Students’ Perceptions of Plagiarism

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Abstract

Plagiarism is perceived to be a growing problem and universities are required to devote increasing time and resources to combating it. Most strategies involve detection and deterrence, the latter often using educational approaches to try to change student attitudes and behaviour. Such approaches fail to take into account the difficulty of achieving this change. Theory and research in psychology show that a thorough understanding of an individual’s view of an issue or problem is an essential requirement for successful change of that person’s attitudes and behaviour. This study used a mixed-method design to develop a comprehensive understanding of students’ perceptions of plagiarism at Charles Sturt University (CSU) in Australia.

The qualitative phase of the study examined students’ perceptions of a number of issues relating to plagiarism. Focus groups were held with students across discipline areas, years of study and modes of study. A thematic analysis revealed six themes of perceptions of plagiarism: confusion, fear, perceived sanctions, perceived seriousness, academic consequences and resentment. These dimensions and the relationships between them were developed into a concept map, which posited relationships between the themes and provided the contextual variables for the quantitative phase of the research.

In the quantitative phase of the study, a questionnaire was developed based on the six themes found in Phase 1. An invitation to complete the survey was sent to all 30,092 domestic students at CSU, and 4,477 students attempted the questionnaire. Of these, 3,405 provided
sufficient information to allow analysis. The data obtained were examined in terms of
gender, year of study, faculty (e.g., arts, science) and whether the students were studying on
campus or by distance education. The data confirmed findings from the focus group study
and previous literature, indicating that confusion regarding what behaviours constituted
plagiarism was evident. Results for the perceptions of seriousness indicated that plagiarism
behaviours were rated as the least serious. Data revealed medium levels of anxiety from the
participants regarding fear of unintentional plagiarism, a finding also consistent with the
literature. Students perceived that sanctions applied to the plagiarism items by the university
were mild to moderate, a contrast to the focus group findings. Evidence from the data
suggests that there is a moderate degree of writing apprehension among the student sample.
Results also indicate that there is some resentment levelled at the university, based on the
perception that there is too much emphasis on plagiarism relative to outside the university
setting.

The hypothesised model that was proposed at the conclusion of the qualitative study was not
supported. Theoretical reasoning, supported by post-hoc analyses, provided opportunity to
further explore regression paths within the model, resulting in the testing of two further
models. The final model best fit the data and presented plausible relationships between the
variables.
The implications of these findings suggest a revision of the CSU policy on academic misconduct, the development of a university-wide systematic approach with an educative focus, and improving deterrence strategies.
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Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material that to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged. I agree that this thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the Executive Director, Library Services or nominee, for the care, loan and reproduction of theses.

Signed: ______________________ On: ___/___/____

Judith Gullifer
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**Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my late father, Ron Gauci, who truly believed in the importance of education and never let me forget the importance of family.

*Determinations goes further than talent!*
Paid Editorial Assistance

Paid editorial assistance was obtained through Elite Editing at the conclusion of the research. Editorial intervention was restricted to Standards D and E of the *Australian Standards for Editing Practice*. There was no revision or alteration of substantive content or conceptual organisation of the thesis by Elite Editing.

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# Publications

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Chapter 1:

Plagiarism—Introduction to the Research

Over the last fifty years increasing attention has been cast on the “blight” of academic misconduct (e.g., cheating, collusion and plagiarism), evidenced by a growing body of literature, media reports, and pressure from administrators (Ashworth, Bannister & Thorne, 1997; Ashworth, Freewood & Macdonald, 2003; Franklyn-Stokes & Newstead, 1995; McCabe, Trevino & Butterfield, 2001; Petress, 2003). This attention has been promulgated by plagiarism being cast as fraudulent behaviour that eliminates the intellectual property of the original author (or publisher) (Petress, 2003). Indeed, Petress (2003) describes plagiarism as a ‘plague on our profession’ (p. 324) that rewards plagiarists for their work and arguably diminishes the goals of academic integrity. Academic integrity has been defined as “...the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner” (Penn State University, 2014). Thus, an act of plagiarism arguably erodes the moral value of honesty, while devaluing the role of assessment items within our educational establishments.

Historically plagiarism has been positioned within a legal discourse suggesting that it refers to an act of theft of the individual ownership of intellectual work (Ashworth et al., 2003; Stearns, 1992; Sutherland-Smith, 2005). The etymology of ‘plagiarism’ derives from Latin roots: plagarius, an abductor, and plagiare, to steal (American Historical Association, 2004). The legalistic construction of plagiarism has developed from notions that knowledge has a history and that past authors must be acknowledged. Without appropriate acknowledgment, Stearns has (1992) argued that one severs the ties between the creator of the work and the creation. Indeed, Athanasou and Olasehinde (2002) assert that ‘the essence
of cheating is fraud and deception’ (p. 2), arguably, a simple and direct characterisation of plagiarism. Thus, plagiarism is constructed as a breach of academic integrity, with some authors describing the act as ‘fraudulent educational practice’ (Deller-Evans, Evans & Gannaway, 2003, p. 105).

The legal discourse that underpins plagiarism is reinforced by internationally recognised copyright legislation, such as Australian Copyright Act 1968, Copyright Act 1814 in England and Copyright Act 1976 in the United States (US). These statutes protect an author’s moral property rights, ensuring they are correctly attributed to the original contributor. Historically, protecting an author’s right to attribution was born from the oldest international agreement on copyright, the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works of 1886 (WIPO Copyright Treaty 1996, cited in Larrick, 2008), which has been enacted by 119 nations. These nations agree to comply and uphold international copyright and regulations for authors.

Noteworthy of copyright legislation is the right of the proprietor of the intellectual property to disseminate material (Australian Copyright Act 1968). Therefore, copyright protection prevents authors from verbatim reproduction of large portions of material from a copyrighted work even when the author of that work is given due acknowledgment. For example, the Australian Copyright legislation will only allow a maximum of 10% of material to be reproduced from a book, or the equivalent of one chapter, whichever is the greater (Australian Copyright Act 1968). Anything that exceeds this limit requires the permission from the publisher. Breaching this maximum limit on the reproduction of work
without permission from the publisher, even when the author is acknowledged, may constitute a legal violation, as well as an ethical one.

University regulations have assumed similar legal notions of copyright protection by developing policy initiatives that protect authors’ moral rights to attribution (Sutherland-Smith, 2005). Consequently, appropriate attribution is considered scholarly academic conduct, while breaches of plagiarism are defined as academic misconduct requiring sanctions. Peter Jaszi (1994), a faculty director at the Glushko-Samuelson Intellectual Property Law Clinic and professor of law, sums it up as follows:

   The stakes are high in disciplinary actions against students accused of intramural offenses against authorship. Indeed, our institutions underline the seriousness of these proceedings by giving them the form, as well as some of the content, of legal actions for violations of copyright law. (p. 29)

   This means that claiming ownership of language without due acknowledgement to the original author is considered serious enough to warrant sanctions based on legal statutes.

   In a study that examined plagiarism policies across 140 universities in the US, United Kingdom (UK) and Australia, Pecorari’s (2001) study finds that plagiarism is universally constructed as an academic crime deserving of punishment. Reinforcing the ‘criminal’ discourse of plagiarism is the media attention given to reported cases of plagiarism. In her article in the Courier Mail, Margaret Wenham (2009b) writes that more than 300 students were found guilty of plagiarism at a University in Queensland, Australia. The article details the findings of a major audit of the university by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), which found that there was a perception among students that plagiarism was rife.
Wenham (2009b) also writes that the AUQA report alluded to ‘a significant academic and reputational risk’ posed by acts of plagiarism to universities. In a later article, Wenham (2009a) suggests that plagiarism is rising, with up to 2000 students found guilty in one Australian state, which is, perhaps, due to the increasing use of text-matching software.

It is not only students that are found guilty of plagiarism. The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in Australia revoked the doctorate of a former Deputy Dean of the School of Global Studies, Social Science and Planning after discovering that he plagiarised sections of his thesis (Trounson, 2011). In another instance, Anak Agung Banyu Perwita, a professor of international relations at Parahyangan University, resigned after the university’s senate found him guilty of plagiarism. Perwita admitted to plagiarising from an article by Australian scientist Dr Carl Ungerer in the English-language newspaper The Jakarta Post (Fitzpatrick, 2010). On a larger political scale, Germany’s Defence Minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg resigned in 2011, one month after having his doctoral title rescinded because of accusations of plagiarism (Gipp, Meuschke & Beel, 2011). These examples are not isolated incidents, and events like this attract media attention across the world.

1.1 Research Context

Within the tertiary education sector, there is evidence of constant innovation and changing approaches to addressing the problem of plagiarism; however, students continue to cut and paste text from the Internet and purchase papers from websites that market completed assessment tasks (Roig & Caso, 2005; Underwood & Szabo, 2003). An unpublished doctoral thesis by Helen Marsden (2008) examining the extent and nature of dishonest academic behaviour states that, in an Australian sample of 9,543 students across 11 universities, more
than half the sample reported having engaged in some form of cheating during their time at university (Marsden, 2008). Despite the fact that many authors examine and report steps that can be taken to reduce the incidents of plagiarism in higher education, the problem persists (Bowman, 2004; Brown & Howell, 2001; Carroll, 2005a; Park, 2003; Randall, 2001).

Over the last two decades, a plethora of studies on academic integrity has grown. These studies focus on three broad areas: prevalence of academic misconduct, prevention and management of academic misconduct and the individual and institutional factors associated with academic misconduct. Within these focus areas, researchers investigating student perceptions and attitudes towards plagiarism use a range of methodologies, including but not limited to interviews (Ashworth et al., 1997; Devlin & Gray, 2007; Love & Simmons, 1998; Pecorari, 2003; Zobel & Hamilton, 2002), questionnaires (Elzubeir & Rizk, 2003; Faulkender et al., 1994; Marsden, Carroll & Neill, 2005; Underwood & Szabo, 2003; Waugh, Godfrey, Evans & Craig, 1995) and surveys (Brimble & Stevenson-Claireke, 2005a; Lim & See, 2001).

Other literature examines institutional approaches to deterring, detecting and dealing with plagiarism (Carroll, 2005a; Collins & Amodeo, 2005). These include providing guidance to avoid plagiarism (Brown & Howell, 2001), peer reporting (Lim & See, 2001), using a holistic approach that incorporates institutional and departmental measures to design out plagiarism opportunities (Macdonald & Freewood, 2001), policy revision (McGowan, 2003), appropriate induction to the tertiary culture of enquiry (McGowan, 2005) and implementing transparent penalty systems that are consistently applied (Park, 2003).
Much of this research examines plagiarism from the perspective of the institution. In other words, implicit within the literature is that tertiary institutions make certain assumptions regarding the ability of a student to discriminate and identify plagiarism. The institutions expect that students can present their work by citing all relevant references to other works used and adhering to university policy. However, Overbey and Guiling (1999) examine student perceptions of plagiarism and find that, except for the verbatim copying of text, many students are ignorant of what constitutes plagiarism. The question then centres on whether tertiary institutions wrongly assume that students know what plagiarism is and, therefore, take ineffective steps to avoid it. Thus, the current research project proposed to explore how students constructed the concept of plagiarism.

The costs of plagiarism to society can be great with inadequately trained graduates posing a risk to public safety, through to provision of inaccurate advice on welfare and financial decisions, and not least of all damaging university reputations through media scrutiny (Marsden, Carroll, & Neil 2005). Further costs within universities include administrative management to combat it (Carroll, 2005c; Franklyn-Stokes & Newstead, 1995; James, McInnis & Devlin, 2002; Johnston, 1991; O’Connor, 2003; Park, 2003). Specifically, an increased burden is placed on the academic staff member managing the subject to correctly identify plagiarism and refer the matter through appropriate university processes (Sutherland-Smith, 2005).

1.2 Purpose of the Research

In psychology, it is essential to obtain the client’s perception and understanding of the issue or problem before commencing therapy. A client’s insight or lack of insight is likely to
influence their responsiveness to different therapeutic approaches (Cochran & Cochran, 2005; Egan, 2007; Kanfer & Schefft, 1988; Prochaska & Norcross, 2007). Prochaska and Norcross (2007) agree with this idea and argue that it is important to understand not only what to change but also the process of change to ensure clients successfully overcome their problems. Central to their model is the concept of ‘stages of change’; that is, the model represents ‘specific constellations of attitudes, intentions and behaviours related to an individual’s readiness in the cycle of change’ (p. 515). In other words, if the therapist is able to identify where the client is situated in regards to their insight of the problem, then the probability of successful change towards the problem or issue is increased. Likewise, in an academic setting, to develop positive behaviours towards academic integrity in students, it is necessary to have a good understanding of their perceptions of and attitudes towards the issue. Literature from forensic psychology suggests that an understanding of offenders’ perspectives and motivations is important for the design of an effective program to reduce recidivism. For example, Byrne and Trew (2005) argue that:

> to be effective, interventions that aim to reduce or prevent offending behaviour need to be based on a sound understanding of what leads people to offend, and what leads people to stop offending. (p. 125)

Ashworth et al. (1997) express similar sentiments in relation to plagiarism. They argue that ‘understanding the student perspective on…plagiarism can significantly assist academics in their efforts to communicate appropriate norms’ (p. 187).

It appears that there is merit in understanding students’ perspectives regarding plagiarism in order to develop successful strategies to promote academic integrity and,
thereby, prevent plagiarism. Academic staff have an important role in trying to change students’ attitudes and behaviour towards plagiarism. If an academic has a very different view of plagiarism and is unaware of how students perceive it, the chances of them being able to successfully manage plagiarism are reduced.

Research suggests that academics not only tend to perceive and evaluate plagiarism differently to students (Brimble & Stevenson-Clarke, 2005b) but also tend to define plagiarism in vastly different ways (Roig, 2001). Such differences are important because, if there are large differences between academic staff perceptions, then students are likely to get contradictory messages that may decrease their understanding of plagiarism.

To promote a consistent understanding of plagiarism, good institutional policy needs to be transparent and understood by all stakeholders. However, it may be evident that institutional policy for plagiarism haphazardly filters down to the various stakeholders, if at all. For example, McCabe and Trevino (1993) identify a significant relationship between academic misconduct and how students perceive both student and staff understanding of institutional policy. Higher levels of misconduct are associated with lower levels of understanding. Another study by Roig (1997) demonstrates that more than half of the students cannot identify clear examples of plagiarism, indicating that, while policy may exist, students have little knowledge or understanding of it.

When this doctoral research commenced there was a lack of studies investigating plagiarism in Australia, with most of the research being conducted in the Northern Hemisphere (UK and US). The plethora of published research tends to focus on prevalence rates, identification of causes of a range of behaviours that are often described as cheating
(exam cheating and assignment cheating) and are situated within an overall category of academic misconduct. What is unclear and, therefore, the purpose of the current research is how students develop an understanding of plagiarism in all of its nuances and what that understanding is.

1.3 The Case Study Setting

A case study approach was undertaken at Charles Sturt University (CSU) to investigate how students understand plagiarism, as defined in the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy (see page 53 for detail). CSU is a publicly-funded multi-campus university located across two States and a territory in Australia. It has seven campuses in various regional centres, with a further three specialist centres located in metropolitan and rural geographic regions. CSU has four faculties (arts, business, education and science) that offer a diverse range of courses and disciplines at the bachelor and postgraduate level. As of 2010, CSU had 37,964 students enrolled, with the majority (22,004) studying by distance education (off campus). Distance education uses teaching methods and technology to enable students to access education when they are not physically present (Cleveland-Innes & Garrison, 2010). This requires access to the Internet because courses are supported by online technology.

1.4 Significance of the Research

Given that universities are inclined to define plagiarism as a problem of academic misconduct in students, universities can benefit from learning about their own students’ perceptions of plagiarism to develop appropriate strategies for promoting academic integrity. In light of this, the current research program is important because it systematically examined
students’ understandings of and attitudes towards plagiarism within one Australian university. The research used an in-depth, case study approach to understanding students’ perceptions of plagiarism, with the intention of informing the institution on approaches that may promote a greater awareness of plagiarism and, therefore, prevent or minimise its occurrence. A comprehensive understanding of how students’ construct plagiarism in one university setting may be generalisable to other institutions, therefore, enabling those institutions to reduce the prevalence of plagiarism. Bertram Gallant and Drinan (2006) ask, ‘what could be more significant to higher education than a study of its integrity?’ (p. 13). Elaborating on this, the current research proposes to study a specific aspect of integrity at CSU: the students’ perceptions of plagiarism.

1.5 Research Questions

Research shows that, except for the verbatim copying of text, many students are ignorant of what constitutes plagiarism (Dee & Jacob, 2010; Overbey & Guiling, 1999). Hence, the current research focuses on the following interlinked questions:

1. How do students at CSU structure their understanding of plagiarism?

2. Is plagiarism understood differently depending on gender, year of study, faculty, campus affiliation and mode of study?

These questions focus on student understanding of plagiarism and whether they distinguish between the different types of academic misconduct, as identified in the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy.

Attitudes regarding the seriousness of plagiarism may affect whether students engage in it. Literature from criminology suggests that attitudes towards offences may well influence
compliance with the law (Roberts & Stalans, 1998; Tyson & Hubert, 2003). For instance, most people do not view breaking the speed limit as particularly serious and so are much more likely to speed than to steal a car, as the latter would generally be regarded as a more serious offence. If students do not view plagiarism as serious, then they are more likely to engage in it (Franklyn-Stokes & Newstead, 1995). Consequently, it is important to gain students’ views of the seriousness of plagiarism relative to other offences. Some international studies show that students often do not view plagiarism as serious (Park, 2003), while others find a sliding scale of seriousness (Franklyn-Stokes & Newstead, 1995). However, there are few studies on Australian students’ perceptions of seriousness.

The deterrence effect of interventions is influenced by the perception of the risk of being caught. If the perception is low, then the offending behaviour is more likely to occur (e.g., speeding), although, there is an interaction with perceived seriousness and the severity of the penalty. Hence, if students perceive the probability of being caught for plagiarising as low, then the chances of plagiarism occurring increases. In addition to looking at the perceived risk, information will also be obtained regarding the factors that influence that perception of risk.

Consequently, there is a need to explore the evaluative judgements of plagiarism in an Australian context by exploring the following questions:

1. How seriously is plagiarism perceived?
2. How morally unacceptable is it seen to be?
3. What are the perceived sanctions applied by the university?
1.6 Researcher’s Position

The genesis of this doctoral program did not follow the traditional trajectory of a doctoral research program, whereby one examines a research problem through a strategically and clearly mapped out research strategy from the outset. It was the result of a much smaller research grant that spurred the research program. When I began my academic career at CSU, I already had a professional background. Therefore, while I was a new academic, I had clear expectations of what I believed constituted scholarship and academic integrity. In the first semester of my appointment as an Associate Lecturer in 2006, I experienced some disappointment and frustration after finding a small number of cases of plagiarism.

I felt quite disappointed that students would engage in conduct that I believed was unethical and clearly limited the development of their own scholarship. At approximately the same time, a discussion about academic integrity, particularly plagiarism, with my colleague and supervisor, Associate Professor Graham Tyson, resulted in wanting to explore students’ understanding of plagiarism further. This discussion highlighted our own ideas of plagiarism and, perhaps, how divergent views of plagiarism among academic staff had the potential to result in inconsistencies in the way with which it is dealt and to influence how students may perceive it.

At the suggestion of my supervisor, we pursued a Teaching and Learning Scholarship grant to investigate student beliefs about plagiarism through a series of focus groups. The project formed the basis of this PhD (see Chapter 3). The findings from that first study stimulated my curiosity and, like most forms of research, prompted more questions about the phenomenon under study. Specifically, what were the perceptions held by students about
plagiarism and what were the consequences of those beliefs. Therefore, the research design was conducted in two stages, which included both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

1.7 The Research Design

A mixed-method framework was undertaken to explore and understand students’ perceptions of plagiarism. This design involved the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data at different stages of the research process (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The rationale for using both quantitative and qualitative methods was that neither method alone was sufficient to capture the complexity of how students perceive plagiarism and then confidently generalise to the university population. When used in combination, quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and allow for a more complete analysis of students’ perceptions of plagiarism (Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

1.8 Pragmatism

The potential problem of mixing qualitative and quantitative data collection processes is that they are embedded within two distinct (and, some would argue, opposing) epistemologies (Creswell, Plano-Clark, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). To address the assumptions that underpin these epistemologies, the current research process combined the two methods as interdependent but separate procedures during data collection. In the first study, qualitative research inquiry focused on developing an understanding of students’ perceptions of plagiarism. The aim was to develop a holistic picture of the participants’ experience or perceptions through focus groups and then analyse the text. The underlying philosophy of the knowledge created was based on constructivist
approaches to understanding human experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). In this approach, the students were perceived as the experts of their understanding of plagiarism, as they were immersed in the university setting in which the study was framed. The collected data were then analysed based on the students’ values, attitudes and beliefs. Consequently, the qualitative research process produced an understanding of plagiarism based on multiple contextual factors, as experienced and expressed by the students.

To address criticisms aimed at the incompatibility of integrating positivist and constructivist epistemologies in the one research project, it has been argued that not all research is founded on a philosophical commitment to either positivist or constructivist claims but, rather, on a pragmatic belief that research design and methodology are often chosen to best suit the research questions (Darlington & Scott, 2002). The pragmatic paradigm is a pluralistic rejection of the pressure to conform to either post positivism or constructivism (Creswell, 2007). Thus, the current research was based on the pragmatic paradigm, which was founded on a set of beliefs that were centred on a practical approach to addressing the research questions. Given that the research undertaken in this thesis was an evolving process (each stage in the research informed the next), the pragmatic paradigm enabled methods that were appropriate to the research aims to be used (Creswell et al., 2003). For these reasons, the pragmatic paradigm was ideal for the current research, as it was adopted for the purpose of an applied research endeavour taken within a sequential exploratory design.
1.9 Research Design: Sequential Exploratory Design

The current research used a sequential exploratory design that consists of two distinct phases. According to Plano-Clark and Creswell (2008), the sequential exploratory design does not necessarily need to be implemented within a pre-defined theoretical framework. The current descriptive research paradigm aimed to explore questions that focused on what plagiarism is for students, rather than explaining why students may plagiarise. Good descriptive research on plagiarism could highlight the students’ perceptions of plagiarism and enable relevant stakeholders to affect student attitudes and university policies. As outlined by Creswell et al. (2003), the sequential exploratory design is characterised by an initial qualitative data collection phase, followed by a qualitative data analysis.

1.9.1 Phase 1.

Phase 1 was framed by the qualitative paradigm and completed prior to the phase two quantitative investigations. It explored students’ perceptions of a number of issues relating to plagiarism at CSU. Creswell et al. (2003) recommend using interviews to obtain themes and specific statements from individuals that support the themes. In the current research, focus group interviews were held with students (N = 49) across discipline areas, years of study and mode of study. A thematic analysis revealed six themes of perceptions of plagiarism: confusion, fear, perceived sanctions, perceived seriousness, academic consequences and resentment. These themes were developed into a concept map to diagrammatically represent the relationship between the themes evident in the data. The method and outcomes of the qualitative analysis are detailed in Chapter 3.
1.9.2 Phase 2.

The themes and statements obtained in the qualitative study were then used to create scales and items in the Phase 2 questionnaire (see Chapter 4). All domestic students at CSU were invited to participate in the survey. The questionnaire contained items relating to understanding of plagiarism, writing apprehension, seriousness of plagiarism, fear of inadvertent plagiarism, sanctions for plagiarism and prevalence of plagiarism. The quantitative analysis of the survey revealed important information about student understanding and perceptions of plagiarism.

1.10 Preview of Remaining Chapters

In the chapters that follow, the reader will be guided through the development of this thesis, exploring students’ perceptions of plagiarism at CSU. Chapter 2 sets the context for the research by providing an overview of the problematic nature of defining plagiarism and the factors that influence students’ perceptions of plagiarism. Chapter 2 concludes by drawing the reader’s attention to CSU and the academic misconduct policy that guides the management of plagiarism at this institution.

Chapter 3 synthesises the findings from the qualitative research project that explored students’ perceptions of plagiarism. This chapter resulted in the first publication from this thesis. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 outline the research process of developing the questionnaire to measure the thematic concepts found in the qualitative study and the procedures used for

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collecting the data. The following seven chapters (Chapters 7–12) detail the quantitative analysis of each of the thematic constructs, as measured by the questionnaire. Chapter 7 resulted in the second publication from this thesis\(^2\), and Chapter 9 is currently submitted for publication and under review. Chapter 13 theorises students’ perceptions of plagiarism by exploring the relationships between the thematic concepts found in the qualitative study. The final chapter (Chapter 14) discusses the findings of both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the research and discusses some implications and recommendations, reviews limitations of the research and explores future directions.

Chapter 2: Research on Plagiarism

2.1 Introduction

There is prolific literature that explores the concept of academic integrity. Notably, academic integrity tends to be defined by what it is not, that is, different types of behaviour that are deemed dishonest in higher education. Terms such as academic misconduct and academic dishonesty are often used interchangeably to describe these behaviours and will be used throughout this thesis. Donald McCabe, leading researcher within the field of academic integrity, and his colleagues identify multiple forms and methods of academic misconduct (McCabe, 1999; 2005b; McCabe & Trevino, 2001; McCabe et al., 2001). Within this body of literature, academic misconduct encompasses the behaviours of cheating, copying, plagiarism and collusion. To further confuse matters, plagiarism and academic misconduct are often treated as though they are one construct (Lampert, 2008). The consequence of this is the tendency to describe a range of behaviours as plagiarism when they are not.

The inconsistency in definitions and the diversity of understanding of academic misconduct across the higher education sector has emerged as an important issue in the research literature (Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003). The reason for this is that academic misconduct can only be addressed by understanding how staff and students perceive it (Roberts & Rabinowitz, 1992). The problem, as indicated in the following literature review, is that students do not have a clear understanding of what academic misconduct is and do not believe it is a significant issue (Cizek, 2003; Roberts & Rabinowitz, 1992). As a result of these beliefs, students appear more likely to plagiarise because they do not have a deep
understanding of academic misconduct behaviours (Jocoy & DiBiase, 2006; Pickard, 2006). Researchers find that students always regard some behaviours as academically dishonest, especially those behaviours that occur under exam conditions. However, other behaviours, such as plagiarism, paraphrasing and collusion, are more ambiguous (Burrus, McGoldrick & Schuhmann, 2007; Higbee & Thomas, 2002; Hughes & McCabe, 2006b).

This chapter presents a review of the literature with a specific focus on the studies relevant to students’ understanding of plagiarism. Specifically, this chapter will explore several factors that influence students’ understanding of plagiarism: definitions of plagiarism, university expectations, the digital world, peer behaviour and university policy. It is important to point out that the following review may discuss literature that was written within the last two decades and, therefore, may not be applicable to the current higher education context. However, despite the diminishing currency, it is important to review how plagiarism has been constructed in the scholarly literature to consider the potential influence it may have on how students perceive it.

2.2 Factors that Influence Students’ Understanding of Plagiarism

2.2.1 Definitions of plagiarism.

Authors provide various definitions of plagiarism that all tend to deem it dishonest. Some authors argue that plagiarism involves stealing material from another source and passing it off as one’s own, submitting a paper that has been written by someone else, copying sections of material from one or more sources without acknowledging the author and paraphrasing material from one or more sources without proper acknowledgement (Brandt, 2002; Howard, 2002; Wilhoit, 1994). One account suggests that plagiarism challenges the
individual ownership of intellectual work, personal authorship, creativity and originality and the view that knowledge has a history and past authors must be acknowledged (Ashworth et al., 2003). These behaviours are believed to be breaches of academic integrity, an act of academic misconduct (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002).

Other accounts of plagiarism clearly articulate the behaviours that make it dishonest. For instance, plagiarism is defined as the imitation of article structure or text organisation (Marshall & Garry, 2006; Martin, 1994); the direct copying, word for word, of another person’s work without acknowledging that person’s authorship (Brandt, 2002; Collins & Amodeo, 2005; Park, 2003); the inventing of material and attribution of that material to a false source (Petress, 2003) and the use of a source cited in one body of work without actually accessing the second source (East, 2005). However, the inconsistency between these accounts of plagiarism highlights the lack of ‘unitary representation’ (Howard, 1995, p. 793) of policy and practice from one academic institution to another, and the labelling of some practices as plagiarism when in fact they are not.

Park (2003) identifies different types of plagiarism that are reorganised by Warn (2006) as follows:

1. Sham: refers to sham paraphrasing, which is the practice of correctly citing a source but presenting the material as paraphrased when it is a direct quotation without the quotation marks.

2. Verbatim: refers to the practice of copying material exactly from a source without citing the source, thus, presenting the material as one’s own.
3. Purloining: refers to the act of submitting an assignment that is substantially or entirely the work of another student, with or without that student’s knowledge.

To add further complexity, when reviewing the North-American literature, the terms ‘assignment cheating’ and ‘plagiarism’ are often used interchangeably but do not always mean the same thing. Assignment cheating refers to a broad range of behaviours that include poor documentation, poor proofreading and ‘outright, premeditated fraud’ (Wilhoit, 1994, p. 162). Notably, this broad characterisation of assignment cheating can include behaviours that are considered plagiarism and vice versa; however, this is not always the case (Caruana, Ramaseshan & Ewing, 2000).

The many appearances of plagiarism (Martin, 1994) not only emphasise the difficulty in defining the concept but also tap into underlying ‘philosophical and pedagogical issues’ (Johnson & Clerehan, 2005, p. 37) that are debated within academic literature and learning institutions. Such issues could make it increasingly difficult for students to understand what plagiarism is, let alone comprehend how they can complete their written work with integrity (East, 2005; Thompson, 2002). For example, many definitions of plagiarism contain implications that words and thoughts can be possessed as though they were objects, a notion that is both misleading and confusing for students (Johnson & Clerehan, 2005). Therefore, educators have challenged whether students understand the concept of using their own words in an assignment (Briggs, 2003; Pennycook, 1993; Thompson, 2002).

Margaret Price (2002) voices similar concerns regarding how students make sense of the concept of ownership, particularly with regard to group projects that are completed in collaboration with other individuals. Price argues that plagiarism is not a simple or universal
construct and suggests that some students experience an intrinsic struggle when tackling the subject of plagiarism. She points out that, while many universities consider plagiarism to be an offence that is serious enough to warrant expulsion from a program, rarely do the same institutions provide policy documents that offer clear and solid boundaries for students, defining what is acceptable and what is unacceptable practice. Arguably, documents may exist; however, they may not be readily accessible by the student body.

Research that specifically examines students’ definitions of plagiarism unanimously conclude that the term ‘plagiarism’ is confusing for students (Ashworth et al., 1997; Barrett & Cox, 2005; Parameswaran & Devi, 2006; Park, 2003; Yeo, 2007). The studies show that students know the concept of plagiarism exists but are unsure of the exact behaviours that define plagiarism. For example, some students narrowly define the act of plagiarism as copying portions of text without attribution, while others are unsure of the correct procedures to follow when integrating the ideas or work of others. Thus, some of the confusion around plagiarism appears to be based on deciphering whether it is an act of omission (not citing sources) or an act of commission (including material and claiming credit for it).

In addition to being unable to decipher what plagiarism is, students may be confusing plagiarism with other forms of academic misconduct. They may be able to identify that an act is a breach of academic misconduct; however, they are unable to differentiate between the behaviours that make up academic misconduct. For example, Barrett and Cox (2005) examine the perceived differences between collusion and collaboration. Specifically, they find that students tend to regard copying other students work as collusion or collaboration, rather than plagiarism. In other studies, students believe that copying assignments may be
considered cheating but that assisting friends to complete assignments is not (Del Carlo & Bodner, 2004; Parameswaran & Devi, 2006). Evident in these studies is that behaviours that are considered plagiarism are confused with other forms of academic misconduct. The consequence of this confusion may lead to engagement in the very behaviours that are considered plagiarism by universities.

In summary, there is some difficulty in locating a standard definition of plagiarism that clearly and consistently articulates the behaviours that encompass it in the research literature. Moreover, the lack of a universally accepted definition of plagiarism appears to create some confusion about what it actually is. Therefore, the act of plagiarism is often not perceived to be a distinct form of academic misconduct that is different to cheating, collusion or fabrication. Thus, when various authors in the research literature use the term ‘plagiarism’ interchangeably with ‘academic misconduct’, it creates some confusion.

The implication of inconsistently using the term ‘academic misconduct’ to refer to a range of behaviours is that it may influence how students understand what these different behaviours mean. In addition, as a result of the inconsistencies around the term ‘plagiarism’ and the subsequent confusion around citation and referencing practices, Park (2003) suggests that academic staff are asking students to perform at a level that is beyond their level of skill. Consequently, plagiarism may occur as a result of inadequate ability or skill and having an incomplete or inaccurate understanding of scholarship within the university environment (Devlin & Gray, 2007; Park, 2003). Therefore, an examination of university expectations is warranted when examining the factors that influence how students’ perceive plagiarism.
2.2.2 University expectations.

The current university environment is characterised by the commercialisation of higher education. One consequence of this is the requirement of universities to demonstrate the benefits of higher education to justify public funding (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). As a result, there is increasing competition between universities for funding and student enrolment (Bertram Gallant, 2008). To increase funding and enrolment numbers, there has been a substantial increase in student demographic diversity. With this student diversity comes differing educational values and expectations, with academic misconduct being one area of concern (Maruca, 2004). Arguably, differing educational values have resulted in intergenerational tension. This tension refers to distinct generations of students and educators whose age groups contain conflicting ideas, expectations and practices when it comes to university education.

Where in the past, students may have specifically attended university to immerse themselves in the scholarly environment, this may no longer be the case today (Bertram Gallant & Drinan, 2006). Instead, higher education may be a path towards a professional career and longer term financial stability and status (Dalton, 1998). In other words, university education is perceived to be a means towards professional credentialing. The implication for educators is that the act of plagiarism may be perceived, by a small minority of students, as an acceptable or necessary option to achieve the required grades (Michaels & Miethe, 1989). However, for many other students, plagiarism may be the result of poorly developed skills (e.g., writing, referencing and paraphrasing), rather than an intentional act (Wilhoit, 1994).
Academic writing is a complex intellectual task involving many component skills, some of which students may lack completely and some of which they may have only partially mastered. However, many academics may assume that students enter university with these skills already mastered. Wilhoit (1994) posits that only a small minority of students enter university knowing the ‘relationship between plagiarism and the rules about quoting, paraphrasing, and documenting material’ (p. 162). While Wilhoit’s claims were made more than two decades ago, they may still hold true in the current context. Students may not know how to paraphrase text so that it differs substantially from the original source and is in their own words (Angélil-Carter, 2000). Arguably, academics may offer limited tuition in teaching students how to incorporate the ideas and words of authors into their own writing because of time constraints or teaching an already crowded curriculum. Such tuition requires detailed instruction in developing an argument, paraphrasing the work of other authors and then integrating and citing those sources.

Notably, within the contemporary university, researchers suggest that there appears to be an absence of understanding of the basic skills outlined earlier and the shared aspect of scholarship. In their classic research, Ashworth et al. (1997) find that students have little idea about the communal aspect of scholarship, whereby an author contributes to the scholarly literature and, in doing so, the contribution of others is acknowledged. Instead, students seem to believe that referencing is a form of academic etiquette. De Voss and Rosati (2002) similarly find that students prioritise gathering sources, quotations and citations over developing their own original ideas. Students may then plagiarise when they are unable to attribute sources appropriately because they have not comprehended the thesis of the original
source. In addition, they state that students are not able to understand the concept of common knowledge. Moreover, students may not have the requisite skills to understand the learning goals of completing an assignment and the intended audience (DeVoss & Rosati, 2002).

Brandt (2002) suggests that contemporary generations perceive authorship and ownership differently to previous generations, as they are living in an era where textual ownership is less obvious because of the ease of access provided by advancing technological mediums. The advent of readily accessible Internet and the rise of digital technologies have challenged the idea of media and textual ownership. This digital revolution has influenced a generation who have become, what Prensky (2001) termed the ‘digital natives’, a generation who are “‘native speakers” of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet’ (p. 1). Prensky is referring to students who are proficient in the use of digital technologies. By the time students attend university, it is reasonable to assume that they are highly computer literate and are proficient with using the Internet, downloading a range of media types and using a range of software packages. The ability to use new technologies has had an unintended consequence, which is the availability of enormous amounts of material that can be easily cut and pasted into documents.

2.2.3 Plagiarism and the digital world.

The availability of information in the digital world and the ease at which students can use this material and synthesise it with their own work has also influenced how students understand plagiarism. Plagiarising online content has variously been referred to as cyber-cheating, cyber-plagiarism, mouse-click plagiarism and academic cyber-sloth (Anderson, 1999; Auer, 2001; Carnie, 2001; Craig & Evans, 1990), which are terms that clearly link to
the online aspect of misconduct. McCabe (2005a) highlights the concerns that have risen with the advent of Internet use:

Internet plagiarism is a growing concern on all campuses as students struggle to understand what constitutes acceptable use of the Internet. In the absence of clear direction from faculty, most students have concluded that “cut & paste” plagiarism—using a sentence or two (or more) from different sources on the Internet and weaving this information together into a paper without appropriate citation—is not a serious issue (para. 5).

The underlying message in McCabe’s (2005a) quotation is that the use and advancement of technology in higher education has created a cultural lag in determining what is deemed acceptable use of this technology.

A contributing issue is ascertaining the ownership of source material. In as early as 1984, Woodmansee argued that ‘the computer is dissolving the boundaries essential to the survival of our modern fiction of the author as the sole creator of unique, original works’ (p. 25). The nature of authorship of electronic text is not always easy to ascertain, contributing to perceptions of freely available material that does not require acknowledgement. Further, there appears to be widespread uncertainty of what Internet material is in the public domain. This uncertainty has led Gajadhar (1998) and others to suggest that students regard Web material as ‘free for everyone to use’ (Colon, 2001; Whiteneck, 2002).

The assumption by some Internet users that anything available on the Internet is free is summed up by Terrell and Rosen (2003):
The convenience and anonymity of file sharing have made it a remarkably guilt-free form of plunder. In effect, the masses of Americans have joined the previously small chorus of hard-core hackers in chanting the credo ‘Information wants to be free.’ (p. 43)

With the prevailing message that everything on the Internet is free, it is not surprising that students are confused about using such material for their university studies. However, in a chapter devoted to the Internet and plagiarism, Sutherland-Smith (2008) argues that, while one cannot deny that a link exists between plagiarism and the Internet, the literature is mixed regarding whether one can make causal attributions between the two. For example, authors who are for a causal link between the Internet and plagiarism argue that the Internet is indeed a cause of increased incidents of plagiarism, with the Internet lending itself to cut-and-paste cheating (James et al., 2002; Underwood & Szabo, 2003). However, other authors argue that an increase in the incidence of plagiarism is not related to the advent of the Internet; rather, the Internet has provided opportunities for those who have a propensity to plagiarise (McCabe, Butterfield & Trevino, 2003). Thus, with more exposure to the Internet as a means of preparing assignments, students may be more willing to engage in copy and paste plagiarism (Underwood & Szabo, 2003). Conversely, the Internet has also made detection easier.

The digital world has seen the proliferation of paper mills, described as ‘website[s] that students can access in order [to] obtain a term paper on any topic’ (Cvetkovic, 2004, p. 25). These websites have provided another avenue for students to obtain material with ease. However, Groar, Oblinger and Choa (2001) argue that paper mills are not a new phenomenon
and existed prior to the advent of the Internet. Rather, the Internet has enabled an avenue for sourcing ready-made papers that are easily obtainable; therefore, they are perceived to be on the increase. In addition to the availability of material on the Internet are advances in word processing software that enable the easy copying and reuse of online material. The relative ease at which students can plagiarise has resulted in what Baruchson-Arbib and Yaari (2004) describe as an attitude to normalise and legitimise cut-and-paste plagiarism from the Web.

However, it is important to note that use of the Internet to engage in plagiarism is also influenced by social norms. Beliefs about plagiarism can be situated in social norms theory that posits that students will strive towards behaviour consistent with their perception of how other members of their social group behave (Hard, Conway & Moran, 2006). Thus, social norms that are perceived to be permissive of plagiarism tend to influence those students who plagiarise to a greater extent than those who perceive the norms to be unsupportive (Whitley Jr, 1998). Therefore, while technology may have an effect on the way that students perceive plagiarism (Selingo, 2004), it is important to also consider the influence of social norms on whether the behaviours are deemed acceptable.

2.2.4 Perception of peer behaviour.

Bandura’s (1986) social learning theory posits that much of human behaviour is learnt through observing other people’s behaviours and the consequences of those behaviours. An example of a normative influence is the downloading of music (LaRose & Kim, 2006). Neri (2004) suggests that more than 60 million people in the US have downloaded music at one time or another, despite this issue facing legal sanctions. Moreover, a large proportion of these people are young and regularly download music. It has become quite popular on
university campuses, where students with limited budgets and access to high-speed Internet are able to download music at no cost (LaRose, Lai, Lange, Love & Wu, 2005).

As with downloading music, engaging in plagiarism could be attributed to the strong influence of peers (McCabe & Trevino, 1997). Most students at university seek the guidance of peers to determine what is perceived to be common behaviour at university (Allen, Fuller & Luckett, 1998; Graham, Monday, O’Brien & Steffen, 1994; McCabe, Trevino & Butterfield, 1999; Rettinger & Kramer, 2009). Students who perceive that plagiarism is an acceptable behaviour are more likely to perceive that engaging in plagiarism to obtain the required grades is a viable option. Moreover, in an environment where plagiarism is seen to be an acceptable behaviour, a student may feel at a disadvantage if they do not engage in similar behaviour (McCabe & Trevino, 1993). Thus, engaging in plagiarism may be perceived as an option to improve performance at university.

Cizek’s (2003) study finds that, across all predictors of cheating, perceiving that others are cheating (to a greater extent) and are successful at getting away with it are the most consistent and strongest predictors of cheating behaviour. Other researchers find that students who engage in academic dishonesty may sense that others are also engaging in plagiarism and feel that they will be at disadvantage if they do not follow (Allen et al., 1998; Rettinger & Kramer, 2009). Students who observe plagiarists receiving underserved grades believe it is unfair to those students who do not plagiarise. If a student’s morale and performance is affected, they may be more likely to plagiarise (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002). Thus, plagiarism may not only be influenced by observing the behaviour of others but
also by the idea that peers’ behaviour provides normative support for it. This shows that plagiarism may be conceived as an acceptable method for succeeding at university.

Staff ambivalence towards plagiarism and inaction in addressing cases of plagiarism may inadvertently reinforce peer social norms (Ashworth et al., 1997; Kerkvliet & Sigmund, 1999; Love & Simmons, 1998; McCabe & Trevino, 1997; Phillips & Horton, 2000). Scribner (2003) suggests that staff may ‘passively enable student plagiarism’ (p. 32) by not checking that appropriate sources are used and by accepting cut-and-paste assessments that do not have citations to support work or have incomplete citations. In summary, social learning theory may account for the strong influence of peer behaviour on music downloading or plagiarism through observing others engaging in these behaviours or through normative support of engaging in these behaviours (McCabe, 1993).

2.2.5 Policy context.

Students’ perceptions of plagiarism are also influenced by universities’ preventative strategies, such as the presence and enforcement of academic misconduct policies (Carroll & Duggan, 2005; Crown & Spiller, 1998; Devlin, 2006). Policy-influenced strategies include defining plagiarism for students (McLafferty & Foust, 2004), communicating expectations within academic misconduct policies clearly to students (Phillips & Horton, 2000) and university administration supporting staff to enforce the policy on academic misconduct (Hutton, 2006).

2.2.5.1 Communicating policy expectations.

Using an academic misconduct policy to manage plagiarism relies on the language within the policy to clarify the expectations of the university and the responsibility of all
stakeholders to abide by the policy. Within university plagiarism policies, students are generally portrayed as either cheaters or learners and the problem framed as either an ethical issue or a pedagogical problem (O'Regan, 2006). Plagiarism constructed as an ethical issue refers to student behaviour that is motivated by an ‘absence of ethics’, while plagiarism constructed as a pedagogical problem refers to behaviour that demonstrates ‘an ignorance of citation conventions’ (Howard, 1995, p. 788). The central role of an academic misconduct policy is to police plagiarism that is motivated by an absence of ethics (Hinman, 2002; Howard, 1995; Price, 2002) and involves a two-step process of catching and punishing offenders. In order to police plagiarism, detection software, such as Turnitin©, may be used to find instances of plagiarism. If an instance of plagiarism is found, then the sanction should match the degree of plagiarism (Phillips & Horton, 2000). Penalties may range from a caution or reprimand to expulsion from university (CSU, 2010).

Relying on an academic misconduct policy to police plagiarism is unlikely to be sufficient to deter plagiarism. One reason for this is that making the plagiarism policy available to students does not ensure that they will read and understand its content (O'Regan, 2006; Price, 2002). For instance, research indicates that, unless these policies are similarly understood by all stakeholders, they may have little effect on deterrence (Hutton, 2006). In support of this claim, McCabe (1993) finds that a shared understanding of an academic misconduct policy has a significant effect on student self-reported academic misconduct. Moreover, Hard et al. (2006) state that academic staff who have greater knowledge of the university academic integrity policy are more likely to engage in classroom preventative measures and address cases of academic misconduct. Thus, there appears to be a link
between communication of university values regarding academic integrity and the likelihood of students avoiding plagiarism.

2.3 The Australian University Context

University policies that govern academic misconduct can differ in their definitions and sanctions. Moreover, the process in which these policies are communicated to all stakeholders may have an effect on how they are understood and accepted by different universities (McCabe & Trevino, 1993). Despite the contradictions and complexity in finding a common definition of plagiarism within the research literature, the definition that determines what constitutes plagiarism within a university is arguably that within its policy. This definition is the one that stakeholders must abide by within the university setting, and it sets the parameters for reporting, investigating and penalising infringements. Therefore, if the policy is poorly understood then it is less likely to be adhered to (McCabe & Trevino, 1993)

The CSU Academic Misconduct Policy’s definition of plagiarism will be used for the purpose of this thesis. It is important to examine the CSU policy on academic misconduct. Given the idiosyncratic context in which an academic misconduct policy is developed and the potential influence that this may have on how plagiarism is understood by its student body, the CSU policy was compared to the policies of three other New South Wales (NSW) universities. This showed that the definition and management of plagiarism is dependent on the policy guiding it.

The three policies examined were developed by the University of Western Sydney (UWS), Macquarie University and the University of Sydney.
The UWS Student Academic Misconduct Policy (2010) defines academic misconduct as involving plagiarism, cheating and collusion. Plagiarism is defined as occurring when ideas, words or other work are taken from a source and presented as if it was the students’ own work without acknowledgment of the original author. UWS places emphasis on the presentation of one’s work without acknowledging the source as plagiarism, and not the intent of the student when doing so. Thus, within the policy, the intent of committing the act is accounted for. The policy refers to allegations of academic misconduct that may ‘arise from a student’s ignorance or misunderstanding of appropriate referencing or other academic requirements’ (UWS, 2010, p. 4). In this instance, teaching staff are to decide whether the intention to plagiarise was evident and to then advise the student accordingly. Within this policy, there is some leeway for the academic staff member to have autonomy in deciding on how to proceed should an allegation of plagiarism occur.

The academic staff member can decide on the appropriate penalty from a range of sanctions. These penalties range from academic counselling to resubmitting an assessment and downgrading the mark of an assessment. The implication is that an allegation of plagiarism is to be investigated first by the academic staff member and then appropriately managed by the school, if it is deemed ‘minor misconduct’ (UWS, 2010, p. 6). It is only if the allegation is deemed substantial (‘second or later case of minor misconduct or any case of collusion’, p. 6) that the matter is referred to the relevant dean for further investigation.

The Macquarie University (2010) uses positive language by referring to their policy as the Academic Honesty Policy and differentiates plagiarism from deception, fabrication and obstruction. Plagiarism is defined as using the work or ideas of another person and
presenting it a one’s own with acknowledging the source. Unlike the UWS policy intentionality is not taken into consideration. The Macquarie University policy provides a range of different acts as exemplars of what can be considered plagiarism. For example acts such as copying of documents, summarising the work of others, submitting the same final version of work of another student, sourcing others to complete the student work and resubmitting the same work for different tasks are all different examples of plagiarism.

Unlike the UWS policy, the scope of this policy applies to all students and staff, encouraging all stakeholders to undertake their work with honesty. It disregards the intention of the person when they plagiarise, making any transgressions under the policy culpable, regardless of intent. The policy also emphasises an educative approach towards promoting academic honesty by drawing attention to the development of strategies to promote academic honesty and reduce academic dishonesty. The policy specifies the responsibilities of all stakeholders under the policy, clearly identifying the procedures and responsibilities of those involved in promoting and managing academic integrity.

Unlike the UWS policy, a breach of the Macquarie Academic Honesty Policy is reported, by the teaching staff, to the unit convenor, who gathers all relevant material and evidence of the basis of the allegation and reports the incident to the faculty student administration manager. Under this policy, the unit convenor does not directly manage or sanction the breach. The head of the department then nominates an investigator who reports the outcomes of the investigation to the faculty student administration manager. The final decision for the penalty rests with the faculty discipline committee. If the case is proven, then the student’s academic breach history is reviewed and a penalty selected from one of four
levels is imposed. Level 1 is the least serious and comprises of cautions and reduced marks and Level 4 is the most serious and involves a referral to the University Discipline Committee for further review. Learning skills advisors and pastoral care are also implemented as part of the policy procedure.

In contrast to UWS and Macquarie University policies, the University of Sydney (2010) specifically distinguishes between academic misconduct and plagiarism, referring to their policy as the Academic Board Policy: Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism, which defines plagiarism as presenting another person’s work as one’s own work without acknowledgement of the source. While plagiarism is deemed a form of academic misconduct, it is treated separately. The Sydney University policy also provides a range of acts that can be considered plagiarism. These include replicating work (ranging from the use of phrases, sentences, paragraphs or longer extracts) without acknowledgement of the source, and using the work of another person without acknowledgment. The intent of the act is classified as either negligent plagiarism or dishonest plagiarism. Behaviours that are deemed reckless or careless (referencing breaches) are not treated as seriously as the knowing intent to claim work as one’s own. Academic misconduct is defined as a range of behaviours that would include cheating and collusion.

If proven, a breach of the policy would result in a preliminary assessment of the behaviour to decide whether it was ‘negligent plagiarism or dishonest plagiarism or Academic Dishonesty’ (University of Sydney, 2010, p. 8). If the behaviour is deemed negligent plagiarism, then the nominated academic will counsel the student, refer the student to learning skills and issue a written warning should there be further breaches of the policy. If
the allegation is deemed dishonest plagiarism, then the student’s history is reviewed, the extent of plagiarism is assessed, the adverse effect on peers and staff is taken into account and the effect on academic standards is considered. If the dishonest plagiarism is not deemed very serious, then a similar process to negligent plagiarism is followed, with an additional letter sent to the registrar and held on file. A serious breach of dishonest plagiarism is referred to the registrar for further processing.

Similar to the Macquarie University policy but in contrast to the UWS policy, there is an expectation that staff at the University of Sydney educate students about academic integrity. Academic staff are expected to know and consistently apply the policy, be aware of student diversity, incorporate the principles of academic honesty in course outlines and assessments, consistently apply referencing styles across tasks, provide feedback to students who may require remedial support and warn students if they are at risk of breaching the policy. In contrast, Macquarie University accepts the responsibility, as an institution, to engage staff and students actively in academic honesty, as opposed to placing responsibility on the individual shoulders of staff. Academic honesty is portrayed as applying to all members of the university by expecting staff and students to share the responsibility of academic honesty.

The university claims responsibility to educate staff and students to undertake their work honestly and complete appropriate training. The university also accepts responsibility for taking a consistent and equitable approach to manage ‘dishonest student behaviours’ (Macquarie University, 2010, p. 2) by warning students that work will be checked, implementing a consistent and university-wide framework for remedial work and penalties,
establishing consistent procedures to manage academic dishonesty and managing the appeal process. Interestingly, the CSU Policy on Academic Misconduct does not address staff academic misconduct. For example teaching resources (e.g. lecture slides, subject outlines, study guides etc) appear to be exempt from scrutiny, which is in contrast to research outputs which are treated separately under the Research Misconduct policy (CSU, 2012).

Evident within the three policies are preambles that reinforce an institutional culture of integrity. All three policies refer to ethical scholarship. The departing point among the three policies is that UWS (2010) targets students as the focus of the policy by clearly articulating that ‘the Policy applies to all UWS undergraduate and postgraduate students who are enrolled in coursework units of the University, including students who are attending partner institutions overseas’ (p. 1). On the other hand, Macquarie University (2010) outlines that ‘its fundamental principle is that all staff and students act with integrity in the creation, development, application and use of ideas and information’ (p. 1). Similarly, the University of Sydney (2010) clearly articulates that the policy informs the principles that underpin academic honesty by identifying the individual responsibilities and prescribing the process. The policy expands on the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders and articulates the pivotal role that staff have in modelling the ‘highest standards of academic honesty in their research, teaching and the creation of university documents’ (the University of Sydney, 2010, p. 6).

2.3.1 CSU policy on plagiarism.

CSU regulations, policies and procedures are publicised and made available every teaching session through subject outlines; an online, university-wide information letter sent
to each student at the beginning of every session (see Appendix A) and the CSU website. At CSU, the responsibility to learn about academic integrity resides with the student.

The student charter, available online at CSU, suggests that the university encourages a sense of community and with that comes shared values and expectations (McVilly & McGowan, 2007) (see Appendix B). The shared values refer to freedom of inquiry, knowledge refinement and dissemination, ethical practice and the responsible stewardship of resources. These values are expressed through shared expectations that staff and students have of each other. The points in the charter relevant to academic integrity are that students can expect:

- access to information about University regulations, policies and procedures including research and study requirements and that they will be applied appropriately.

And the university can expect students to:

- adhere to University rules, regulations, policies and procedures
- interact with the University with honesty, integrity and in a timely manner.

According to the charter, the role of the university is to make information about university regulations, policies and procedure available, with the assumption that, once the information is available, it is the responsibility of the student to be familiar with and adhere to the information within the regulations, policies and procedures.

Similar to the UWS policy of academic misconduct, the CSU (2010) policy (see Appendix C) lists plagiarism (along with collusion and cheating) as one of the acts of academic misconduct. Academic misconduct is defined as:
acting in a way, or attempting to act in a way, or assisting another student to act in a way which could reasonably be expected to defeat the purpose of a learning experience or an item of assessment or an examination. Academic misconduct will normally be evidenced by plagiarism, cheating or collusion. (p. 2)

Within the policy:

A student plagiarises if he or she gives the impression that the ideas, words or work of another person are the ideas, words or work of the student. Plagiarism will include:

- copying any material from books, journals, study notes or tapes, the Web, the work of other students, or any other source without indicating this by quotation marks or by indentation, italics or spacing and without acknowledging that source by footnote or citation; or

- rephrasing ideas from books, journals, study notes or tapes, the Web, the work of other students, or any other source without acknowledging the source of those ideas by footnotes or citations. This could include material copied from a source and acknowledged, but presented as the student’s own paraphrasing. (p. 2)

The CSU policy lists a range of acts that are considered plagiarism. These acts include;

“copying unacknowledged passages from textbooks, reusing in whole or in part the work of another student, and obtaining materials from the Web and submitting them, modified or otherwise, as one's own work “ (p. 2) (see Appendix C for detail).

Similar to the University of Sydney policy, the CSU policy (2010) clearly distinguishes between inadequate or inappropriate acknowledgement of work cited and intentional plagiarism. While the policy recognises that cases may differ according to intent,
students are warned in the CSU guide to avoiding plagiarism that academics are responsible for reporting suspected cases of plagiarism to the appropriate authority, regardless of intent (McVilly & McGowan, 2007). Moreover, the guide also informs students that extenuating circumstances, such as the ‘the seriousness of the misconduct, the relative experience of the student and whether the student has previously been found guilty of misconduct’ (2007, p. 9) are considered. Penalties are stated to become ‘progressively harsher depending on the nature of the plagiarism’ (p. 9). Penalties can range from no action taken to a caution or reprimand, resubmission of work, no marks awarded for submitted work, failure of the subject or exclusion from university. A combination of these penalties can also be applied.

According to the CSU policy (2010), if an academic staff member has reason to believe that a student has plagiarised, they inform the relevant head of school (HoS). A breach of the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy is conducted by the HoS or an officer authorised by the HoS. The HoS writes to the student, informing them of the allegation and inviting them to respond. The HoS conducts an investigation and a report is prepared within 14 days of the HoS receiving the signed statement. The student has a right to be informed of the evidence used to make the determination (i.e., copy of the assessment with the plagiarised text highlighted and a copy of the original source attached). The HoS has seven days to take action based on the findings in the report. A HoS can find ‘no case to answer’ if the student is not guilty or ‘a case to answer’ if the student is believed to be guilty. If it is the latter, the student is advised in writing and the dean of the relevant faculty is informed of the finding, along with the HoS recommendations. The HoS will also invite the student to respond to the finding and recommend a penalty, which is then forwarded onto the
dean with the report of the investigation. In making a determination, the dean considers the following:

- the seriousness of the academic misconduct
- the experience of the student at university level (i.e., more leniency would be shown in the case of a first-year student)
- whether or not the student has previously been found guilty of academic misconduct
- The Dean may make recommendations to the deputy vice chancellor (DVC) (academic) on matters arising from the investigation. The DVC may also conduct further enquiries, depending on the case. Penalties for academic misconduct are as follows:

  1. no action taken
  2. counselled, cautioned, and/or reprimanded
  3. awarded zero marks and cautioned or reprimanded
  4. failed subject and cautioned or reprimanded
  5. failed subject and fined
  6. failed subject and suspended from university
  7. combination of 5 and 6.
  8. failed subject and excluded from university for at least two years.

Other behaviours that are defined as academic misconduct in the CSU policy (2010) are cheating and collusion, which are defined as:

Cheating: A student cheats if he or she does not abide by the conditions set for a particular learning experience, item of assessment or examination
Cheating in the CSU policy (2010) includes acts such as falsifying data, copying the answers of another student in an examination, and taking unauthorised materials into an examination (see Appendix C for detail).

Collusion: A student colludes when he or she works without permission with another person or persons to produce work which is then presented as work completed independently by the student. (p. 3)

Collusion includes, but is not limited to acts such as writing the whole or part of an assignment with another person, using the notes of another person to prepare an assignment and using for an assignment the resource materials of another person that have been annotated or parts of the text highlighted or underlined by that person (see Appendix C for detail).

2.3.2 Comparing policies.

The four policies were compared to highlight the differences in conceptualisation and management of plagiarism at four universities in NSW, Australia. Plagiarism is defined across the four universities’ policies as behaviour that involves submitting work or presenting work without acknowledging the sources and claiming it as one’s own. The form and content for the act of plagiarism varies in detail across the four policies. Noteworthy is that the policies at both the University of Sydney and CSU allow the intentionality of the act of plagiarism to be considered. Of notable difference are the varying definitions of what constitutes collusion and cheating behaviours across the four university policies. Similar to CSU, UWS clearly demarcates plagiarism, collusion and cheating; Macquarie refers to deception, fabrication and sabotage to include cheating and collusion and the University of
Sydney lists cheating and collusion as being separate from plagiarism. It is these differences that many writers claim cause much of the confusion about what plagiarism is and also influences the perspectives of researchers when investigating academic misconduct. They also justify the use of a case study approach to understanding students’ perceptions of plagiarism within the one institution.

2.4 Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the factors that influence students’ understanding of plagiarism. These factors involve how plagiarism is defined within the university context, the expectations of the university, the effect of digital technologies, the perception of peer behaviour and the policy context. The lack of a universally accepted definition of academic misconduct appears to create some confusion about what it actually is. Thus, inconsistently referring to a range of behaviours as academic misconduct may influence how students understand what these different behaviours mean and how plagiarism is understood. University expectations also influence how students understand plagiarism by way of differing educational values between staff and students. Academic misconduct is one area of concern creating tension between university expectations and students’ understanding. This tension refers to distinct generations of students and educators whose age groups contain conflicting ideas, expectations and practices concerning university education. For example, the availability of online materials and the ease with which students can use this material and synthesise it within their own work has also influenced students’ beliefs concerning what can be counted as common knowledge and what needs to cited. Moreover, most students at university seek the guidance of peers to determine whether
plagiarism is acceptable behaviour at university. Students who perceive that plagiarism is acceptable are more likely to perceive that engaging in plagiarism to obtain the required grades is a viable option.

Finally, students’ perceptions of plagiarism are also influenced by university preventative strategies, such as the presence and enforcement of academic misconduct policies. Students’ understanding of the academic misconduct policy is influenced by the language within the policy and the responsibility of all stakeholders to abide by the policy. The CSU policy read alongside the CSU Student Charter may give the impression that the simple existence of the academic misconduct policy is sufficient for students to avoid plagiarism. However, Price (2002) notes that there is an assumption that ‘the possession of the document [policy] is tantamount to absorption of its meaning’ (p. 102). Various authors indicate that having access to knowledge about plagiarism, talking to students about avoiding plagiarism as a universal concept or using warning passages does not guarantee the skills to avoid it (Brown & Howell, 2001; McGowan, 2005a; O'Regan, 2006). Despite claims that the most important preventative remedy for plagiarism is the availability and enforcement of an academic misconduct policy (Crown & Spiller, 1998; McCabe & Trevino, 1996; 1997), these policies need to be effectively communicated to students (Phillips & Horton, 2000). However, other than reference to the policy within subject outlines and a formal welcome letter, there is no university-wide approach that educates students on CSU policy.

This chapter presented an overview of the factors that may influence students’ perceptions of plagiarism. The following chapter presents the qualitative study, which was
the first phase of this research program. The findings from Chapter 3 informed the variables of interest for the quantitative study presented in later chapters.
Chapter 3:  
Phase 1—Qualitative Investigation of Students’ Perceptions of Plagiarism

3.1 Introduction

Since the 1960s and, particularly, in today’s technologically advanced society, academic misconduct (e.g., cheating, collusion and plagiarism) has continued to attract considerable attention from the media, academics, administrators and students (Ashworth, Bannister & Thorne, 1997; Ashworth, Freewood & Macdonald, 2003; Franklyn-Stokes & Newstead, 1995; McCabe, Trevino & Butterfield, 2001; Petress, 2003). This attention may be due to plagiarism being conceived as fraudulent behaviour that diminishes the intellectual property of the original author and rewards plagiarists for their work (Petress, 2003). Indeed, Petress (2003) describes plagiarism as a ‘plague on our profession’ (p. 324) that arguably obliterates rewarding the ethic of hard work and erodes the moral value of honesty, while devaluing the role of assessment items within our educational establishments.

This characterisation of plagiarism is partly due to its historical roots, which position plagiarism within a legal discourse and suggest that it refers to an act of theft of the individual ownership of intellectual work (Ashworth et al., 2003; Stearns, 1992; Sutherland-Smith, 2005). This construction of plagiarism assumes that knowledge has a history and that

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3 This chapter is a verbatim report published in Studies in Higher Education in 2010. Therefore, it may replicate literature produced elsewhere within this thesis.
past authors must be acknowledged. Without due acknowledgement, it has been argued that one severs the ties between the creator of the work and the creation (Stearns, 1992). Indeed, Athanasou and Olasehinde (2002) assert that ‘the essence of cheating is fraud and deception’ (p. 2), arguably, a simple and direct characterisation of plagiarism.

At a broader social level, Marsden, Carroll and Neil (2005) stress that the cost to the public from inadequately trained graduates could pose a threat to public safety, welfare and financial decisions through inaccurate advice, the ramifications of which tarnish university reputations and increase media scrutiny. Moreover, other studies suggest that academic misconduct is growing, requiring universities to devote increasing time and resources to combat it (Carroll, 2005c; Franklyn-Stokes & Newstead, 1995; James, McInnis & Devlin, 2002; Johnston, 1991; O’Connor, 2003; Park, 2003). In particular, the onus is on the academic staff member managing the subject to correctly identify plagiarism and refer the matter through appropriate university processes (Sutherland-Smith, 2005).

My experience of identifying and managing instances of plagiarism occurred in 2006 during the first semester of my appointment as an associate lecturer. While the overall number of cases was low, I felt an overwhelming sense of disappointment and frustration. Two issues were evident. First, investigating an allegation of plagiarism requires time and effort to locate the original sources, cross reference them with the student’s assignment and process the allegation and any subsequent misconduct panel and appeals. Second and more importantly, good academic writing is contingent on developing sound skills in both research and writing, critically reading and comprehending appropriate sources, careful note taking, paraphrasing, judicious use of quotations and giving credit to authors for their ideas and
writing (Burton, 2007). Students deny themselves an opportunity to master these skills because of plagiarism, making academic writing increasingly difficult as they progress through their degree.

As psychologists, we are aware that, when attempting to modify peoples’ attitudes or behaviours, it is necessary to have a good understanding of the target person’s perceptions of and attitudes towards the issue. For example, in therapeutic situations, it is regarded as essential to obtain the client’s perception and understanding of the issue or problem before commencing therapy. This insight, or lack thereof, is likely to influence the individual’s responsiveness to different therapeutic approaches (Cochran & Cochran, 2005; Egan, 2007; Kanfer & Scheffit, 1988; Prochaska & Norcross, 2007). Similarly, when exploring attitudes and beliefs towards plagiarism, we can apply the same principles to gain a better understanding of student perceptions and then develop appropriate strategies with an increased probability of effectiveness.

Likewise, literature from forensic psychology suggests that having some understanding of an offender’s perspective and motivation is important for positive change to occur and recidivism to decrease. For example, Byrne and Trew (2005) argue, ‘to be effective, interventions that aim to reduce or prevent offending behaviour need to be based on a sound understanding of what leads people to offend, and what leads people to stop offending’ (p. 185). Comparable sentiments are expressed by Ashworth, Bannister and Thorne (1997) in relation to plagiarism. They argue that ‘understanding the student perspective on…plagiarism can significantly assist academics in their efforts to communicate appropriate norms’ (p. 187).
From the above, we argue that there is merit in understanding students’ perspectives regarding plagiarism to develop successful strategies to promote academic integrity and, thereby, prevent plagiarism. McCabe and Trevino (1993) identify a significant relationship between academic dishonesty and how students’ perceived both student and faculty understanding of institutional policy. Higher levels of dishonesty are associated with lower levels of understanding. Another study by Roig (1997) clearly demonstrates that more than half of the students in his study could not identify clear examples of plagiarism, arguably indicating that while policy may exist, students have little knowledge or understanding of it.

Therefore, it is apparent that universities can benefit from learning about their own students’ perceptions of plagiarism to develop appropriate strategies to promote academic integrity. In light of this, the aim of our research program is to examine students’ understandings of and attitudes towards plagiarism systematically, with the intention of informing the institution of approaches that may promote a greater awareness of plagiarism and, therefore, prevent or minimise its occurrence. This study is exploratory in nature and will form part of a much larger scale investigation.

3.2 Literature Review

There is a large amount of literature on academic misconduct, most of which has been published during the last two decades. The literature on plagiarism offers many different reasons for student plagiarism, including poor time management, perceived disjuncture between award (grade) and effort required, heavy workload over many subjects, pressure to do well, perception that students do not get caught, anomie, motivation, and individual factors (such as age, grade point average [GPA], gender and personality type) (Anderman,

However, this focus can be problematic, as the emphasis is placed on the individual behaviour change process with little attention to socio-cultural and physical environmental influences. McCabe and Trevino (1997) examine both individual characteristics and contextual influences on academic dishonesty. Their results indicate that decision making related to academic dishonesty is not only influenced by individual characteristics (e.g., age and gender) but also by contextual influences (e.g., the level of cheating among peers, peer disapproval of cheating, membership of university-initiated societies and the perceived severity of penalties for cheating). Therefore, to gain a complete understanding of student perceptions of plagiarism, broader contextual factors must also be considered.

Only a few studies explore student perceptions of plagiarism and these tend to either focus on the reasons why students plagiarise (Ashworth et al., 1997; Devlin & Gray, 2007; Marsden et al., 2005) or use attitude scales that are developed with the assumption that all relevant stakeholders share the same understanding of plagiarism (Brimble & Stevenson-Clarke, 2005b; Franklyn-Stokes & Newstead, 1995; Hasen & Huppert, 2005; Lim & See, 2001). The assumption that the term ‘plagiarism’ has a shared meaning is due to institutional reliance on university policy as an instrument that defines plagiarism and the possible consequences of a breach.
Therefore, it has been argued that having a good understanding of institutional policy reduces the risk of engaging in plagiarism. Jordan (2001) finds that students who are classified as non-cheaters report a greater understanding of institutional policy than cheaters do. The apparent lack of knowledge of institutional policy on plagiarism is further compounded by contradictory and often ambiguous information delivered by academic staff, as they also struggle to enforce an accepted and clear definition of plagiarism (McCabe et al., 2003). For instance, in Burke’s (1997) study, over half of the academic participants not only report a lack of familiarity with the university’s policy on plagiarism but also do not refer to the policy when dealing with incidents. As Carroll (2005c) suggests, it is this lack of clarity that influences how students perceive plagiarism.

To both understand how students perceive plagiarism and develop and evaluate learning materials aimed at educating students about plagiarism, Breen and Maassen (2005) conducted a two-phase research study that explores student perceptions of plagiarism and develops learning materials to be embedded within courses. The study uses four focus groups, consisting of 13 undergraduate psychology students across first-, second- and third-year studies. Their findings suggest that, apart from a clear understanding of verbatim use of other people’s work without referencing, students have difficulty comprehending grey areas (e.g., the ability to comprehend and paraphrase work with due citation). In their study, the lack of familiarity with what requires citation is, in part, due to the students’ inability to source adequate information regarding the subtlety of paraphrasing, inconsistency between staff and the fear of inadvertent plagiarism. They also find that students report an increasing understanding of plagiarism as a function of year level, with the associated skill development
to complete assignments. Students also suggest that course improvement should focus on proactive strategies, as opposed to the reactive nature of dealing with plagiarism once discovered.

While Breen and Maassen (2005) aim to explore students’ understanding of plagiarism in their study, their main focus is to develop resource material to embed within their courses. Consequently, they only use a small sample pool of 13 psychology students and questions centred specifically on students’ ability to define and avoid plagiarism. Though Breen and Maassen (2005) elicit some understanding of student perceptions based on how students define plagiarism and then avoid it, the current study aims to extend and build on their work. It is proposed in this study to sample across disciplines and delve deeper into students’ understanding of plagiarism.

McCabe and Trevino (1993) argue for a shift in our conceptualisation and examination of plagiarism from one focused on individual factors that may inform an individual’s propensity to plagiarise to one of examining situational or contextual variables that can be used towards an integrated institutional response. Despite this, relatively little systematic research has been done on the topic of understanding student perceptions of plagiarism, and most of this research has been conducted in the US or the UK. The aim of the present study is to develop a better understanding of how students construct plagiarism by using group discussion to explore the range of opinions regarding students’ perceptions of plagiarism.
3.3 Method

3.3.1 Design.

This is a focus group study where the aim was to collect qualitative data by engaging groups of students in an informal group discussion that was focused on their perceptions of plagiarism. The study aimed to place students (who are typically aware of the rhetoric surrounding plagiarism) in the position of experts whose knowledge and experience is essential to advance the theoretical discussion on student perceptions of plagiarism. It was intended, as Madriz suggests (2000), that the interaction between group participants would reduce the interaction between the moderator and the individual members of the group. In this way, the role of the moderator was to facilitate discussion between participants actively by encouraging students to discuss their views with each other instead of with the facilitator.

3.3.2 Participants.

Complying with the requirements of the CSU Human Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix D), the participants (see Table 3.1) were students recruited from a regional Australian university, which is classified as having an urban centre population of between 25,000 and 99,999 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008).

In total, 41 students (25 females and 16 males) in their first or third year of study took part across seven focus groups. Each focus group was homogenous with regards to discipline and year, as issues pertinent to understanding plagiarism may be discipline or faculty specific (e.g., referencing formats and emphasis placed on plagiarism). The participants brought a rich variety of backgrounds to the discussions and represented four different discipline areas:
psychology, policing, public relations and advertising. Wilkinson (2008) states that a focus group can involve as few as two or as many as a dozen participants.

Table 3.1

**Focus Group Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus group</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Year/discipline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>$N = 3$</td>
<td>1 x Female; 2 x Male</td>
<td>1st year psychology (distance education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>$N = 9$</td>
<td>8 x Female; 1 x Male</td>
<td>1st year psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>$N = 8$</td>
<td>7 x Female; 1 x Male</td>
<td>1st year psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>$N = 8$</td>
<td>2 x Female; 6 x Male</td>
<td>1st session police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 5</td>
<td>$N = 7$</td>
<td>2 x Female; 5 x Male</td>
<td>1st session police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 6</td>
<td>$N = 3$</td>
<td>2 x Female; 1 x Male</td>
<td>3rd year public relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 7</td>
<td>$N = 3$</td>
<td>3 x Female</td>
<td>3rd year advertising</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**3.3.3 Ethical considerations.**

The main ethical considerations in this research centre on voluntary participation and anonymity of data. The four moderators were skilled at interviewing and included two psychologists, a social worker and a research assistant. They were briefed to ensure student confidentiality was maintained and each asked members to introduce themselves by first name only. They obtained informed consent by explaining potential risks or benefits of participation prior to the focus groups commencing, informing participants of the right to leave the group should they need to and explaining that they would not be using coercion in the collecting of data. These ethical issues were essential to ensure that students did not feel condemned for openly discussing a potential range of opinions centred on plagiarism.
3.3.4 Materials.

An interview schedule was developed to provide overall direction for the discussion (see Appendix E). However, the schedule followed a semi-structured, open-ended format to enable the participants to set their own agenda (Wilkinson, 2008)

Each focus group was asked the following questions:

1. What is plagiarism?
2. What are the causes of plagiarism?
3. How common is plagiarism?
4. How serious is plagiarism?
5. What are the chances of being caught?

The guide provided moderators with topics and issues to be covered at some point during the group discussion. Questions that were more important to the research agenda were presented early in the session.

3.3.5 Procedure.

Once the ethics committee approval was given, the interview schedule was piloted with Group 1. Following guidelines by Wilkinson (2008), the aim was to explore if the schedule was likely to engage the students in discussion and whether the questions flowed logically and allowed for a variety of viewpoints. The pilot was considered successful, as students were engaged with the structure of the interview schedule and quite open and willing to discuss issues deemed relevant to them. Consequently, only minor changes were made to the wording of some questions so that they were more open and less ambiguous.
Potential participants were initially sought by contacting the subject co-ordinators for consent to approach students during tutorial sessions. This was followed by a small presentation at the beginning of each class or relayed by the subject co-ordinators. Interested students contacted the research assistant, who then organised a convenient time and place for the group to meet. Four moderators (who were all employed by the university) were used in total to ensure that students were not familiar with the moderator, thereby reducing any possible power dynamics within the focus groups. The duration of each focus group session was no more than 75 minutes and discussion began with an introduction to explain the purpose and ground rules and convey the expectations that everyone will contribute, all contributions will be valued and remain confidential and the session will be digitally recorded (see Appendix F). At the completion of each focus group, the moderator debriefed and noted initial impressions. The recording was then transcribed, pseudonyms assigned and preliminary ideas recorded.

3.3.6 Data analysis.

In accordance with Hayes’s (2000) suggestions, each transcript was read several times to identify content topics, that is, similar threads interwoven throughout all the transcripts. This coding of the data continued for each transcript until no new categories were found. After this initial trawl, a search for patterns and commonalities among the categories were identified and grouped into proto-themes. Hayes (2000) states that proto-themes represent the beginning of a theme and will develop and change as the analysis proceed[s]’ (p. 176).
Once an initial definition of a proto-theme was decided, the transcripts were re-examined for relevant material to that theme. In this article, the term “theme” refers to the patterns that repetitively occur both within each transcript and across the focus groups. Once completed, the theme’s final form was constructed, named and defined. This was done by re-examining related literature, which allowed information to be derived that would allow inferences to be made from the focus groups.

A technique used to increase confidence in the results was the use of credibility checks within the research team to see whether the analysis and interpretation of the data were credible (Willig, 2001). In this process, the first author conducted the initial data analysis. Once completed, the second author (supervisor) and research assistant also read the transcripts and met to discuss the credibility of the six themes generated.

3.4 Analysis and Discussion

From the focus group discussions, six themes of perceptions of plagiarism were identified: confusion, fear, perceived sanctions, perceived seriousness, academic consequences and resentment. Generally, the focus group data revealed that there was much confusion (defined as a lack of knowledge of the academic misconduct policy) reported by students about the term “plagiarism”. This confusion appeared to increase the fear of inadvertent plagiarism, a possible consequence of students not understanding some key ideas around the citation of ideas. This fear appeared to be augmented by an overestimation of the severity of sanctions, along with the perception that the university treats the act of plagiarism very seriously, in contrast to how seriously students perceive plagiarism. Consequently, students reported resentment towards the perceived sanctions administered by the university,
relative to the degree of seriousness placed by the students on plagiarism. The other concerning aspect was that students reported negative academic consequences that manifested as a form of academic learned helplessness. This was reported as a decrease in confidence in their ability to write an academic paper. The next sections discuss each theme in turn.

**3.4.1 Confusion**

Except for the verbatim copying of text, many participants were confused as to what behaviour constituted plagiarism. This theme suggests that participants acknowledged an existence of a concrete, agreed on definition of plagiarism somewhere and were able to express some understanding of the more obvious instances of plagiarism. This is evidenced in the following discussion between two students:

P3: Simply, taking the words…like, for example, in an essay format, taking word for word out of paragraphs things that have been published and not referencing it, and saying it’s your own. Not referencing something basically and just putting it in an essay.

P5: Passing off somebody else’s work as your own.

P3: Exactly, that’s it. (Group 4, line 98–105)

However, while the discussion between students did demonstrate some basic understanding of the behaviours that constitute plagiarism, there was also a degree of misunderstanding. This confusion appeared to extend on a continuum from some misunderstanding to total misunderstanding, as indicated in these two data extracts:
P7: If you get someone else to do your assignment for you because you are not doing the work for yourself, someone else is doing it for you. (Group 5, line 370)

P4: Paying someone to do your assessments? (Group 5, line 375,)

From an institutional perspective, despite the belief that students have access to detailed information regarding plagiarism within subject outlines, access to the academic misconduct policy (online) and access to online plagiarism guidelines, it was clear from the focus groups that this access was not used by the participants. Among academics, there appears to be an assumption that, by merely providing access to the academic misconduct policy and plagiarism guidelines, students would use these resources and, therefore, have a good understanding of plagiarism. However, this was not the case, as demonstrated in the following discussion between three participants, who not only confused the act of collusion as an instance of plagiarism but also poorly understood the act of collusion:

P7: There’s also things under plagiarism, a thing about you are not allowed to show your assignment to another person in your class or something like that because…

P1: Like you can work together on it, but you’re not allowed to…

P2: You’re not allowed to show it to anyone else.

P7: In your class.

P2: Before you write it. (Group 3, line 1190)

The underutilisation of resources that provide information regarding plagiarism was apparent across all seven focus groups. Moreover, participants believed that academic writing was a learning process that needed to encompass not only having access to resources
but also learning about plagiarism. According to the discussion between students, limited exposure to learning about plagiarism may in fact contribute to unintentional plagiarism:

P2: Not fully understanding what plagiarism is, what are the different areas of plagiarism and, therefore, they’ll do it inadvertently just because they don’t understand what plagiarism is. (Group 5, line 521)

P5: The main thing is that we aren’t really getting a lot of feedback from our tutors to say that we’re bordering…

P4: We are or we aren’t, yeah. (Group 5, line 710)

Certainly, there was a clear understanding that downloading complete essays or copying large chunks of material without citing the source was not appropriate but, similarly to findings in Ashworth et al. (1997), it was also found that students were confused about what the term “plagiarism” actually encompassed. Consequently, there was great confusion over the grey area of plagiarism, as indicated in the following data extract that was endorsed by all other members of the group:

P1: Well, listen. I’m terribly confused what it actually means—I mean, that might sound stupid; there’s a policy that…the wholesale copying is obviously quite obvious, but there’s a hell of a lot of grey area in between that I really still don’t even understand—today’s moved that fence further to one side than it ever was before [participants all begin to talk over each other and nod in agreement]. (Group 1, line 45)
Carroll’s (2005b) research study finds that students experience difficulty in defining their own ideas and being able to discriminate between common knowledge and knowledge that requires citation. This is demonstrated in the following data extract:

P6: But I reckon that confuses me because all my ideas come from other peoples’ ideas, so you can’t have just say…“I have an idea”.

P6: But then there’s…I don’t know how to actually quote a work.

P2: I think that really worries me as well because what if I am doing an assignment and I’m…what if I think it’s my brilliant idea…do I have to actually go somewhere and check whether I have stolen it from someone else? (Group 3, lines 271–278)

Even when participants could identify instances of when appropriate citation would be required, there was a lack of knowledge on the conventions of citation. The following discussion was echoed throughout the seven focus groups, regardless of year or discipline:

P2: It’s plagiarism if you don’t reference the person. If you take someone else’s knowledge because it’s not your knowledge that you’re taking, you’re taking someone else’s knowledge and rewording it…you didn’t know it, it has come from them, so you need to reference it.

P6: It’s not word for word.

P2: It doesn’t even matter whether it’s not word for word.

P5: If you had no knowledge and the knowledge you’re getting is from somewhere else.

P2: Exactly, you have to reference it, if that is the case.

P6: In an essay, do we then have to reference every sentence?
P5: Well, that’s it. How many times can you rewrite something? Every five or so words? (Group lines 153–172)

Within this theme, it was evident that participants were unclear about university policy on academic misconduct. Examining current practice at CSU, students reported being provided with online links to the academic misconduct policy via an electronic message sent to every student at the commencement of each semester. However, since a formal induction or transition into the scholarship of academic writing is not available to students, the onus is on the student to search for relevant information pertaining to plagiarism or on the initiative of each individual academic to ensure that students understand academic integrity.

3.4.2 Fear.

The theme of fear represents the anxiety expressed by students regarding the possibility of committing unintentional acts of plagiarism. This fear appears to flow from the discussion threads on confusion. Similar findings in Ashworth, Bannister and Thorne (1997) and Breen and Maassen (2005) suggest that a combination of university expectations and sanctions, the difficulty in finding clear guidelines on minimising plagiarism and the mistaken belief that the most minor errors could result in an allegation of plagiarism increase students’ level of anxiety. Central to the fear is the belief that unintentional plagiarism results in the same consequences as intentional plagiarism:

P3: There are people that intentionally plagiarise, like stealing others’ work instead of doing their own…and then there are people who just haven’t referenced it properly or done something the wrong way, so it is considered plagiarism but they didn’t mean to…. (Group 3, lines 101)
Arguably, this anxiety can be traced back to when students commence university and are overloaded with new information in their first week (McGowan, 2005c). This is demonstrated in the following comment:

P3: The concept’s ok. The concept sits up and says not to use other people’s work without giving them their due credit… it does become a bit of a complex issue. When you first start to study, you, you are given the booklet, you’re given the directions, and you’re, you know, put under… it becomes a bit of a fear factor about, ‘boy, I need to pick this up pretty quickly’. (Group 1, line 60)

Moreover, participants report that education about plagiarism is often presented as a set of rules and warnings that results in a sense of doom, which can be attributed to the legalistic discourse that positions plagiarism in a language of crime and punishment. This is demonstrated in the following data extracts:

P5: I have realised how broad and real it is…like, just using someone else’s concept without even realising can be plagiarism, like there’s so many…you can plagiarise so easily without even realising. It’s pretty scary. (Group 3, line 82)

P3: I think it is scary, though, because it is always in the background, though—it’s always in the back of our minds. It is scary because it is something that I know I don’t have a complete grasp on. (Group 7, line 422)

There appeared to be little understanding of scholarship and the relevance of citation and attribution in developing a position built on a sound foundation of evidence. Rather, the participants reported focusing on the conventions of citation:
P3: I was sitting there the other day thinking, if I reference it right, I spend more time referencing than anything else in the assignment. Like the assignment is really difficult to research, but just the formatting and the referencing at the end can take so long, so I am just worried that, if I put the wrong thing in there, then I will get a “oh she’s trying to get away with this” when, really, I just forgot to include to cite it, really. (Group 6, line 259)

Similar to Ashworth, Bannister and Thorne (1997), the participants indicated that, despite making every effort to avoid plagiarism, there was a real fear of inadvertent plagiarism. This was evident across all focus groups, regardless of year of study or discipline. The participants perceived a relationship between the expressed fear and writing confidence, as expressed by the following participant:

P1: Yeah, I quote way too much, like you are scared. I am scared to write my own words in case they are someone else’s, but I didn’t know about it. (Group 7, line 215)

The loss of confidence implicit in the above quotation may form a poor basis for learning. For instance, research investigating the effect of self-efficacy in learning indicates that students who exhibit confidence and self-esteem are much more likely to be successful at mastering the academic conventions (Archer, Cantwell & Bourke, 1999; Ingleton & Cadman, 2002). Conversely, having a poor understanding of plagiarism may create some uncertainty regarding the academic conventions of writing.

Rumours appear to fill the knowledge gap by providing a source of information to the recipient, despite the inaccuracies. Fiske (2004) argues that, in times of uncertainty, humans are motivated to try to control the environment in order to act effectively. This source of
unconfirmed knowledge may increase the perception of control that then helps to alleviate the threat of perceived sanctions. Students reported doing this by actively working towards avoiding plagiarism at all costs, even if it means resorting to poor writing strategies. This is demonstrated in the following data extract:

P2: I think, a lot of the time, you have to, like, we had to do an assignment last year on this practice in community events. So, basically, I had a whole heap of references saying this is the best practice… and I had actually done community events so I knew what they told me, but I felt like my whole essay was just quoting other people and other people’s ideas. And I thought, because traditionally quotes don’t get contributed to your word count, so my two thousand word essay was probably five hundred words in my own words because it was just jam-packed with so many quotes because they were everybody else’s ideas, and I didn’t want to say, “yeah, this is what I think you should do” because I hadn’t actually done it. So I didn’t really know… so I was just getting this information off other people. (Group 7, line 204)

While fear appeared to be very strongly evident across all focus groups, the literature on plagiarism only gives this small regard. Moreover, the fear expressed by the participants may have been augmented by an overestimation of the severity of sanctions, which is discussed in the next section.

3.4.3 Perceived sanctions.

Interestingly, sanctions for plagiarism were often compared to sanctions for some types of criminal activity. This is not surprising given the legal discourse that frames plagiarism:
P4: At the end of the day, it is copying five or six words, as opposed to getting done for DUI [driving under the influence]… [participants talking over each other]

P5: That’s the problem with this place, they…all they focus on is doing the wrong thing. It’s just a small thing. (Group 5, line 785)

Explicit in the previous quotation is that, relative to some criminal offences, plagiarism is perceived to be minor. Therefore, if the sanctions of engaging in plagiarism are considered disproportionately severe, a student may be less likely to engage in it. For instance, the following participants openly expressed their fear of possible sanctions:

P1: Well, I’ve been at university for a long, long time. I think it’s certainly become more prevalent now and, since I’ve been doing this course, which is two years, it’s pushed all the time and, if you don’t do this, you’ll be—I don’t know—hung, drawn, quartered, thrown out, and you think, blimey! (Group 1, line 224)

P3: Plagiarism is sold under [the] one verse and that is that you are, basically, dealt with, with the sword hand. So, it’s a very worrying concept that’s chortling along in the background. (Group 1, line 251)

Arguably, the fear expressed by participants is not only related to inadvertent plagiarism but also to the often incorrect understanding of the penalties involved in the academic misconduct policy. Noticeably, in the current study, fear was more apparent in disciplines where plagiarism would not only lead to academic sanctions but also to sanctions that resulted in exclusion from career pathways, as is the case of police officer training:

P4: Coming from a fire job, I have given up so much to be here. I’ve got a wife and two kids at home, fifteen-week-old baby, if I went back to them and got booted out
for plagiarism, which I know myself...I’m not trying to prove anything to anyone...but I would never do. You know, I want to graduate and do it myself, I’d just be shattered. I’d be absolutely shattered. You know, the disappointment would be just unbelievable. (Group 5, line 676)

There is also the perception that there is a high likelihood of being caught:

Moderator: What are the chances of being caught at plagiarism?

P2: 100%.

Moderator: 100%?

P1: It seems to be…

P2: Apparently, they [academic staff] all know the sources really, really well. (Group 3, line 1002)

These student statements hint to a possible factor underlying and influencing students’ perceptions and that is rumour:

P2: Everyone keeps going on about how the lecturers know exactly what they are teaching, and they will just be able to tell straight away. (Group 2, line 367)

As previously alluded to, rumours can have an important influence on behaviour. For instance, it appears that rumours could be aggravating the confusion and fear expressed by the participants. The rumours regarding plagiarism could be perceived by the students to be ambiguous and potentially threatening. Consequently, instead of helping students to reduce the confusion surrounding the term, such rumours tend to exacerbate their anxiety. This is shown in the following quotations:
P4: And because this place is a beehive of rumours, right, and hype, that adds to your fear. You know, it adds to your fear because, you know what happens, a situation might happen and it is this big…by the time it goes through two or three hundred people, it is that big. (Group 5, line 1029)

P5: People will get caught eventually, even if it is three years later when they put it through the system before we graduate. So there is a chance of getting caught in the next three years.

P1: Imagine that!

P5: [laughs] You’re going to worry about it for three years that you have accidentally plagiarised! (Group 5, line 1011)

DiFonzo & Bordia (2007) suggest that the content of rumours act as impoverished news when there is a lack of reliable information. Consequently, as a collective group, students may try to make sense of plagiarism and the threat of unintentional plagiarism by trying to determine the evidential basis of the information sourced. Unfortunately, evident within discussions in the focus groups, much of the information obtained is presented as factual, creating uncertainty and fear, as demonstrated in the following data extract:

P1: So is that really the consequence of plagiarism? You get expelled?

P3: It can…well, that’s what’s stated.

P1: Yeah, that’s…

P3: It’s stated that, if it’s proven, that’s the end of your career at this establishment.

That’s my understanding of it.
P1: Is that correct [looking at moderator] or is that…? I mean, you mightn’t be able to answer that. (Group 1, line 595)

The nature of the rumours appears to have some implications for students obtaining clear information concerning plagiarism, adding to the inaccurate knowledge of the sanctions applied. Consequently, the perceived sanctions only add to the fear expressed.

3.4.4 Perceived seriousness.

Participants in the focus groups reported that, unless a student had intentionally plagiarised, the perceived penalties for plagiarism were considered too severe. For example, the quotation below reflects the participants’ perceptions that the act of plagiarism (in this instance, limited by their own definitions) is not as serious as the university treats it:

P1: I don’t believe it’s as serious as people make out. I think it’s a bit of a beat-up, provided you’re not wholesale copying. (Group 1, line 485)

Brimble and Clarke (2005b) find evidence to suggest that students view academic dishonesty less seriously than academic staff do and tend to underestimate the prevalence of student dishonesty. There was some evidence of this belief among participants:

P1: In uni, they are very particular, if you put a comma in the wrong spot, then you are in trouble. You lose marks on referencing and that is frustrating because it doesn’t…if they wanted to look it up, they could still, they can still see who wrote it, what article it came from, what year it was written. The commas don’t matter. But a lot of people [academics] are pedantic about it. (Group 6, line 150)

Ashworth et al. (1997) find similar views are expressed by their interviewees and conclude, ‘plagiarism is a far less meaningful concept for students than it is for academic
staff, and it ranks relatively low in the students system of values’ (p. 201). In the following quotation, the mismatch of expectations is evident:

P1: I should imagine most of the plagiarism errors are errors, not purposely done, so it’s a rather…draconian for not understanding some rules and regulations. Sure enough, if they’re wholesale just cut and copy, that’s fair enough, but if it’s just a lack of understanding of really what it means. It does appear to be a bit severe, what you…the impression that you’ve got that will happen if you are caught for plagiarism. That’s my impression. (Group 1, line 224)

These findings are also consistent with Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead (1995), who find that, in terms of academic dishonesty, plagiarism is perceived by students to be the least serious form. Moreover, McCabe and Trevino (1996) find that copying without citation and collusion are not considered serious offences. Relative to this past research, our findings suggest that the penalties associated with plagiarism are perceived to be draconian, while the act of plagiarism itself is not perceived as serious, relative to other deviant acts. This may be augmented by a rumour mill operating and not based on factual evidence.

The final two themes appear to reflect important consequences resulting from the four thematic areas discussed. Participants in all seven focus groups expressed resentment towards the institutions’ management of plagiarism and the effect that this may be having on their ability to write an academic paper, in the form of decreased self-efficacy (academic consequences) to write an assignment. These two themes will be discussed in the following sections.
3.4.5 Resentment.

As outlined, participants articulated an inadequate understanding of plagiarism, hence, the worrying possibility of inadvertently plagiarising. Moreover, participants perceived the sanctions for plagiarism to be too draconian, which was incongruent with the low level of seriousness placed on plagiarism by the participants. Therefore, the participants believed that the university treated plagiarism too seriously. As a result, the participants expressed resentment towards the institution and the academic staff that they believed monitored plagiarism. This was expressed in the following quotations:

P1: The problem with universities is that they are all at a higher level of education, and they are going to speak to people like…and that’s how it should be. We’re coming along as police officers, not as doctors or solicitors or anything. We’re at the bottom level of all that. Make it easy for us to understand. (Group 4, line 1034)

P1: I don’t know… I kind of see it as the lecturers taking it almost personally, like, “oh, these people have tried to plagiarise and they think that I am really ignorant and don’t realise that it is happening.” That is what I get from the plagiarism speeches they give us. So yeah. (Group 6, lines 310–313)

In both quotations, participants perceive themselves as victims of institutional anti-plagiarism laws that focus on stylistic requirements to be able to reference correctly. Consequently, plagiarism was perceived to be more about the mechanics of writing than about due acknowledgement to the creator of a piece of work:

P3: Yeah, but that’s stupid. Everything I’ve done at uni is to do with referencing!

(Group 4, line 420)
P2: You don’t even feel like you are getting your own work marked. It is all about whether you can piece together other peoples’ works. (Group 7, line 237)

Ashworth et al. (1997) find similar sentiments expressed among their interview participants. They claim that students are unaware of a broader discourse of scholarship in which they are important stakeholders. Within a community of scholars, participation requires the ability to attribute sources of knowledge correctly. Interestingly, this discourse is perceived to be shared among academics but is in contrast to the plagiarism discourse that is constructed by the participants.

Indeed, some of the expressed resentment could be linked to the inability to generalise the importance of scholarship to the external work environment towards which students are working. The policing students, in particular, voiced some resentment towards the relevance of academic work to their future career. For example, the following data extract was endorsed by all the students in the focus group:

P.4 I mean, we are not going to be going and writing theses and all sorts of academic stuff. We are going to be writing reports, so I am not sure how plagiarism comes into that [students nodding and agreeing]. (Group 5, line 754)

Much of the expressed resentment was demonstrated within the focus group environment and manifested in the students’ verbal and non-verbal language. Many of the students became quite animated in discussions, particularly with exchanges that centred on inadvertent plagiarism. Voices often became raised and participants often spoke rapidly. Some students tried to speak over each other to get their point across, while others became
quite silent and still. It could be argued that the focus group method may have heightened the participants’ anxiety and resentment.

3.4.6 Academic consequences.

The theme of academic consequences manifested as a form of academic learned helplessness, which was reported as a decrease in confidence to write an academic paper:

P3: But…I’m just wondering, with all this…is how much our creativity is cut down by all this? And…in some papers that I’ve written in the past that I’ve wanted some licence to move…to really express stuff, and I’ve been that fearful to do it because of the…that I worry about is that I wonder how marks are going sometimes, in the respect of…because we’re all very cautious. (Group 1, line 337)

Implicit within this quotation and within the participants’ discussion was expressed fear that is arguably reminiscent of Seligman’s theory of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975), which McKean (1994) applies to the academic situation. McKean suggests that learned helplessness can lead to negative academic consequences, such as procrastination and poor performance. Certainly, the students in the focus groups seemed to recognise some of these negative consequences, as described in the following quotations:

P2: Sometimes, we do the assignments, worry about the plagiarism and we forget about the issue in the assignment. (Group 1, line 649)

P3: And, I guess, in the end, are we spending too much time concerned about referencing and plagiarism than the actual outcome of the assessment?

P7: Mmm. It’s like, what is it, 5% of your mark is the referencing, but you probably spend 40% of your time on it and worry about it. (Group 3, line 702)
The above quotations imply that participants were concerned about inadvertent plagiarism and, as discussed previously, had a belief that this might result in punitive measures instead of remedial intervention. For example, students expressed concern that, despite their best efforts, there was a distinct probability of accidentally using a phrase or sentence from a book, lecture or journal without acknowledgement. These beliefs were also evident in other studies (Ashworth et al., 1997; Breen & Maassen, 2005). Consequently, participants reported a loss of confidence in their ability to write a paper:

P2: There’s no real encouragement. There’s no positive…

P7: Your confidence is just shot, like, I would go home and say I’m going to fail and then I get an assignment back and it is a good result and I’m really happy. The whole thing about you’re going to fail, it’s not good enough. You need to get 20 references for this, it sort of makes you lose your confidence about what you’re doing. You’re sitting there going…like with our essay, I am sure everybody had it, you don’t feel like you are putting in anything of you…oh, I’ve just got to get 20 references and it’s really difficult to get a high mark if you want to be critical of it and you want to put your own opinion into it. (Group 5, lines 842–857)

The perceived loss of confidence was evident within all seven focus groups, with the fear of failure being attributed to not understanding what the word ‘plagiarism’ meant:

P1: No one really knows what it [plagiarism] is…

P3: I think all the rigmarole is with the issue. I reckon with people, about plagiarism, it is sort of like a dirty word. (Group 7, line 569)
It could be argued that students may eventually give up trying to write a good academic paper and, as a result, may not invest as much effort or any effort at all in writing, as predicted in the learned helplessness model. There appeared to be evidence that some students felt an inhibition of learning that affected their ability to fully and freely express their ideas:

P4 And then, they expect you to reference it. People… I think that dumbs people down at the same time. It really, really does. It doesn’t allow people to express their own creativity; it doesn’t allow people to express their own ideas, their own feelings, their own thought processes about a specific idea, a process, a methodology… anything. It inhibits a person’s understanding, it really does. (Group 5, line 584)

While we expected students to have some difficulty with clear and explicit definitions of plagiarism, we were not prepared for the level of anxiety expressed or the amount of resentment. As previously discussed, this may have been an artefact of the focus group process. Nevertheless, students across the seven focus groups shared similar perceptions of plagiarism, with the participants in the policing focus group demonstrating extreme reactions. This could be due to the dire consequences of plagiarism for policing students, who believe they will be dismissed from police officer training.

3.5 Conclusion

It is evident from the focus group results that the university’s approach towards plagiarism is not effective. While students were able to clearly define cases of plagiarism where verbatim text was inserted in a student assignment without due acknowledgement,
they were unable to discern the more subtle aspects of attribution of ideas and paraphrasing of text. This confusion appeared to increase the fear of inadvertent plagiarism, which arguably appears to be related to the students’ confusion. This fear appeared to be augmented by an overestimation of the severity of sanctions, along with the perception that the university treats the act of plagiarism very seriously, in contrast to how students perceive plagiarism. The other concerning aspect was that students reported negative academic consequences that manifested as a form of academic learned helplessness. This was reported as a decrease in confidence in their ability to write an academic paper.

In order to address some of these issues, we can turn to McGowan (2005c), who argues for a system that is twofold and focuses on the intent of the writer. Penalties for deliberate academic misconduct are recognised as an important deterrent. However, she recognises a need to change the way that we talk about plagiarism or bypassing the term altogether, instead, focusing on academic integrity. Her recommended strategy is to acculturate students into university culture through a process of apprenticeship, thereby giving students the appropriate skills of academic writing. Our research clearly supports such a strategy and is one recognised by our own participants:

P1: It’s a bit like something’s a crime, some things you go to jail for life and some things you go to jail for a year. You know, not all crimes are equal, not all plagiarism is equal. I think that’s going to be…

P3: And then there’s magistrate’s discretion. Yeah, you’re right. I mean, there are variables within, within the process. It’s not, it’s not as fully cut and dried as one would like to have it down pat, probably understanding. (Group 1, line 507)
P7: But, then, also if you get caught, if I get caught doing it accidentally, I want to know what I did wrong because it is not intentional. I want to learn and do it right.

(Group 3, line 1112)

As a way forward, the institution may overcome some of the issues highlighted in the themes by exploring a holistic, university-wide approach, where the onus of responsibility on academic integrity is shared by all stakeholders of the institution. A system is required where students are exposed to the principles of academic integrity that encompass the development of scholarship: learning about the principles of academic writing, the development of the authorial voice and, with it, the place of attribution.

This research highlights the importance of institutions developing an understanding of the perceptions of university students’ understanding of plagiarism. We cannot assume to know that students entering university come with an understanding of the conventions of academic writing. Further, we need to work towards an orientation to university culture that encompasses academic integrity that is not done in a haphazard or piecemeal manner, as reported by participants:

P1: Yeah, on one…in one hand, you’re forced or pushed in the direction, you’ve got to read masses of things, you’ve got to quote lots of things, you’re not to use your own work, you’re nearly forced into using a lot of that work and, then, how you use it correctly is the problem, I find. Obviously, not as correctly as one should have done in the past, but…so there’s that sort of contra. (Group 1, p. 84)

Drawing from Breen and Maassen’s (2005) study, information on plagiarism needs to be specifically covered as a unit of study in the first semester or in their first year at
university. The students in Breen and Maason’s (2005) study recognise that skill development in time management, critical reading, note taking, paraphrasing, writing and referencing are also required to prevent academic misconduct. Skill development was also identified by our participants as an important factor to reduce the possibility of plagiarising:

P1: It also comes down to… this is a learning institution and if you can’t learn how to actually do an essay and do it…therefore, they’ve got to give you some leniency and show you…point you in the direction of where’ve you got that information from? Oh, I got it from here. Oh, but you didn’t reference that. So, it’s a learning experience as well. (Group 5, p. 620)

Finally, while the results do provide a greater understanding of how students perceive plagiarism and the consequences of those beliefs, caution is needed in drawing strong conclusions because of the study’s exploratory nature. We do not seek to generalise our findings, as one would do in a representative survey, given that the only data collection method within this study was a set of one-time focus groups with a relatively small sample of self-selected students in one Australian university. It is proposed that further studies would extend this research, building on the six themes found.
Chapter 4:
Phase 2—Questionnaire Development and Quantitative Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The approach adopted to examine students’ perceptions of plagiarism was to use focus groups in Phase 1 of this research (see Chapter 3) to obtain the perspectives of CSU students. The use of focus groups enabled the development of a questionnaire (see Chapter 5) to reflect the attitudes and beliefs of CSU students. The focus groups were especially useful for exploring the poorly understood and complex phenomena of plagiarism and for assisting in developing measures that were sensitive to the perspective of university students and, therefore, appropriate. The use of focus group methodology provided face validity for the questionnaire.

As outlined in Chapter 1, this research project used a sequential exploratory design. This is the most appropriate method for exploring students’ perceptions of plagiarism because it addresses some of the criticisms of mixed-methods research. The research program has incorporated both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single case study design to explore students’ perceptions of plagiarism in one academic institution. The approach facilitated an expanded understanding of plagiarism with the potential to create new insights, enabling direction for action and change (Sosulski & Lawrence, 2008). The idiosyncratic nature of focusing on one institution’s approach to addressing plagiarism and the students’ understanding of plagiarism has the potential to add value to the accumulated knowledge in the academic integrity literature, as opposed to supporting or confirming previous findings (Kroll & Neri, 2009).
In the current research program, the specific aims of the focus group discussions were to:

a) explore the meaning of plagiarism for the participants
b) identify dimensions and items for establishing the item pool for Phase 2.

Figure 4.1 represents the concept map of the proposed relationships between the themes. These themes are then referred to as variables to develop measures that enable Phase 2 of the study to be conducted.

![Concept Map](image)

Figure 4.1: A concept map of the relationships between themes.

As described in Chapter 3, the focus group data revealed that students were confused about the term “plagiarism”. This confusion referred to how students understood what the term meant, as defined in the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy. As represented in Figure 4.1, the more confusion expressed by students regarding the term, the greater their expressed fear of inadvertent plagiarism. This fear appeared to be a consequence of students
not understanding some key ideas around the citation of ideas, rather than their understanding that verbatim copying of text and cut and pasting from the Internet was plagiarism. This fear of inadvertent plagiarism appeared to be augmented by an overestimation of the severity of sanctions and the perceived seriousness that the university placed on the act of plagiarism. Consequently, students reported resentment towards the disjuncture between perceived sanctions administered by the university and the students’ perceived seriousness of plagiarism (PSP). The other concerning aspect was that students reported negative academic consequences that manifested as a form of writing apprehension. These themes informed Phase 2 of the research project, which is outlined next.

4.2 Phase Two: Quantitative

The themes developed in Phase 1 were used to inform the development of a Web-based questionnaire to collect quantitative data from a large sample of CSU students. Specifically, Chapters 5 and 6 will describe the questionnaire development and participants and procedures, while the following Chapters 7 through to 14 will investigate the research questions that arose from the findings in Chapter 3.

4.2.1 Research questions.

1. How well do students understand the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy?
2. How well do students rate their own understanding of plagiarism and that of other students?
3. Is plagiarism understood differently depending on gender, year of study, faculty, campus affiliation and mode of study?
4. How fearful are students of inadvertent plagiarism?
5. What are student-perceived prevalence rates?

6. How seriously is plagiarism perceived by students?

7. How morally unacceptable is it perceived to be?

8. Is there evidence of writing apprehension among the student sample?

9. Are students resentful regarding the emphasis of plagiarism at CSU?

   This research did not seek to gain data on self-disclosure of plagiarism because there is recent research that has accomplished this in Australia (see Marsden, 2008). Therefore, students were not required to self-report on their behaviour. Rather, students were provided with an opportunity to share their knowledge of plagiarism and the contextual factors associated with it.
Chapter 5:

Questionnaire Development

Phase 1 of this research project explored the phenomenon of students’ perceptions of plagiarism. Phase 2 builds on the results of the qualitative phase by developing items and scales for the questionnaire. In addition to the seven demographic questions, the final questionnaire was divided into 13 sections to measure the following:

- Section 1: general understanding of plagiarism
- Section 2: writing self-efficacy
- Section 3: seriousness of plagiarism
- Section 4: moral wrongfulness of plagiarism
- Section 5: understanding CSU plagiarism policy
- Section 6: penalty for plagiarism
- Section 7: knowledge of instances of plagiarism
- Section 8: rumours of instances of plagiarism
- Section 9: perceptions of plagiarism rates
- Section 10: perceptions of students being caught
- Section 11: fear of inadvertent plagiarism
- Section 12: importance of plagiarism in the community
- Section 13: demographic information

Each of the following chapters in this thesis will describe, in greater depth, the results and discussion of the outlined measures. Most of the items in the questionnaire were created
based on the findings from the focus group study reported in Chapter 3. However, existing measures were also used to assess perceived seriousness, moral wrongfulness and writing apprehension. Once the questionnaire was constructed, the draft was piloted (for more detail on the piloting process see section 5.9 and 5.10) to:

a) identify mistakes in wording  
b) assess the ordering of questions  
c) check that the questions were understood by respondents  
d) assess whether additional or specifying questions were needed or whether items should be eliminated  
e) check whether the instructions were adequate.

5.1 Measure of Perceptions of Plagiarism Prevalence

The qualitative study reported in Chapter 3 suggested that rumours concerning the incidence of plagiarism and the seriousness of penalties applied could be aggravating the fear of inadvertent plagiarism. Therefore, as shown in Table 5.1, two items were developed to measure:

a) whether a participant personally knew another student who had plagiarised  
b) whether the participant had heard from a third party of a student who had plagiarised.

If participants answered “yes” to Item 1 and/or Item 2, they were asked to indicate:

c) how many students they had heard had plagiarised (from a choice of four categories)  
d) what was the most severe penalty imposed.
Table 5.1

*Items for Assessing Prevalence and Perceptions of Plagiarism and Severity of Penalty*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Response Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Do you personally know any student who has been caught plagiarising?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>How many students do you personally know who have been caught plagiarising?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Have you ever heard from a third party about another student who has been caught plagiarising?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b</td>
<td>How many students have you heard of who have been caught plagiarising?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>What was the most severe penalty received?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The open comment responses for Item 3 were later coded to align with university penalties, which are:

1. No Action Taken
2. Counsellled, Cautioned/Reprimanded
3. Awarded Zero Marks, Cautioned/Reprimanded/Resubmit
4. Failed Subject and Cautioned/Reprimanded
5. Failed Subject and Suspended from University
6. Failed Subject and Excluded from University for at Least Two Years
7. A Combination of 5. and 6.
8. Failed Subject and Excluded from University for at Least Two Years
5.2 Measure of General Understanding of Plagiarism

5.2.1 Assessing knowledge of plagiarism and reading the academic misconduct policy.

The theme of confusion discussed in Chapter 3 indicated that the focus group participants were unclear of what behaviours constituted the act of plagiarism. Moreover, the focus group discussions indicated that this confusion was widespread and common among the student population. As stated in Chapter 2, the role of the university, according to the student charter, is to make information about university regulations, policies and procedures available to students. There is an assumption that once the information is available, it is the responsibility of the student to become familiar with and adhere to the information within the regulations, policies and procedures. A reminder of this responsibility is given in subject outlines and in a formal university letter, sent to students at the commencement of each teaching session (see Appendix A).

A measure of the general understanding of plagiarism was developed to gauge how well students at CSU understood what plagiarism is, as defined in the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy. Specifically, the aim was to assess whether the participants had read the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy and how well they understood it. The six items created to assess the overall understanding of plagiarism and the response formats are described in Table 5.2.
Table 5.2

*Items to Assess Students’ Understanding of Plagiarism and the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Response format</th>
<th>Anchors/alternatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Based on your knowledge, please indicate how well you understand what plagiarism is.</td>
<td>11-point rating scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Have you read the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy that addresses plagiarism? If response is “yes”, then:</td>
<td>Dichotomous scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Please rate how clear you think the CSU policy on plagiarism is.</td>
<td>11-point rating scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Please rate how fair you think the CSU policy on plagiarism is.</td>
<td>11-point rating scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>In general, how well do you think students at CSU understand what plagiarism is?</td>
<td>11-point rating scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Please rank these sources (from 1 to 5) in order of what your knowledge of plagiarism is based on.</td>
<td>Rank order scale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the participant selected “other” for Item 6, a free-text box was provided for them to elaborate and clarify their response. Table 5.3 presents the responses that were content analysed and coded into eight categories.
Table 5.3

*Categories for Responses to “Other” in Item 4*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General sources of knowledge (e.g., dictionary, Internet, common sense)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal document (e.g., referencing guides, law, journal articles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sources and interpersonal communications (e.g., media, family, news)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalid response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.2 Understanding plagiarism scale.

The focus of the Understanding Plagiarism Scale (UPS) was to assess how well students comprehended the definitions of plagiarism, cheating and collusion systematically, as set out in the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy. Participants were instructed to indicate from a list of 17 items, listed in Table 5.4, whether they considered the behaviour plagiarism.

The statements in the UPS were drawn from the CSU policy definitions of plagiarism, cheating and collusion. Answering “yes” to a plagiarism item would constitute a correct response. Conversely, answering “yes” to a cheating or collusion item would indicate an incorrect response. An additional five supplementary items were developed as plausible behaviours that may be commonly misidentified as plagiarism. The supplementary items
resonated with some different types of plagiarism behaviours identified in a white paper titled *The Plagiarism Spectrum*, sponsored by Turnitin (Turnitin, 2012). In the Turnitin (2012) research, 879 educators responded to a survey reporting on the prevalence and problematic nature of 10 different types of plagiarism behaviours. For example, the eighth most serious behaviour was titled ‘404 ERROR’, which referred to “a written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources” (p. 4). The description of this type of plagiarism supported the inclusion of the item “making up false reference citations” in the current research, thus, increasing the face validity of the supplementary items. As with the cheating and collusion items, a “yes” answer to the supplementary items would indicate an incorrect response.

To obtain a total scale score and sub-scale scores, the cheating, collusion and supplementary items were first reversed so that all correct responses were coded 1 (correctly identifying plagiarism and correctly identifying non-plagiarism) and all incorrect responses were coded 0. The second step was to sum the total number of correct responses from all the items that make up the UPS. This yields a total scale score ranging from zero to 17, with higher scores indicating a greater understanding of plagiarism and the ability to discriminate between plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct.
Table 5.4

*Items in the UPS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plagiarism Items</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying passages from textbooks, journals or the Web without acknowledgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying actual text without using quotation marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reusing, in whole or in part, the work of another student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submitting the work of another person, which has had only minor changes, without acknowledging the source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking ideas from a source, such as a brochure, advertisement, television program or radio program, and using them as your own without acknowledgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cheating Items</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making changes to an assignment that has been marked, then returning it for re-marking, claiming that it was not correctly marked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking unauthorised materials into an examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falsifying data obtained from experiments, surveys or similar activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying the answers of another student in an examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collusion Items</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing another student, who has to submit an assignment on the same topic, access to one’s own assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing the whole or part of an assignment with another person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the notes of another person to prepare an assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supplementary Items</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making up false reference citations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citing sources that have not actually been read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving out a reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formatting a reference contrary to your discipline’s preferred reference style</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3 Measure of Fear of Inadvertent Plagiarism

Drawing from the focus group data discussed in Chapter 3, fear represents the anxiety expressed by students regarding the possibility of committing unintentional acts of plagiarism. The two items listed in Table 5.5 were developed to measure how fearful students were of being accused of plagiarism and inadvertently plagiarising, using the two items rated on a scale zero to 10 (where zero = not at all scared and 10 = extremely scared). A subsequent analysis showed a strong positive correlation between the two variables ($r = 71$). A composite score of fear of allegation of plagiarism was calculated.

Table 5.5

*Items in the Assessment of Fear of Inadvertent Plagiarism*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Anchor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Please indicate how scared you are of being accused of plagiarism.</td>
<td>0 = not at all scared, 10 = extremely scared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Please indicate how scared you are of unintentionally plagiarising.</td>
<td>0 = not at all scared, 10 = extremely scared</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4 Measure of Perceived Seriousness of Plagiarism

The focus group data indicated that students may rate the seriousness of plagiarism by comparing the behaviour to other offences, rather than rating the seriousness of plagiarism based on the act itself. In their discussions, comparing the act of plagiarism to common crimes, participants in the focus groups did not perceive plagiarism as serious. Therefore, to develop a measure that would assess the relative seriousness of plagiarism against other
crimes, a review of the criminological literature was undertaken. The selection criterion for potential measures to assess seriousness ratings of crime were that they had to be empirical and objective and that the measure would also include a variety of crimes and deviant acts of varying seriousness (violent, property, white-collar, drug, traffic infringements and copyright breaches) to allow participants the opportunity to rate the perceived seriousness of a broad range of offences.

Two studies met the criteria for measuring the relative seriousness of a range of crimes and deviant behaviours: Tyson and Hubert’s (2003) research on the cultural differences in adolescents’ perceptions of the seriousness of delinquent behaviours and Mark Warr’s (1989) research on the perceived seriousness of crime. Stylianou (2003) suggests that there are two important characteristics associated with perceptions of seriousness of crime: consequences and wrongfulness. Warr (1989) argues that, historically, researchers investigating the seriousness judgements of crime overlook both wrongfulness and harmfulness as consequences of the act. Therefore, he examines the wrongfulness and harmfulness of three types of crime: property, personal and public order. Drawing from Warr’s (1989) findings, the concepts of seriousness and wrongfulness may be most relevant to plagiarism, as it is assumed that it is a victimless crime. Applying this framework to plagiarism, perceptions of seriousness of plagiarism may be related to how wrong the behaviour is perceived to be, rather than how harmful it is perceived to be. Moreover, the use of wrongfulness to assess PSP is more likely to capture how a student feels about the serious nature of plagiarism and why.
The 22 items presented in Table 5.6 were used to assess the perceptions of seriousness of a range of behaviours. From these behaviours, thirteen were replicated from Tyson and Hubert’s (2003) perceptions of seriousness measure. These behaviours ranged from making a nuisance call (minor act of deviance) to selling drugs, such as cocaine, heroin or ice (major crime). The three violent crimes (e.g. murdering someone) were taken from Warr’s (1989) seriousness scale. The plagiarism items were replicated from the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy (e.g., copying text without using quotation marks or acknowledging the source). Two items were generated that could be considered cheating behaviours but are not behaviours listed as plagiarism in the CSU Academic Misconduct Policy (e.g., submitting an essay bought off the Internet) (see Table 5.6).

Replicating Warr’s (1989) procedure, participants were first required to rate the seriousness of each of these behaviours on an eleven-point scale ranging from zero (least serious) to 10 (most serious). Participants were then required to rate the same behaviours according to how morally wrong they were and the degree to which they would harm or damage the victim.

Chapter 10 discusses, in-depth, the use of the items to measure PSP, relative to a range of deviant or criminal behaviours.
Table 5.6

*Items for the Perceptions of Seriousness of a Range of Behaviours*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serious items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Murdering someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Participating in a gang rape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sexually assaulting someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Selling drugs, such as cocaine, heroin or ice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Driving a car while drunk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Hitting someone without a reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Purposely damaging something that does not belong to you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Knowingly buying, selling or holding stolen goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Breaking into a building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Submitting an essay bought off the Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Cheating on an exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Stealing something worth $50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Spraying abusive graffiti on a public building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. <em>Paraphrasing whole chunks of text in an assignment without acknowledging the source</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Making up false reference citations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Using marijuana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. *Copying text without using quotation marks or acknowledging the source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Making a nuisance phone call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. <em>Paraphrasing a few sentences in an assignment without acknowledging the source</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Downloading music from the Internet without paying for it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Copying a DVD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Skipping lectures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Note:_ * denotes plagiarism items.

**5.5 Measure of Perceived Sanctions for Plagiarism**

Perceived severity of sanctions was investigated by referring to deterrence theory.

That is, deterrence theory provided the rationale to examine students’ perceptions of the
probability of being caught and the perceived severity of sanctions. Research has found evidence to support the deterrence model of plagiarism prevention, finding that students’ perceptions of the probability of being detected and the severity of sanctions were negatively correlated with cheating (Michaels & Miethe, 1989). Deterrence theory suggests that, for plagiarism to be discouraged, students must perceive that they will be caught and that severe penalties will be imposed for plagiarising (Ogilvie & Stewart, 2010). Therefore, the expectation that a severe penalty will be the consequence of being caught plagiarising may reduce engaging in it.

The measures for assessing the perceptions of sanctions for plagiarism were developed to quantitatively gauge what sanctions students perceived would be applied by the university for a range of academic misconduct behaviours for a first time offence and then again for a second offence. The academic misconduct behaviours were identical to those in the UPS (see Section 5.2.2), which were based on behaviours in the academic misconduct policy. The sanctions (available penalties) were also taken from the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy (CSU, 2010). the percentage of students that participants estimate intentionally plagiarise in one academic year

a) the probability that a student who intentionally plagiarises will be caught

b) the percentage of those who are caught that receive a serious penalty, such as failing the subject, being suspended or being excluded from university.

Each of these items had response categories that ranged from less than 1% to 100%.

Table 5.7 lists the possible penalties that can be imposed by the university.
Table 5.7

Available Penalties at CSU Ranked in Order of Increasing Severity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severity</th>
<th>Penalties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No Action Taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Counseled, Cautioned and/or Reprimanded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Awarded Zero Marks and Cautioned or Reprimanded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Failed Subject and Cautioned or Reprimanded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Failed Subject and Fined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Failed Subject and Suspended from University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Combination of (5) and (6) above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Failed Subject and Excluded from University for at Least Two Years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Items were also developed to assess:

5.6 Measure of Writing Apprehension

Participants in the focus group discussions expressed resentment towards the institution’s management of plagiarism and the effect that this may have had on their ability to write an academic paper. This writing apprehension was expressed as decreased confidence (academic consequences) in their ability to write an assignment. To assess writing apprehension, the current research used the Writing Apprehension Test (WAT), originally developed by Daly and Miller (1975) and later adapted by Pajares and Valiante (1997a).

Writing apprehension describes a “person’s tendencies to approach or avoid situations perceived to potentially require writing accompanied by some amount of perceived evaluation” (Daly & Wilson, 1983, p. 327). Daly and Miller (1975) developed the WAT, which is a twenty-six-item instrument that uses a five-point Likert scale. The WAT is a reliable measure of writing anxiety ($\alpha = .94$). Adapting Daly and Miller’s (1975) WAT 20 years later for use with high school students, Pajares and Johnson (1996) obtain a Cronbach
alpha of .93 in their study. In another study, Pajares and Valiante (1997b) reduce the twenty-six-item instrument to nine items for use with elementary students and obtain an alpha coefficient of .83.

The WAT used for the current research was a shorter version. An additional item related to referencing sources was added (see Item 9). The 10 items are shown in Table 5.8. Participants were asked to self-assess their level of agreement to that item on a scale from zero to 10, where zero = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree. A composite score of the ten items was created by averaging the total score, with higher scores indicating greater writing apprehension. The writing apprehension scale had an alpha co-efficient of .88.

Table 5.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items in the Writing Apprehension Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on an essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Expressing my ideas through writing seems to be a waste of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 I am afraid of writing essays when I know they will be evaluated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4* I feel confident in my ability to express my ideas in writing clearly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5* I enjoy academic writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 I often struggle to organise my ideas in a written essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 When I hand in an essay, I know I am going to do poorly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Just thinking about a writing assignment makes me feel anxious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9* I feel confident in my ability to reference any sources appropriately that I use in my assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10* It is easy for me to write a good essay.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * denotes item reversed scored.
5.7 Measure of Resentment

Many of the participants in the qualitative research believed that the sanctions for plagiarism were draconian and disproportionate to the act of engaging in plagiarism. Generally, there was a belief that an act of plagiarism would result in expulsion from university, in other words, a career-ending result. This belief was particularly expressed by the policing students, who faced dismissal from the police force if they engaged in plagiarism. Therefore, if the sanctions of engaging in plagiarism were considered disproportionately severe, as compared to drink driving, then participants expressed resentment. To assess the level of resentment, the three items listed in Table 5.9 were developed.

Table 5.9

*Items Assessing Resentment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Anchor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate the emphasis that CSU places on plagiarism?</td>
<td>0 = too little emphasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of the university environment, how important do you think the issue of plagiarism is?</td>
<td>0 = not at all important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In your opinion, how does the emphasis on plagiarism affect your academic writing?</td>
<td>A bipolar scale anchored at each end with −5 (extreme negative effect on written expression) and 5 (extreme positive effect on written expression)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A general measure of resentment is obtained by obtaining a difference score between Item 1 and 2 for each participant. By subtracting the score on Item 1 (emphasis that CSU places on plagiarism) from Item 2 (the importance of the issue of plagiarism outside of the university), a score of a participant’s discrepancy between the two can be obtained. Difference scores can range from –10 to 10. A high negative score (e.g., –10) indicates too much emphasis placed on plagiarism by the university relative to the low importance given outside of the university (extremely resentful). A high positive score (10) indicates too little emphasis placed on plagiarism by the university relative to the high importance given outside of the university (not at all resentful). Scores close to zero indicate no discrepancy between the emphasis placed on plagiarism by the university and how important it is regarded outside of the university.

The third item was developed to assess participants’ perception of the effect that the emphasis on plagiarism had on academic writing. The scores for item three were re-coded to form a scale from zero to 10, where zero = extreme positive effect and 10 = extreme negative effect. It is inferred that higher scores will be indicative of greater resentment towards the institutions approach to plagiarism because of the effect it has on academic writing.

5.8 Demographic Information

To enable useful analysis of the collected data, demographic information was collected, including gender, course, mode of study (distance education or on campus), load of study (part time or full time), campus, year of study and GPA. These questions were placed at the end of the survey to allow the participants to engage with the questionnaire immediately, prior to providing demographic information. The final survey had 103 items,
which included the eight demographic questions. The demographic question on age was included in the pilot studies but was accidently deleted from the final online survey. This error was not discovered until near the completion of data collection. Therefore, no analyses were undertaken using age as an independent variable.

5.9 Pilot Study 1

Prior to piloting the questionnaire, ethical approval was gained to comply with the requirements of the CSU Human Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix G). A pilot study of the draft survey involved giving a printed version of the questionnaire and conducting group interviews with 47 third- and fourth-year undergraduates from CSU. Participants were observed as they worked through the items and were encouraged to give feedback. The pilot session lasted approximately 45 minutes.

The students were asked to examine the question construction in terms of Ouimet, Bunnage, Carini, Kuh and Kennedy’s (2004) three categories: questionnaire appearance and ease of completion, item clarity and potential accuracy of response categories. Each of these categories will be discussed in the following sections.

5.9.1 Instrument appearance.

The pilot study participants commented that the scales used to rate the seriousness, moral wrongfulness and harmfulness of a list of different types of behaviour were too long and arduous to complete. Each of these three scales had 22 items. Moreover, placement of these scales at the start of the questionnaire appeared to have a priming effect for how participants reported responding to other questions within the scale. In keeping with Warr’s
(1989) conclusion regarding the high correlations between the harmfulness and wrongfulness scales, the harmfulness scale was eliminated from the questionnaire.

Recent research that examines cultural differences in adolescent perceptions of the seriousness of delinquent behaviours also suggests that it can be difficult to ascertain what participants are rating when they are asked to respond to a range of behaviours (harmfulness, wrongfulness or legal aspects) (Tyson & Hubert, 2003). Tyson and Hubert (2003) further suggest that harmfulness is a more objective measure and, therefore, is more likely to increase consensus on seriousness ratings. Conversely, focusing on the dimension of wrongfulness increases the difference of opinion among participants (Vogel, 1998). Therefore, in their research, Tyson and Hubert (2003) suggest that assessing the wrongfulness of an act is more likely to represent the individual’s personal feeling about the behaviour. For this reason, they operationalised seriousness as the wrongfulness of behaviour.

The questionnaire was modified so that potential participants were asked to rate on an eleven-point scale how morally wrong they perceived the three plagiarism items to be from 0 (least morally wrong) to 10 (most morally wrong). Further, restricting moral wrongfulness to plagiarism was consistent with the aim of differentiating whether students perceived the seriousness of plagiarism based on perceptions of seriousness alone or on moral wrongfulness. Thus, the seriousness scale was retained and only the three plagiarism items from the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy were used to assess wrongfulness (see Chapter 10). These two scales were then placed towards the end of the questionnaire.
Participants in the pilot study also suggested that the questionnaire required a general introductory statement to describe the research in order to contextualise the rationale for the research on plagiarism. That is, they wanted to know why they were being asked a range of questions about plagiarism. Based on this feedback, an opening paragraph contextualising the questionnaire as an exploration of how well students understood the academic misconduct policy was included:

At the beginning of every semester, you are sent an eBox message titled CSU Policies and Regulations that outlines what is expected of you, as a student, regarding your studies and research. This eBox message provides a hyperlink to the Student Academic Misconduct Policy, which details the policies and regulations of the university that frame your study. Lecturers also often discuss expected academic conduct as part of an introduction to their subject, which is also contained in the Subject Outline of the subject(s) you are studying. The following questions will explore your understanding of these policies.

5.9.2 Item clarity.

When participants in Pilot Study 1 were asked to report on the clarity of individual items, they commented that predominantly questions were clearly worded and easy to comprehend. Participants made suggestions on how to improve the clarity of eight items in the survey to improve readability and suggested including a “do not know” option. Participants identified a potential problem with the item “Have you seen or read the CSU plagiarism policy?” The item was double-barrelled, asking two questions in one (i.e., seeing the policy and reading the policy). As a result, some students were not certain what to
respond if they had seen the policy but had not read it. This item was changed to, “Have you read the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy that addresses plagiarism?”

5.9.3 Response categories.

Overall, participants reported little difficulty with understanding the requirements of the response categories for most of the items in the questionnaire. Only one section of the questionnaire required revision of the response categories and that related to the perceptions of sanctions measure.

The perceptions of sanctions scale originally required students to select a penalty from a range of possible penalties, varying in severity for a first time breach of the misconduct policy and a second breach. Participants reported that this task was too complex to complete and was dependent on the context of the situation. Therefore, the final online version of the questionnaire did not have the requirement to select a penalty for a second breach. Further, to simplify the selection of a penalty, the questionnaire was redesigned to use drop-down boxes with the list of penalties a student could select from to respond to each of the behaviours listed.

5.10 Pilot Study 2

Once all the recommended changes arising from Pilot Study 1 had been made, a second pilot of the questionnaire occurred with 18 first-year, undergraduate, distance-education participants, who were recruited during a residential school visit. The second pilot involved giving participants the printed revised version of the questionnaire and conducting group interviews. It resulted in minor changes to only two items. The item “Please indicate, on the scale below, how scared you are of being accused of plagiarism” created some
discussion around the intent of the respondent. That is, participants commented that they would not be scared if they had not intentionally plagiarised. Participants suggested making clear the intent of the act. So another item was added, asking “Please indicate how scared you are of unintentionally plagiarising,” to differentiate between an accusation of intentional plagiarism, as opposed to unintentional plagiarism.

The second item that participants discussed was “To what extent do you think the CSU policy on plagiarism affects your academic writing?” This item was reported to create some confusion, as the response required participants to indicate an extreme negative effect or extreme positive effect. Some students indicated that they found it difficult to respond because they did not understand to what positive or negative effect alluded. Definitions were added to the item response to indicate that an extreme negative effect was on written expression (too much time taken on referencing) and an extreme positive effect was on written expression (motivates taking time on referencing).

**5.11 Online Development and Piloting of Questionnaire**

After the final revisions were made to the questionnaire, it was developed into an online survey (see Appendix H). An anonymous Web-based survey, using the commercially available SurveyMonkey, was devised and consisted of six sections. The software allowed for a range of response options, including radio buttons for single responses and a checkbox option that allowed the respondent to select more than one answer, which also included a text box for additional information. Another option provided a matrix format that allowed respondents to select a response on a Likert scale. Finally, logical path questions allowed participants who answered “yes” to a particular question to be presented with further
questions, while those who answered “no” to be taken to the next question in the questionnaire. At the end of the survey, all participants were provided with an opportunity to add further comments about plagiarism and the university’s policy or procedures regarding plagiarism. Participants were unable to proceed to the next question until responses in each section were completed.

Once 100 responses had been collected in SurveyMonkey, the data were downloaded as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and checked. It became apparent that forcing participants to respond to each section in the survey before they could move on to the next section was creating irritation, as some participants elected not to continue. Written feedback provided by some distance-education participants indicated that, as some items did not include a “do not know” option, it was difficult for respondents to continue completing the survey. This is clearly indicated in the following personal communication received from a participant:

Some of the questions regarding how well other students understand plagiarism, I was unable to answer as I have never met or discussed this issue with another CSU student. My response would be invalid, therefore I did not answer the question, unfortunately the program would not advance without completing all sections, (anonymous participant and personal communication by email, October 23, 2009).

It was apparent from this feedback that the item “In general, how well do you think students at CSU understand what plagiarism is?” may have been difficult to answer for some distance-education respondents; however, they were willing to continue with the survey. Thus, the online survey was modified to allow respondents to continue with questions, even if they had missed one. It could be inferred that, if participants completed the survey and
missed an item, then it may indicate that a student did not know the answer to that question. Therefore, the completion of other items could still be used in the final analysis. Given the modifications made to the final instrument, the responses to the final pilot were not utilised in the final data set in order to maintain consistency. These responses were deleted from the final data set.

At the completion of the data collection period, the data were imported into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and relevant items were coded for input into the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 20 software package. Once coding had been completed, the data were exported to SPSS for analysis. Based on the total population of 30,092 students, an attained sample of 4,477 participants gathered over the two-week period represented a response rate of approximately 15%. It is important to note that not all potential participants received or opened the email invitation to participate in the online questionnaire because of either an incorrect email address or not accessing their email accounts during the data collection period. Thus, the response rate may, in fact, be higher.

5.12 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the process used to develop the questionnaire, prior to making it publicly available to the student body. The scale development process was based on Plano-Clark and Creswell’s (2008) exploratory sequential design. In total, 103 items made up the final questionnaire. Three pilot studies with 165 students enabled a refinement of the items. Chapter 6 will report the process of validating the survey with a large sample and developing the psychometric properties of the final scales to be used in the statistical analysis presented from Chapter 7 through to Chapter 12.
Chapter 6:

Participants and Procedures

6.1 Introduction

As outlined in Chapter 5, a self-report questionnaire was developed to assess CSU students’ perceptions of plagiarism. Specifically, the survey was developed to test the relationships between the themes in the concept map presented in Figure 4.1. Phase 2 used an electronic questionnaire delivered via the commercially available website Survey Monkey. This chapter will detail the sample and procedure for Phase 2 of the study.

6.2 Participants

The population of interest was all current domestic students enrolled at CSU, a regional university in NSW, Australia. The rationale for limiting the study to one university was due the idiosyncratic approach that each institution takes to address plagiarism, as outlined in Chapter 1. Thus, the current research is an in-depth case study of one institution’s approach to addressing plagiarism.

All domestic students enrolled at CSU were invited to complete an online questionnaire \((N = 30,092)\). Complying with the requirements of the CSU School of Social Science and Liberal Studies Human Ethics Research Committee (see Appendix G), permission was obtained from the Executive Director of the Division of Student Administration (see Appendix I) to have an email address list of all active students generated from the university database. The email addresses were university addresses allocated on enrolment at CSU. Each email address had a unique student username, followed by the
university domain name. Consequently, no individual identifying information was sourced (such as names or addresses). No personal email addresses were sourced to protect participant privacy. The email list was limited to domestic students that were enrolled at one of the seven campuses that make up CSU in Australia (Bathurst, Wagga, Goulburn, Dubbo, Orange, Albury-Wodonga and Griffith Campuses).

6.2.1 Characteristics of the sample.

The population of interest \((N = 30,092)\) was invited to complete an online questionnaire, and the questionnaire was attempted by 4,477 students. Of these, 3,405 provided sufficient information to allow analysis. The sample thus represented 11% of the overall population of domestic CSU students.

As shown in Table 6.1, males and on-campus students were slightly underrepresented when compared to the official university census figures, while students from the Faculty of Arts were slightly overrepresented. Official university figures were available for the student population, based on enrolment numbers finalised at the end of 2009. These population statistics included students who had enrolled later in the year.
Table 6.1

Comparison of Final Sample Characteristics as a Percentage of Population Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage of sample (%)</th>
<th>Percentage of population (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>N = 3,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1,060</td>
<td>13,709</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2,264</td>
<td>20,950</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>932</td>
<td>6,541</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>9,267</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>6,945</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>8,041</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance mode</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On campus</td>
<td>1,058</td>
<td>13,332</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance education</td>
<td>2,350</td>
<td>21,327</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of study #</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>828</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>842</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>745</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>472</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate students</td>
<td>344</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *The official population figure included the new enrolments for the same year that data were collected but were not included in the study. Therefore, the official population figure is greater than the figure for the population of students sourced for the study.

*No population statistics available

A series of chi-square goodness-of-fit tests were used to compare the proportion of cases from the sample with the known values of the population (obtained via university statistics) for gender, faculty and mode of study. The tests indicated that the sample differed
significantly from the CSU population for gender, faculty and attendance mode: \( \chi^2 (1, N = 3,324) = 83.10, p < .001 \), CSU, \( \chi^2 (3, N = 3,216) = 83.10, p < .001 \) and \( \chi^2 (1, N = 3,324) = 82.51, p < .001 \), respectively. Cramer’s Phi was 0.16 for gender and mode of study and 0.23 for faculty, all of which indicated a small to medium effect size. This is in keeping with Cohen’s (1988) suggested criteria of 0.1 for a small effect size, 0.3 for medium effect size and 0.5 for a large effect size. Small effect sizes indicate that the pattern observed does not deviate substantially from expected size. Thus, the sample is reasonably representative of the population.

In summary, while significant differences were observed within the participant categories (gender, faculty, campus and mode of study) for the proportion of cases against actual population figures, the effect of the differences was small. Thus, it was cautiously assumed that the sample represented the population of interest: CSU students.

**6.3 Procedure**

As described in Chapter 5, a questionnaire was created using SurveyMonkey, which enables the user to design a survey and collect responses. The population of interest was invited to participate in the anonymous online survey via a blind carbon copy email to ensure participant email addresses were not visible (see Appendix J). Emails were sent out in batches of 500 so that the university online security system did not treat the emails as spam. The email contained the Web link to the anonymous online questionnaire, whereby students were presented with a statement of information (see Appendix K). Data were collected during a two-week period in the second semester of 2009. Once emails were sent, email
addresses were deleted from the email server. Students were not asked if they had ever plagiarised. Rather the focus was on the six dimensions detailed previously.

6.3.1 Data screening and accuracy.

Prior to statistical analysis, the data set was carefully examined and screened to ensure that data were accurately imported and downloaded into SPSS. This process is recommended as an important initial process that is fundamental to statistical analysis (Allen & Bennett, 2008; Pallant, 2007).

Univariate descriptive statistics were used to examine the accuracy of the data import. Means, ranges, standard deviations and frequencies (where appropriate) were inspected to assess the plausibility of data, that is, to validate the correctness of the data import.

6.3.2 Missing data.

A common problem in survey research is managing missing data (Fox-Wasylyshyn & El-Masri, 2005). Since, missing data can potentially threaten the reliability and validity of the constructs measured (Neuman, 2000), data were checked for patterns of missing data using the SPSS Missing Value Analysis (MVA). Of the 4,477 original cases, 110 cases (2.45%) were found to have 100% missing data. These cases were eliminated, leaving 4,367 cases. Cases with more than 50% of data missing were then also deleted, leaving 3,405 cases. The MVA was conducted with the remaining cases.

Overall, the MVA revealed that data were missing at random for all except two items. These two items are listed in Table 6.2. An inspection of the pattern matrix for the missing data by mode of study (on campus v. distance education) revealed that only five of these missing cases were on-campus students. This indicates that the pattern of missing data was
related to distance-education students not being able to respond to the item. Thus, it can be inferred that the missing data may indicate a “do not know” response for the two items.

Table 6.2

Missed Cases by Number and Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In general, how well do you think CSU staff understand the CSU policy on plagiarism?</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In your opinion, how consistent are staff in implementing the CSU policy on plagiarism?</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the recruitment of the sample, characteristics of the sample, procedure to develop the online survey and collect the data and report on the initial analysis of data, which included a missing data analysis. A large sample of 3,405 students made up the final data set. The following seven chapters will be structured so that each variable of interest in the theoretical model of students’ perceptions of plagiarism will be treated as a separate study, commencing with a synopsis of the literature for each variable, followed by an analysis of the data for that variable and concluding with a discussion of the analysis integrating the relevant literature. This design allowed a thorough understanding of how students construct their understanding of each variable of interest and whether there were differences based on demographic characteristics.
Chapter 7:
Assessing Perceptions of Plagiarism Prevalence

7.1 Introduction

Since the seminal work by William Bowers in the 1960s, there has been a great deal of research conducted on the prevalence of academic misconduct (see Park, 2003 for a review of early material). Much of this work has been conducted in the US and is complicated by definitions of what counts as academic misconduct. Moreover, measures used to assess prevalence rates are not always consistent. Within the literature, the prevalence of academic misconduct is measured as either instances of self-reported behaviours or perceptions of other students engaging in academic misconduct. The problem of comparing and contrasting prevalence rates across studies within the literature is that the measures used to assess prevalence may be assessing two different things. Therefore, it is unsurprising that prevalence rates have somewhat varied between studies. Arguably, what appears to have remained constant is the expressed concern at the proportion of students who admit to academic misconduct, know of others who have engaged in academic misconduct and actual cases that are reported via institutional processes.

During the 1980s and 1990s, a range of studies across the US found varying rates of academic misconduct. For example, Christopher Hawley’s (1984) study of 425 undergraduate students examines self-reported academic misconduct and finds that 37.9% of participants would write a term paper for a friend, 26.1% have reused a term paper, 15.1% have permitted a friend to submit their composition as their own and 14.6% have submitted a term paper composed by another student. A decade later, Graham, Monday, O’Brien and
Steffen (1994) find that, from a sample of 500 students, 90% admit to engaging in a form of cheating at least once and, of this, 63.1% admit to allowing another student to copy homework, 53.6% have reused term papers and 13.7% have copied another student’s assignment.

McCabe and his colleagues have conducted numerous large-scale studies across many universities investigating academic misconduct, and have consistently found that approximately 60–70% of students admit to academic misconduct (exam or assignment cheating) during their university career (McCabe, 2005b; McCabe & Trevino, 1993; McCabe & Trevino, 1996; 1997; McCabe et al., 2001; McCabe, Trevino & Butterfield, 2002). For example, McCabe’s (2005b) program of research across 83 universities finds that 62% of undergraduates and 59% of graduate students admit to cut-and-paste plagiarism, 59% of students admit to verbatim copying without citation, 21% of students cheat on written exams, 16% of undergraduates and 8% of graduates admit to submitting papers that were copied either entirely or substantially or were written by a third party. Other research finds varying rates of academic misconduct within the student sample, ranging from 40 to 90% of participants, with the majority of estimates closer to the top end (Hard et al., 2006; Klein, Levenburg, McKendall & Mothersell, 2007; Rettinger, Jordan & Peschiera, 2004).

Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead’s (1995) small scale study of 128 students extends research on academic dishonesty in the UK. In the study, participants indicate whether they have indulged in any of the listed academic misconduct behaviours as an undergraduate and rate the severity of these behaviours. The results indicate that up to 72% of students reported cheating. Moreover, participants ranked behaviours, such as fabricating references,
paraphrasing without references and copying without references as the least serious of all cheating behaviours and concurrently estimated the frequency of these behaviours as high (52%, 60% and 54%, respectively). Franklyn-Stokes et al.’s (1996) follow up study draws from a much larger sample (N = 923) and finds that 88% of students reported engaging in at least one of the 21 dishonest behaviours used in the study. This finding led Franklyn-Stokes et al. (1996) to state that cheating is “not markedly different” (p. 229) from that of students in the US, with more than half the student population in universities engaging in some form of academic misconduct in their undergraduate years.

Studies in the Australian context on academic misconduct are less frequent, with data on prevalence rates scant. An Australian study by Marsden, Carroll and Neil (2005) uses data from a self-report survey completed by 954 university students in 12 faculties across four universities and finds that 41% of participants reported cheating in exams, 81% reported some form of plagiarism and 25% reported falsifying records or fabricating excuses during their time at university. In terms of gender, male full-time students who were aged 25 years and under reported higher levels of both cheating and plagiarism. The results show that engineering students are significantly more likely to cheat than students from other disciplines are, while first-year students are less likely to cheat overall.

Another Australian study conducted by Brimble and Stevenson-Clarke (2005a) uses self-reported data and finds that 30% of the 1,206 students admit to plagiarism (verbatim copying material from a book, webpage or other source without referencing that source). Brimble and Clarke’s (2005a) study across four universities in Queensland, Australia, asks participants to read a series of scenarios describing different forms of academic misconduct
and then respond to items. Participants are asked to estimate the prevalence of that behaviour within the student population. In the study, the highest incidence of cheating is for collusion (54%), followed by continuing to write at the end of a test (53%), paraphrasing without referencing (47%) and adding to a reference list sources not used (45%). The same study finds that academics consistently underestimate the prevalence of plagiarism and cheating.

In her unpublished doctoral thesis, Marsden (2008) conducts a large-scale, multi-campus survey across 11 universities to explore the nature and extent of academic misconduct. She finds that 51% of her sample ($N = 9,235$) have engaged in at least one of the 14 dishonest behaviours. Marsden (2008) notes that this figure is lower than those reported in previous studies and compares her findings with Bowers’ (1964) study (who finds 75% in his sample). However, both studies obtain substantially higher rates of incidence than Brimble and Stevenson-Clarke’s (2005a) figure of 30%.

In reviewing these studies, a number of methodological limitations are apparent. It is difficult to compare findings between studies because of different operational definitions for the academic misconduct behaviours, different methodologies and temporal differences. For example, many of the reported studies use questionnaires that require students to either self-report their own behaviour or report on peers’ behaviour of academic misconduct (Graham et al., 1994; Hughes & McCabe, 2006a; McCabe, 1992; 2005b; McCabe et al., 2003). In contrast, other studies require students to estimate prevalence rates of a range of academic misconduct behaviours focusing on perceptions of behaviour, rather than observations of actual behaviour (e.g., Brimble & Stevenson-Clarke, 2005a).
It is not surprising that the use of different measures results in variability of prevalence rates across studies. This wide variability was noted in an earlier review of studies published between 1980 and 1993, examining prevalence rates for self-reported academic misconduct among students and finding that prevalence ranged from as little as 15% to as high as 91% (Brown, 1995). Given the large variability of prevalence rates of plagiarism across large-scale studies, one may question the validity of the data. As Newstead et al. (1996) suggest when discussing methodological concerns regarding the relationship between reported cheating and actual cheating, “a paradox of research is that it asks students to be honest about their own misconduct” (p. 240).

Asking students to rate their own understanding of plagiarism could be liable to self-presentation or social desirability bias, also known as impression management (Kopcha & Sullivan, 2007; Schaeffer, 2000), which is a tendency of participants to present themselves in a good way or avoid looking bad to others. Asking students to estimate their own cheating behaviours may result in participants underreporting academically dishonest behaviours, as opposed to overestimating. As indicated by Walker (1998), academic misconduct may be more prevalent than surveys assess. Therefore, any measure of prevalence of plagiarism needs to take into account impression management and phrase items to inquire about knowledge of other students’ academic misconduct, if known. Thus, the current research will ask students to respond to items using their knowledge of other students who have plagiarised.
7.1.1 Student characteristics and prevalence rates.

Student characteristics refer to those that relate to variables such as gender, academic discipline and year of study. The findings in the literature on the gender differences in academic dishonesty are mixed. There appears to be substantial support in the early literature for the idea that females report less academic misconduct than males (Ameen, Guffey & McMillan, 1996; Calabrese & Cochran, 1990; Davis et al., 1992; Huss, Curnyn, Roberts & Davis, 1993; Iyer & Eastman, 2006; Rettinger et al., 2004; Thorpe, Pittenger & Reed, 1999).

In contrast, other studies find that females report more academic misconduct than males (Graham et al., 1994; Leming, 1980; Taylor-Bianco & Deeter-Schmelz, 2007). Other studies find narrowing margins between male and female reports of academic misconduct (Blankenship & Whitley, 2000; Haines, Diekhoff, LaBeff & Clark, 1986; Hendershott, Drinan & Cross, 1999; McCabe et al., 2001).

Athanasou and Olasehinde (2002) put forward an explanation for the narrowing margins between females and males in self-reports of academic misconduct in a meta-analysis of 21 studies from 1964 to 1999. They indicate that a case of Simpson’s Paradox may inflate gender difference in academic misconduct. They find that low male response rates may confound the extent of female academic misconduct, since male participants are disproportionately represented in the first-year cohort compared to females; thus, the proportion of males cheating outnumber the proportion of females cheating. The authors explain that the paradox is a result of the data containing unequally sized groups, which are then collapsed into one large group.
Comparing prevalence rates of academic misconduct across academic disciplines has found that students from science and technology were more likely to report academic misconduct than students from health, social work and humanities (Newstead et al., 1996). However, other studies find that students from the disciplines of business and engineering are more likely to engage in academic misconduct (McCabe & Trevino, 1997). For example, a study conducted by McCabe et al. (2006) involving 54 academic institutions in the US and Canada finds that more than half of the participants from business (54%) admit to academic misconduct, compared to 47% of participants not from a business discipline. Further, Harding, Carpenter, Finelli and Passow (2004) find support for the disproportionate number of business and engineering students in prevalence rates. They report that 63.8% of engineering students admit to academic misconduct a few times per term, while a further 79.2% admit to cheating at least once per term. A possible reason put forward to explain why business students tend to have higher levels of academic misconduct is to improve chances of getting into competitive MBA programs by increasing grades (McCabe & Trevino, 1995).

Some caution is advised when comparing prevalence rates of plagiarism between disciplines, as some of these studies only focus on that particular discipline within the study and on exams rather than plagiarism. For example, in the McCabe and Trevino (1995) study that surveyed 6,096 students across 31 institutions, the low proportion of business majors at the surveyed colleges results in the researchers using intended profession rather than academic major as the variable of interest. Business majors may have a higher self-reported rate of cheating; however, they constitute less that 5% of the sample. Moreover, these studies
use questionnaires specifically developed for each study, making direct comparisons between studies questionable.

Other studies find no significant difference between business students and other disciplines when it comes to academic misconduct (Iyer & Eastman, 2006; Klein et al., 2007; Wotring, 2007). For example, a recent study by Klein et al. (2007) explores whether business students are more likely to commit academic misconduct than those from other disciplines (criminal justice, engineering, biomedical sciences, nursing and social work) and find no significant differences of academic misconduct between business students and other academic disciplines. However, they do find that participants from business schools have a more lax attitude towards cheating than participants from other disciplines. These findings parallel those by Wotring (2007) and Iyer and Eastman (2006) whose research finds no significant differences in academic misconduct between academic disciplines.

When examining the year of study and prevalence rates of academic misconduct, research findings are mixed. Some research finds that first-year students are more likely to engage in academic misconduct than seniors (Harding et al., 2004; Nowell & Laufer, 1997). In contrast, an early review by Whitley (1998) examines the results of 107 studies of prevalence and relationships of cheating among college students and proposes that the relationship between year of study and academic misconduct may be curvilinear, with students in the middle of their degrees more likely to engage in academic misconduct than students in their first or final years. Similar findings in an Australian study of 954 students by Marsden et al. (2005) show partial support for Whitley’s (1998) study, with second- and third-year participants more likely to plagiarise than either first-year or postgraduate students.
7.1.2 Official prevalence rates at Charles Sturt University.

Given the variability of prevalence rates cited between studies and the methodological confounds outlined, the present case study will draw comparisons between students’ perceptions of prevalence of plagiarism and official university figures. The Student Academic Misconduct Policy at CSU requires that an annual report be given by the DVC (academic) to the academic senate on cases of suspected and alleged academic misconduct investigated under the policy. Table 7.1 provides data of all cases of academic misconduct, across all faculties of the university, that were investigated and a decision made by either the dean or the DVC (Academic) in 2009, the year the current data were collected.

Table 7.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Enrolment numbers</th>
<th>Plagiarism</th>
<th>Cheating</th>
<th>Collusion</th>
<th>Academic misconduct</th>
<th>Number of allegations investigated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>6,541</td>
<td>31 (0.47)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>9,267</td>
<td>41 (0.44)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>83 (0.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>6,945</td>
<td>38 (0.55)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>43 (0.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>8,041</td>
<td>85 (1.05)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>103 (1.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>268</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage of enrolment.*

Evident in the table is that the science discipline had the greatest number of allegations of plagiarism investigated and charged (38%) across the faculties, followed by
business (31%). However, while the business faculty had the second highest number of cases investigated for plagiarism across the faculties, the education faculty had a greater proportion of cases when compared to enrolment numbers (0.55% v. 0.44%).

The official figures for plagiarism at CSU in 2009 indicated that it was the most prevalent (73%) of the academic misconduct behaviours investigated and charged. Newstead et al. (1996) also finds that students from science and technology are more likely to report academic misconduct than students from health, social work and humanities. Noteworthy is that, relative to the student population ($N = 34,659$), official figures for academic misconduct are only 0.77% of the student population, a figure that is much lower than any self-report measure of plagiarism in the literature.

Although informative, the reported figures for plagiarism at CSU must be read with caution. It is plausible that many cases of plagiarism are investigated unofficially and managed by academic staff members informally, if at all (Zobel & Hamilton, 2002). Moreover, these figures were reported in an era where electronic detection software was not used. In fact, the figures for allegations of academic misconduct investigated in 2010 and 2011 almost doubled those of 2009 (2010 = 364, 2011 = 543). Whether this increase was due to the use of detection software or greater staff awareness and reporting is beyond the scope of the current research.

While knowing official prevalence rates is of great importance when observing trends and measuring outcomes of any potential strategies to reduce plagiarism, understanding students’ perceptions of prevalence rates is of equal interest. This is because perceptions of peer behaviour, as indicated in Chapter 2, have a normative effect on whether a student may
decide to engage in that behaviour. Moreover, as will be explored in detail in Chapter 10, deterrence theory posits that if there is a greater likelihood that a student will be caught plagiarising, then it is less likely that they will engage in it. Therefore, if students overestimate the incidence of plagiarism, compared to official figures, and underestimate the probability of being caught, it stands to reason that they may perceive the risk of being caught as lower than the benefits obtained by engaging in plagiarism.

The following research questions were derived to investigate the perceptions of prevalence of plagiarism at CSU:

1. What are student-perceived prevalence rates of plagiarism?
   a) Are there differences between male and female observations of knowing or hearing of other students who have plagiarised or have been caught plagiarising?
   b) Are there differences between a student’s year of study and observations of knowing or hearing of other students who have plagiarised or have been caught plagiarising?
   c) Are there differences between a student’s academic discipline and knowing or hearing of other students who have plagiarised or have been caught plagiarising?

2. What are the perceived sanctions applied by the university?

7.2 Method

7.2.1 Sample and procedure.

A detailed description of sample characteristics, ethics approval and procedure can be found in Chapter 6.
7.2.2 Measure of perceived prevalence rates.

The items used to measure students’ perceived prevalence rates are detailed in Chapter 5.

7.3 Results and Discussion

7.3.1 Perceptions of prevalence.

In this sample, 22% \( (n = 769) \) of participants \( (N = 3,405) \) indicated that they personally knew of a student who had been caught plagiarising. These figures were then broken down by mode of study and presented in Table 7.2. This total figure was considerably lower than that reported in most previous studies. It is possible that a number of students may be reporting knowing the same individual, thus, inflating the actual figure of how many students are known to plagiarise. For instance, internal students may have more opportunity to interact with other students and, therefore, personally know of more students who have plagiarised, compared to distance-education students who are more likely to study in isolation.
Table 7.2

*Percentage of Participants Who Personally Know Another Student Caught Plagiarising by Mode of Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Study</th>
<th>Personally knowing a student caught plagiarising</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes ($n = 736$)</td>
<td>No ($n = 2,589$)</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On campus</td>
<td>388 (38)</td>
<td>643 (62)</td>
<td>1,031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance education</td>
<td>348 (15)</td>
<td>1946 (85)</td>
<td>2,294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>736 (22)</td>
<td>2589 (78)</td>
<td>3,325</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate percentage rate of respondents across rows.*

As shown in Table 7.2, on-campus students were significantly more likely than distance-education students to personally know another student caught plagiarising, $\chi^2 (1, N = 3,325) = 206.95, p = .000$, phi = .250, which, according to Cohen’s (1988) study, is a medium effect size.

Participants who responded positively to knowing another student who had plagiarised were then asked to indicate how many students they personally knew who had been caught plagiarising. The results are shown in Table 7.3.
Table 7.3

*Frequency of Personally Knowing Another Student Caught Plagiarising by On-Campus Students and Distance Education Students (N = 3,325)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students known</th>
<th>On-campus students</th>
<th>Distance-education students</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>160 (41.1)</td>
<td>177 (50.3)</td>
<td>337 (45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 3</td>
<td>164 (42.2)</td>
<td>132 (37.5)</td>
<td>296 (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 5</td>
<td>42 (10.8)</td>
<td>18 (5.1)</td>
<td>60 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;5</td>
<td>23 (5.9)</td>
<td>25 (7.1)</td>
<td>48 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>389 (100)</td>
<td>352 (100)</td>
<td>741 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Parentheses indicate percentage of participants for that mode.

As seen in the table, more than half of those who responded positively to knowing someone caught plagiarising knew at least two to three people who had been caught. On-campus students were more likely to know a greater number of students who had plagiarised than distance-education students. These findings are noteworthy, as the official CSU figures indicate that only a very small portion of allegations of plagiarism were investigated and charged (> .01) in the same year that the data were collected.

7.3.2 **Hearsay and perceptions of prevalence.**

To understand if hearsay or rumour affects perceptions of prevalence rates of plagiarism, participants were asked if they had ever heard from a third party about another student who had been caught plagiarising. A total of 1,121 (33.7%) students indicated hearing from a third party that another student had been caught plagiarising, as shown in
Table 7.4. The table indicates that half of the on-campus respondents positively indicated hearing from a third party about another student caught plagiarising. This finding is not surprising given the greater contact between them. Moreover, on-campus students are more likely to hear about incidences of plagiarism from teaching staff during class time.

Table 7.4

*Frequency Response for Hearing from a Third Party about Another Student Caught Plagiarising by Mode of Study (N = 3,325)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hearing from a third party</th>
<th>On-campus students</th>
<th>Distance-education students</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>502 (49)</td>
<td>1,702 (74)</td>
<td>2,204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>529 (51)</td>
<td>592 (26)</td>
<td>1,121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,031 (100)</td>
<td>2,294 (100)</td>
<td>3,325</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Parentheses show percentage rates for columns.

A McNemar test of change indicated that there was a greater likelihood to have heard from a third source about a student plagiarising than to actually know of a student caught plagiarising. The observed tendency for all participants to report to have heard from a third party about a student plagiarising (34%) compared to actually knowing an individual who has plagiarised (22%) was significantly different ($p < .001$).
7.3.3 Perceptions of sanctions

Participants were asked to report on the most severe penalty they believed was received by a student who had been caught plagiarising (when they personally knew the student and via hearsay). Responses are reported in Table 7.5.

The most frequently cited penalty when the student was personally known to the respondent was that the student received zero marks for the assessment task, was cautioned and/or reprimanded (40.5%). However, when the information was hearsay, the most frequently cited penalty was failing the subject and being cautioned and/or reprimanded (30.7%), a more severe penalty. Finally, there was more uncertainty reported with a hearsay allegation than with personally knowing a student who had been caught plagiarising.
Table 7.5

*Frequency of Responses for Perceived Severity of Penalty for a Student Personally Known to Have Been Caught Plagiarising Compared to a Hearsay Incidence of Plagiarism*

| Penalty | Personally known  
|---------|----------------|
|         | (n = 610)     | Hearsay  
|         | Frequency %   | (n =795) Frequency % |
| 1. No Action Taken | 6 1.0 | 15 1.9 |
| 2. Counselling, Cautioned/Reprimanded | 122 20.0 | 97 12.2 |
| 3. Awarded Zero Marks, and  
Cautioned/Reprimanded | 247 40.5 | 213 26.8 |
| 4. Failed Subject & Cautioned/Reprimanded | 138 22.6 | 244 30.7 |
| 5. Failed Subject & Fined | 0 0 | 11 1.4 |
| 6. Failed Subject & Suspended from University | 46 7.5 | 94 11.8 |
| 7. Combination of 5 and 6. | 1 .2 | 2 .3 |
| 8. Failed Subject and Excluded from University  
for at Least Two Years | 50 8.2 | 119 15.0 |
| Total | 610 100 | 795 100 |

*Note:* Penalty number indicates code from least severe to most.

**7.3.4 Student characteristics and perceptions of prevalence.**

The use of a case study approach to examine students’ perceptions of plagiarism at CSU enabled a thorough understanding of the factors that may be associated with perceptions of prevalence of plagiarism. Thus, a range of demographic characteristics and contextual factors were examined for their association with perceptions of plagiarism prevalence. Chi-
square analysis examining the association of gender, faculty and year of study (1–6) on personally knowing a student who had plagiarised was performed.

7.3.4.1 Gender.

There was a significant association between gender and personally knowing another student caught plagiarising, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 3,324) = 4.431, p = .032, \phi = .037 \). While females personally knew more students who had been caught plagiarising (14.4%) compared to males (7.9%), the small effect size suggests that this difference may not be of practical significance when developing strategies to reduce the incidence of plagiarism. This finding supports those of Athanasou and Olasehinde (2002), who only find small differences between males and females in self-reports of academic misconduct.

7.3.4.2 Faculty.

There was a significant association between faculty and personally knowing a student caught plagiarising, \( \chi^2 (3, N = 3,216) = 40.68, p = .000, \text{Cramer's } V = .112 \), which produced a small effect size. As illustrated in Table 7.6, business faculty students were significantly less likely to personally know of a student caught plagiarising relative to the other faculties. However, when compared to official university statistics, the business faculty recorded the second highest number of charges for plagiarism (\( n = 41 \)) compared to science (\( n = 85 \)). The finding that business students were less likely to personally know another student caught plagiarising is also in contrast to the findings of Davy, Kincaid, Smith and Trawick (2007), Rettinger and Jordan (2005), McCabe and Trevino (1993) and McCabe et al. (2006), who all find that business students are more likely to cheat than those in other disciplines.
Noteworthy is, when examining the official university figures for charges of plagiarism, students from the Faculty of Education had a higher proportion of students within the faculty charged with plagiarism compared to students from the Faculty of Business. Commensurate with this finding is that participants from the Faculty of Education also knew of more students caught plagiarising than those from the Faculty of Business knew, as shown in Table 7.6.

The current research also found that science students were more likely to know of another student caught plagiarising (34%) than students in the Faculties of Arts (32%), Education (21%) and Business (13%) (see Table 7.6). The findings that science students are more likely to know personally of another student caught plagiarising may be in line with the official university statistics. That is, the science faculty investigated more charges of academic misconduct than the other faculties. In contrast, the Faculty of Business, which was the next most investigated faculty for plagiarism, was also the least likely to report personally knowing another student caught plagiarising.
Table 7.6

*Percentage of Students Personally Knowing Another Student Caught Plagiarising by Faculty Compared with Official University Figures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Personally knowing a student caught plagiarising</th>
<th>Official university charges for plagiarism (2009)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n)</td>
<td>(%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>932</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*7.3.4.3 Year of study.*

Data were analysed to examine whether year of study was associated with personally knowing a student who had plagiarised, that is, whether the students in later years of study were more likely to know of another student who had plagiarised. A chi-square test for independence indicated a significant association between year of study and personally knowing another student caught plagiarising, \(\chi^2 (5, N = 3,231) = 40.02, p = .000\), Cramer’s \(V = .111\).
Table 7.7

*Percentage of Students Personally Knowing Another Student Caught Plagiarising by Year of Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of study</th>
<th>Personally knowing a student caught plagiarising</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.7 shows that, as participants progressed from years 1 to 3, the reported incidences of personally knowing a student who had plagiarised increased and then decreased in postgraduate years. This finding supports those of Whitley (1998) and Marsden et al. (2005), who both report a relationship between year of study and academic misconduct with students in the middle years of their degree, showing that they are more likely to engage in academic misconduct than students in the first or final years.

### 7.4 Discussion

Comparing the current findings with findings from previous research is difficult, as the word “plagiarism” was not defined in the survey and, therefore, may be incompatible with the definitions used by the participants or with definitions used in previous research. Participants in the current research applied their own knowledge of what constitutes plagiarism and, according to findings presented in Chapter 7, students confused collusion and cheating with plagiarism, when compared to the CSU policy definitions of plagiarism. Therefore, comparing prevalence rates between studies must be done with caution. For
example, when compared to McCabe’s (2005b) research that used data from the US and Canada, the current findings and official figures at CSU are well below his findings of 62% of undergraduates and 59% of graduate students who admit to cut-and-paste plagiarism and 59% of students who admit to verbatim copying without citation. The variability between the current research findings and McCabe’s (2005b) research is that the latter asks students to self-report whether they had plagiarised, while the current research examines perceptions of peer behaviour.

Comparing the current findings to Frankly-Stokes and Newstead’s (1995) UK research that asks students to estimate frequency of cheating in their year group, the current findings are still substantially below their finding of 72%. This discrepancy may be explained by the large proportion of distance education students who may underestimate the dishonest behaviours of others. That is, asking distance education students to report their perceptions of dishonesty, as opposed to self-reported dishonesty, may be a difficult task given their limited contact with other students on campus. However, it is important to note that Frankly-Stokes and Newstead use a different measure that includes all cheating behaviours, not just plagiarism, to estimate overall peer cheating. Further confounding the comparison of prevalence rates is the many changes that have occurred since 1995, such as technology enabling the ease of committing plagiarism, while, at the same time, improving detection rates.

In comparison to Australian research, the figure of 22% of participants at CSU knowing another student who had plagiarised is substantially below the 81% of students who admit to some form of plagiarism in Marsden et al.’s (2005) study. In contrast to the current
study, participants in the study are required to identify how often they have engaged in cheating, plagiarism and falsification behaviours, while the items in the current research ask participants to report on their perceptions of peer behaviour. This difference in measure may explain the discrepancy between the two studies. Another plausible explanation is that individuals may not be willing to disclose peer behaviour, which may then result in underestimating the prevalence of plagiarism.

The perceived prevalence rates in the current research are more in line with those from Brimble and Clarke’s (2005a) study. Their research also asks students to indicate if they know of another student who has engaged in different types of academic misconduct behaviours. A notable difference is that Brimble and Clarke (2005a) use scenarios to represent the academic misconduct behaviours and they also ask their participants to report their own history in committing the same behaviour. This enables them to compare directly the perceived occurrence of plagiarism against actual occurrence. Overall, their findings suggest that the participants’ perceptions regarding the prevalence of academic misconduct for the reported behaviours are in line with the actual self-reported engagement of that behaviour (about 30%). The relevance of these findings to the current research is that, if there is concordance between perceptions of plagiarism and actual incidence of plagiarism, then the official figures at CSU may not be representative of the actual prevalence of plagiarism at CSU.

The finding that more than half of the on-campus students reported hearsay knowledge of another student who had been caught plagiarising, along with the most frequently cited penalty being failing the subject, supports the focus group findings in
Chapter 3, as far as the role of rumours go. That is, rumours appear to prevail in students’ perceptions of plagiarism. DiFonzo and Bordia (2007) define rumours as “unverified and instrumentally relevant information statements in circulation that arise in contexts of ambiguity, danger or potential threat, and that function to help people make sense and manage risk” (p. 19). This definition, in relation to the current research, refers to the ambiguity present in students’ understanding of plagiarism. For example, participants were unable to differentiate between the academic misconduct behaviours defined in the CSU policy (see Chapter 8) and reported being fearful of inadvertent plagiarism (see Chapter 9). Consistent with the results of the qualitative study reported in Chapter 3, it may appear that rumour could be aggravating the confusion and fear.

As observed in this research, participants are more likely to have hearsay information about the prevalence of plagiarism and they appear to overestimate the penalty awarded for an allegation of plagiarism. Moreover, an absence of a unified institutional approach at CSU to address the issue of plagiarism, which goes beyond merely providing links to information, may increase the potential for plagiarism to occur.

7.5 Conclusion

Despite providing interesting information on the significant associations between gender, faculty, mode of study and year of study on personally knowing another student who plagiarised, effect sizes were small, rendering the differences negligible. The significant results can be explained by the large sample size that will inflate chi-square. Nevertheless, the data indicated that female participants were more likely to know a student who had been caught plagiarising, on-campus students were more likely to had heard from another party
about a student who had been caught plagiarising and students enrolled in the Faculties of Science, Art and Education were more likely to personally know of a student who had plagiarised than those students from the Faculty of Business. Further, as participants progressed through their degrees, they were more likely to report knowing another student who had plagiarised.

The most frequent penalty cited by participants who personally knew of a student caught plagiarising was on the mild end of sanctions, typically resulting in loss of marks for an assignment and a caution. However, when the knowledge about the person who was caught plagiarising was hearsay, the perceived penalty was more severe and tended to result in failing a subject and a caution. Similarly the most severe penalty—failing a subject and being excluded from university for at least two years—was more frequently reported for hearsay knowledge than personally knowing another student caught plagiarising. Participants were also more likely to select “uncertain” for a penalty when the plagiarism was hearsay.

This chapter has explored students’ perceptions of the prevalence rates of plagiarism at CSU. Noteworthy was that students’ perceptions of plagiarism prevalence was much greater than official university figures. Given an absence of official communication about the detection of plagiarism at the university, students are left to rely on personal observations and hearsay for their information. Therefore, the findings imply that plagiarism, in comparison to official figures, is rife and not detected. The potential consequence, as explored in Chapter 2, is an increased probability of engaging in it.
Chapter 8:

Who Has Read The Policy on Plagiarism? Unpacking Students’ Understanding of Plagiarism

In higher education, mastery of competent and disciplinary-specific writing is arguably a fundamental skill that demonstrates a student’s understanding of subject-based knowledge (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995). Students express their authorial voice by synthesising the ideas drawn from scholarly literature within their own work. This process requires understanding the rationale for attribution and how to cite original sources in order to avoid plagiarism (Wingate, 2006). However, the evidence suggests that many students unintentionally plagiarise and confuse plagiarism with behaviours that are defined as cheating or collusion (Ashworth et al., 1997; Barrett & Cox, 2005; Gullifer & Tyson, 2010). Moreover, not understanding what plagiarism is appears to contribute to increased anxiety of inadvertent plagiarism and uncertainty of what constitutes plagiarism (Ashworth et al., 1997; Breen & Maassen, 2005; Gullifer & Tyson, 2010; James et al., 2002; Yeo, 2007). Studies indicate that plagiarism may occur because of this confusion, rather than intentional plagiarism (Ellery, 2008; Gullifer & Tyson, 2010; Park, 2003; Sutherland-Smith, 2008; Zimitat, 2008). Specifically, students may not realise that altering an original source, even

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by a few words, without citing the original source constitutes plagiarism. Moreover students may not realise that Internet sources must also be cited.

The confusion surrounding the term plagiarism may also be experienced by academics, therefore, contributing to the inconsistencies to which students are exposed. For example, in two studies conducted by Miguel Roig (1997, 2001), students and academics are able to paraphrase simple text without plagiarising but, as text becomes more complex and technical, many students (Roig, 1997) and some academics (Roig, 2001) make minor changes to the text by altering a few words. Although greater skill is required to paraphrase dense and complex text, this practice could be construed as plagiarism because of the lack of attribution. Similarly, in a high school setting, Craig and Evans (1990) find that a quarter of the teachers and almost half of the students do not realise paraphrased text must be acknowledged. These findings reinforce the idea that there is no absolute standard among staff in recognising plagiarism and, therefore, managing it consistently.

After examining the plethora of research published on academic misconduct and integrity, it is obvious that a standard definition does not exist. Some studies group all academic misconduct behaviours into a single category and others use a variety of terms to define academic misconduct, with plagiarism often described as being a form of cheating, academic fraud, misrepresentation or fabrication (Ashworth et al., 1997; Athanasou & Olaschinde, 2002; McCabe, 1992; 2005b; McCabe et al., 2001; McCabe et al., 2002; Newstead et al., 1996; Whitley Jr, 1998). For this reason, it is hardly surprising that the ambiguous nature of the term “plagiarism” may result in inadvertent plagiarism.
Chris Park (2003) confirms that students are genuinely perplexed about the concept of plagiarism. He finds that some students unintentionally plagiarise because of the lack of familiarity with writing conventions when quoting and paraphrasing. There is also an expectation that students entering university understand the values of authorship and, therefore, the importance of attribution. In addition, students are expected to discern common knowledge from material that must be cited. The uncertainty surrounding plagiarism is further complicated by contextual issues, such as the perceived degree of seriousness and degrees of violations. While there appears to be little agreement on a precise definition of plagiarism, there is consensus that it includes using another person’s ideas, work and expression and passing it off as one’s own ideas, work and expression (Gibaldi, 2003).

Arguably, the definitions that determine what constitutes plagiarism are those within university policy. It is these definitions that all stakeholders in the university setting must abide by and that set the parameters for reporting, investigating and penalising infringements. More importantly, these definitions should be the benchmark for assessing how well students understand plagiarism. By delimitating definitions of plagiarism to those set in university policy, the problem of generalising and finding a universal definition is eliminated. This is an important consideration given the socio-cultural context in which plagiarism occurs.

It is of interest to note that a search of the published literature revealed that, while research has investigated why students plagiarise (Burrus et al., 2007; McCabe, 2005b; Sutherland-Smith, 2005), who plagiarises, (Harding, Mayhew, Finelli & Carpenter, 2007; Iyer & Eastman, 2006; McCabe, 2005a), how they plagiarise (McCabe & Trevino, 1993) how many plagiarise (Hard et al., 2006; Lin & Wen, 2007; McCabe, 2005b), what students
think it is (Ashworth et al., 2003; Devlin & Gray, 2007; Gullifer & Tyson, 2010; Power, 2009; Yeo, 2007) and how to prevent it (Devlin, 2006; Duggan, 2006; McGowan, 2005b), no research to date has actually asked students if they have read the institution’s policy or how well they understand the definitions of the different academic misconduct behaviours within that policy. Given the importance of university policy to strategically guide the management of plagiarism and the emphasis placed on communicating the policy to all stakeholders, this anomaly is interesting. Moreover, the consequence of not reading the policy may contribute to widespread ignorance of the behaviours that constitute plagiarism.

Therefore, a case study approach was initiated to investigate how well students at an Australian university understand plagiarism, as defined in the institution’s academic misconduct policy. CSU is a multi-campus university, with four faculties (arts, business, education and science) offering a diverse range of courses and disciplines at the bachelor and postgraduate level. The majority of students at CSU study by distance education (off campus). This mode of study uses teaching methods and technology to enable students to access education when they are not physically present (Cleveland-Innes & Garrison, 2010). Studying by distance education requires access to the Internet, as courses are supported by online technology.

The CSU policy on academic misconduct (2010) lists plagiarism (along with collusion and cheating) as one of three types of academic misconduct. Within the policy, academic misconduct is defined as:

Acting in a way, or attempting to act in a way, or assisting another student to act in a way which could reasonably be expected to defeat the purpose of a learning
experience or an item of assessment or an examination. Academic misconduct will normally be evidenced by plagiarism, cheating or collusion. (p. 2)

The policy defines plagiarism as occurring when:

He or she [student] gives the impression that the ideas, words or work of another person are the ideas, words or work of the student. Plagiarism will include:

- copying any material from books, journals, study notes or tapes, the Web, the work of other students, or any other source without indicating this by quotation marks or by indentation, italics or spacing and without acknowledging that source by footnote or citation

- rephrasing ideas from books, journals, study notes or tapes, the Web, the work of other students, or any other source without acknowledging the source of those ideas by footnotes or citations. This could include material copied from a source and acknowledged, but presented as the student’s own paraphrasing. (p. 2)

The academic misconduct policy at CSU recognises that consideration of the motivation of the student is important when assessing cases of plagiarism, as shown in the following extract:

Plagiarism is to be distinguished from inadequate and/or inappropriate attempts to acknowledge the words, works or ideas of someone else, as for example when a student makes a genuine attempt to reference their work, but has very poor referencing skills. (p. 2)

While the policy recognises that cases may differ according to the intent of the student, a booklet titled “Avoiding Plagiarism at CSU” advises students that academics are
responsible for reporting suspected cases of plagiarism to the appropriate authority regardless of intent (McVilly & McGowan, 2007). Moreover, students are also informed in the booklet that factors, such as “the seriousness of the misconduct, the relative experience of the student and whether the student has previously been found guilty of misconduct” (p. 8) are considered when an allegation of plagiarism is investigated. Penalties are stated to become “progressively harsher depending on the nature of the plagiarism” (p. 8). Penalties can range from no action taken to a caution or reprimand, resubmission of work, no marks awarded for submitted work, failing of the subject and exclusion from university. A combination of these penalties can also be applied.

Currently at CSU, the responsibility to learn about academic integrity resides with the student. The CSU Student Charter (CSU, 2012) suggests that the university encourages a sense of community and with that comes shared values and expectations. The shared values refer to freedom of inquiry, knowledge refinement and dissemination, ethical practice and the responsible stewardship of resources. These values are expressed through shared expectations that staff and students have of each other. The points in the charter relevant to academic integrity are that students can expect:

- access to information about University regulations, policies and procedures including research and study requirements, and that they will be applied appropriately (para 2).

In addition, the university can expect students to:

- adhere to University rules, regulations, policies and procedures (para 3)
- interact with the University with honesty, integrity and in a timely manner (para 3).
According to the charter, the role of the university is to make access to the information about university regulations, policies and procedure available, with the assumption that, once the information is available, it is the responsibility of the student to be familiar with and adhere to the information within the regulations, policies and procedures. Access to CSU regulations, policies and procedures is publicised and made available every teaching session, through information placed in each subject outline, and in a letter sent at the beginning of the session to each student, through an electronic mailbox. Students can also access the information through the CSU website.

The current strategy to promote academic integrity at CSU seems to rely on the students’ responsibility to source and independently learn about plagiarism by becoming familiar with the academic misconduct policy. However, it appears that this strategy is not working, as plagiarism continues. An answer for this problem may be found by assessing how well students know and understand the academic misconduct policy at CSU. Thus, this research used a case study approach to investigate the following research questions:

1. How many students at CSU have read the CSU policy on academic integrity?
2. How well do students rate their own understanding of plagiarism and that of other students?
3. How well do students understand the behaviours that constitute plagiarism, cheating and collusion in the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy?

Where do students primarily obtain their knowledge of plagiarism?

In addition, differences in understanding based on gender, year of study, faculty affiliation and mode of study were examined.
8.1 Method

8.1.1 Characteristics of sample.

The population of interest was all current domestic students enrolled at CSU. All eligible students ($N = 30,092$) were invited to complete an online survey of which this study was a small component. Of the 4,477 respondents who started the survey, 3,405 provided sufficient information to allow analysis. Thus, the sample represented 11% of the overall population of domestic CSU students. The demographic details of the sample and census data for the population of students enrolled at that time are provided in Table 8.1.
Table 8.1

*Comparison of Sample Characteristics as a Percentage of Population Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage of sample (%)</th>
<th>Percentage of population (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1,060</td>
<td>13,709</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2,264</td>
<td>20,950</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>932</td>
<td>6,541</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>9,267</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>6,945</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>8,041</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance mode</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On campus</td>
<td>1,058</td>
<td>13,332</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance education</td>
<td>2,350</td>
<td>21,327</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of study*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>828</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>842</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>745</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>472</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate students</td>
<td>344</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: * denotes no population statistics available.

A series of chi-square goodness-of-fit tests were used to compare the proportion of cases from the sample with the known values of the population (obtained via university statistics) for gender, faculty and mode of study. The tests indicated that the sample differed
significantly from the CSU population for gender, faculty and attendance mode: \( \chi^2 (1, N = 3,324) = 83.10, p < .001 \), CSU, \( \chi^2 (3, N = 3,216) = 83.10, p < .001 \) and \( \chi^2 (1, N = 3,324) = 82.51, p < .001 \), respectively. Cramer’s Phi was 0.16 for gender and mode of study and 0.23 for faculty, all of which indicated a small to medium effect size. This suggests that the sample does not deviate substantially from the population and that it can be considered reasonably representative of the population.

8.1.2 Measures.

8.1.2.1 Assessing knowledge of plagiarism.

The current study used the following four self-assessment items. Where relevant, eleven-point rating scales (0–10) were used:

1. Have you read the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy that addresses plagiarism? If response is “yes”, then:
   a) Please rate how clear you think the CSU policy on plagiarism is (extremely confusing to extremely clear).
   b) Please rate how fair you think the CSU policy on plagiarism is (extremely fair to extremely unfair).

2. Based on your knowledge, please indicate how well you understand what plagiarism is (no understanding to complete understanding).

3. In general, how well do you think students at CSU understand what plagiarism is? (no understanding to complete understanding)

4. An additional item required students to indicate what they based their knowledge of plagiarism on:
Please rank the following sources (1–5) in order of what your knowledge of plagiarism is based on:

a) Lecturers
b) Other students
c) Materials in ebox or subject outlines
d) Academic misconduct policy
e) Other

If the participant selected “other”, a free-text box was provided for them to elaborate and clarify their response. The responses were content analysed and coded into eight categories (see Table 8.7). Demographic information requesting gender, course of study, mode of study (on-campus student, distance-education student) and load of study (full time or part time) was also collected.

Self-report measures of students’ own understanding of plagiarism may be influenced by self-presentation bias. This occurs if they believe that their responses reflect their own competence relative to other students or are inconsistent with the expectations of the university and teaching staff (Kopcha & Sullivan, 2007; Schaeffer, 2000). Nancarrow and Brace (2000) suggest that a way to bypass socially desirable responding is to ask participants indirect questions regarding what they think other people might feel about a particular issue. The assumption here is that a respondent will project their thoughts or behaviours about that particular situation (Fisher, 1993). Thus, the use of indirect questioning may reveal insights about not only the participants beliefs but also what similar others may be thinking.
Therefore, Items 2 and 3 were statistically compared to examine if there was a significant
difference between self-assessing their own understanding of plagiarism and assessing other students’ understanding. A significant difference may allude to self-presentation bias within the sample.

8.1.2.2 Understanding Plagiarism Scale.

The focus of the UPS was to systematically assess how well students comprehend the definitions of plagiarism, cheating and collusion, as set out in the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy. Participants were instructed to indicate from a list of behaviours whether they consider the behaviour to be plagiarism (see Table 8.4)

The statements in the UPS are congruent with the CSU policy definitions of plagiarism, cheating and collusion. Answering “yes” to a plagiarism item would constitute a correct response. Conversely, answering “yes” to a cheating or collusion item would indicate an incorrect response. An additional five supplementary items were developed by the authors (thesis author and supervisor) as plausible behaviours that may be commonly misidentified as plagiarism. As with the cheating and collusion items, a “yes” answer to these items would indicate an incorrect response.

To obtain a total scale score and sub-scale scores, the cheating, collusion and supplementary items were first reversed so that all correct responses were coded 1 (correctly identifying plagiarism and correctly identifying non-plagiarism) and all incorrect responses were coded 0. The second step was to sum the total number of correct responses from all the items that make up the UPS. This would yield a total scale score ranging from zero to 17, with higher scores indicating a greater understanding of plagiarism and the ability to discriminate between plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct.
8.1.3 Procedure.

Approval from the CSU Human Ethics Research Committee was obtained and an email was sent inviting students to complete an anonymous online survey. Data were collected over a two-week period. Once emails were sent, email addresses were deleted from the email server. Students were not directly asked if they had ever plagiarised.

8.2 Results

8.2.1 Reading the policy.

In this sample, only half (52%) of the 3,405 participants indicated that they had read the policy. Given the lack of literature that specifically examines whether students have read the policy, it was decided to examine the characteristics of those students who indicated that they have read the policy. There was a significant association between gender and reading the academic misconduct policy, with males significantly more likely to read the policy than females, $\chi^2 (1, N = 3,324) = 8.52, p = .004, \phi = .051$. A positive association was also found for mode of study and reading the misconduct policy, with distance-education students more likely to have read the academic misconduct policy compared with on-campus students, $\chi^2 (9, N = 2,966) = 29.93, p < .001, \phi = .100$.

To control for the effect of gender and to examine whether males who study by distance education are more likely to read the academic misconduct policy than female distance-education students, gender was added as a layer in the analysis (see Table 8.2). There was a significant association between mode of study and gender on reading the academic misconduct policy, with more male distance-education students, $\chi^2 (1, n = 1,058) = 35.42, p < .001, \phi = .185$, reading the academic misconduct policy than females, $\chi^2 (1, n =
There was no significant association between faculty and reading the misconduct policy.

While significant gender and mode of study differences in reading the misconduct policy were found, in terms of Cohen’s (1988) criteria, the effect sizes were small and, hence, have little practical significance. In other words, any strategies to increase reading rates of the academic misconduct policy should not specifically target either gender or mode of study as a criterion. Rather, all students enrolled at CSU should be included in any strategy that would increase the reading rate of the academic misconduct policy.

Table 8.2

*Percentage of Participants Who Had Read the Academic Misconduct Policy by Mode of Study and Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of study</th>
<th>Read academic misconduct policy</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 1,058)</td>
<td>(n = 2,247)</td>
<td>(N = 3,305)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance (off campus) (n = 2,279)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>1,116</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>1,131</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On campus (n = 1,026)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>585</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>473</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3,305</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.2.1.1 Rating the clarity and fairness of the policy.

Participants who had read the policy where then asked to rate how clear the policy was. Overall, the clarity of the policy was highly rated ($M = 7.24$, $SD = 2.14$), with more than 72% of the respondents giving a rating of seven or greater. Less than 8% of the participants who had read the policy gave a rating of two or less. Participants who had read the policy were also asked to indicate how fair they thought the misconduct policy was. This item was reverse coded. In general, the policy was rated as moderately fair ($M = 6.76$, $SD = 3.03$), with the majority of participants (64%) rating fairness above six. Thus, the majority of students who had read the policy rated the misconduct policy as clear and moderately fair.

8.2.2 Subjective measure for understanding the term “plagiarism”.

The results for the question of how well students understood the behaviours that made up the plagiarism items in the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy are shown in Table 8.3. In general, respondents indicated that they had a reasonably good understanding of plagiarism ($M = 7.25$, $SD = 2.17$), with more than 80% of the sample rating their understanding of plagiarism as seven or above on the eleven-point scale. Less than 10% of the sample indicated little understanding of plagiarism (rating of < 3) and, of those, only 0.1% indicated no understanding.

In order to check for self-presentation bias, students were asked how well they thought other students at CSU understood what plagiarism is. The mean score of 6.05 ($SD = 1.91$) indicates that participants rated other students as having a moderate understanding of plagiarism (see Table 8.3). Less than 10% of respondents rated other students’ understanding as three or less.
Table 8.3

*Means and Standard Deviations for Students’ Self-Ratings of Understanding Plagiarism and Rating Other Students’ Understanding of Plagiarism by Gender, Faculty, Year of Study and Attendance Mode*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rating self-understanding of plagiarism</th>
<th>Rating other students’ understanding plagiarism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7.84</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>7.66</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>7.79</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>7.94</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>7.66</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year of study</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.73</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.72</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.72</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.76</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>7.85</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attendance mode</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance Education</td>
<td>7.90</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On campus</td>
<td>7.41</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total sample</strong></td>
<td>7.75</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between self-rated understanding of plagiarism and the rating of other students’
understanding of plagiarism. A significant difference was found, $t(3,336) = 37.03, p = .001$ (two-tailed), with respondents indicating that they rated their own understanding of plagiarism as better than that of other students. Cohen’s $d (.83)$ indicated a large effect size. The fact that students reported their own understanding of plagiarism as better than that of other students suggests that a socially desirable response bias may have been operating.

To probe whether there were differences between groups (gender, faculty affiliation, attendance mode and year of study) in how other students’ understanding of plagiarism was rated, a series of pairwise comparisons and analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted. Given the large sample size, an alpha of .01 was used to test for significance. No significant differences were found for any of these analyses.

**8.2.3 Discerning plagiarism behaviours in the UPS.**

As shown in Table 8.4, there was a ceiling effect for the plagiarism items of the UPS, with most respondents obtaining near perfect scores for each of the items. However, as evident in the table, there was more variability for the cheating, collusion and supplementary items, with these sometimes being incorrectly endorsed as plagiarism. In other words, students were unable to demarcate accurately whether these behaviours were plagiarism.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Read policy (%) (n = 1,759)</th>
<th>Not read policy (%) (n = 1,646)</th>
<th>Total sample (%) (N = 3,405)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plagiarism Items</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying passages from textbooks, journals or the Web without</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acknowledgement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying actual text without using quotation marks</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reusing, in whole or in part, the work of another student</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submitting the work of another person, which has had only minor</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>changes, without acknowledging the source</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking ideas from a source, such as a brochure, advertisement,</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>television program or radio program, and using them as your own</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>without acknowledgement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cheating Items</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making changes to an assignment that has been marked, then</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>returning it for re-marking, claiming that it was not correctly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marked</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking unauthorised materials into an examination</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falsifying data obtained from experiments, surveys or similar</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying the answers of another student in an examination</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collusion Items</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing another student, who has to submit an assignment on the</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>same topic, access to one’s own assignment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing the whole or part of an assignment with another person</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the notes of another person to prepare an assignment</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supplementary Items</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making up false reference citations</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citing sources that have not actually been read</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving out a reference</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formatting a reference contrary to your discipline’s preferred</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reference style</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note: Bolded responses denote correct responses.

Means and standard deviations for average total scale scores for plagiarism, cheating, collusion and supplementary items are reported in Table 8.5.

Table 8.5

*Mean Total Sum Scores for Correctly Identifying Behaviour as Plagiarism*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Read policy</th>
<th>Not read policy</th>
<th>Total sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plagiarism</td>
<td>0–5</td>
<td>4.77 (0.59)</td>
<td>4.70 (0.66)</td>
<td>4.74 (0.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheating</td>
<td>0–4</td>
<td>1.91 (1.43)</td>
<td>2.00 (1.40)</td>
<td>1.96 (1.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collusion</td>
<td>0–3</td>
<td>1.64 (1.11)</td>
<td>1.88 (1.04)</td>
<td>1.76 (1.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary</td>
<td>0–5</td>
<td>2.46 (1.44)</td>
<td>2.57 (1.37)</td>
<td>2.52 (1.41)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These average scores indicate that students demonstrated a high degree of accuracy in identifying those behaviours that are classified as plagiarism in the academic misconduct policy; however, they confused cheating, collusion and the supplementary items as plagiarism.

To understand whether reading the policy improves understanding of plagiarism, an independent t-test (for equal variances not assumed) was conducted using the UPS. There was a significant difference between scores for students who did not read the policy ($M = 7.61$, $SD = 2.22$) and students who had read the policy ($M = 7.25$, $SD = 2.39$), $t (3,402.85) = 4.570$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed), indicating that those who had not read the policy performed significantly better than those who had. Although the magnitude of the difference was small
(Cohen’s $d = .16$), this result is important because it suggests that reading the academic misconduct policy does not enable participants to accurately discern between the different behaviours that make up the academic misconduct policy. Further, the data suggest that those students who read the policy were slightly more likely to incorrectly endorse cheating and collusion behaviours as plagiarism.

The final item asked participants to rank a range of sources in order of importance, in relation to their knowledge of plagiarism. These items were coded so that only the primary source of information was analysed for each participant. Percentage responses for items ranked as their primary source of information are reported Table 8.6.

Table 8.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Source of Information</th>
<th>Read policy $(n = 1,566)$</th>
<th>Not read policy $(n = 1,491)$</th>
<th>Total sample $(N = 3,057)$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other students</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic mailbox/subject outline</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most frequently cited primary source of information on plagiarism across the entire sample was lecturers. However, for those students who had read the policy, the policy itself was the primary source, followed by information from lecturers. Noteworthy was that 12% of participants who indicated that they had not read the policy on plagiarism ranked
their primary source of information on plagiarism as the policy. This anomaly may be attributed to participants not being entirely clear of what the actual policy is, perhaps confusing subject outline information or the university booklet on avoiding plagiarism as being policy.

For those students who had not read the policy, lecturers were ranked as the most frequent primary source of information, followed by “other” sources of information. Table 8.7 displays the coded categories for those participants who indicated “other” as their primary source of information.

Table 8.7

*Reported Categories and Percentage Response Rates for “Other” Categories of Primary Sources of Information on Plagiarism by Whether the Academic Misconduct Policy Was Read*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Read policy (n = 655)</th>
<th>Not read policy (n = 749)</th>
<th>Total (N = 1,404)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General sources of knowledge (e.g., dictionary, Internet, common sense)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal document (e.g., referencing guides, law, journal articles)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sources and interpersonal communications (e.g., media, family, news)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of above</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalid response</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal experience</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Completing a workshop was the most common source of information (23%) of plagiarism for students who reported “other” as their primary source of information, followed by using general sources of information and then referring to formal documents. It was interesting to note that 11% of these participants reported using public sources (which are not regarded as scholarly sources) as their primary source of information on plagiarism.

**8.3 Discussion**

In this study, slightly more than 50% of participants indicated that they had read the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy. Male students and distance-education students were significantly more likely than female students and on-campus students to read the policy. Male distance-education students were the group most likely to have read the academic misconduct policy. There was no significant association between faculty affiliation and reading the misconduct policy.

The finding that only half the sample read the policy is surprising given the emphasis placed on academic integrity at CSU. It is of concern that students are indicating that they have not read the academic misconduct policy given that it is an integral requirement and obligation under the student charter. If the information is readily available, why are students not taking the necessary steps to engage with the material provided? As stated in the Avoiding Plagiarism at CSU booklet (McVilly & McGowan, 2004), a strategy to avoid plagiarism is to understand the terminology set out in the policy.

An answer may be found in the business and marketing literature on information overload (Edmunds & Morris, 2000). In a review of the literature, Eppler and Mengis (2004) provide a range of terms to describe information overload, such as cognitive overload,
sensory overload, communication overload, knowledge overload and information fatigue syndrome. Essentially, research finds that information overload negatively correlates with individual performance; that is, information is retained up to a certain point but, as it increases beyond this point, individual performance rapidly declines, resulting in information overload (Chewning & Harrell, 1990; Eppler & Mengis, 2004; O'Reilly 1980).

It is plausible that students may be receiving too much information at the commencement of each semester and, to filter the information, they may be selecting resources perceived to be useful or relevant at that time. It is also posited that, as the session progresses, time pressures and motivational factors may affect their ability to take in adequate important information on academic misconduct. Moreover, researchers indicate that, when issues of academic integrity arise, students may perceive the content to be irrelevant to their training and on the periphery of their future role prospects (Ashworth et al., 1997; Gullifer & Tyson, 2010; Park, 2003). Thus, these factors may contribute to the reasons why students avoid reading the academic misconduct policy, despite the relative ease of access to it.

Despite claims that clear definitions of plagiarism and well-developed institutional policies about plagiarism enable greater understanding of attribution of knowledge (Lampert, 2008), it is evident in the findings of this research that the academic misconduct items of cheating, collusion and supplementary referencing are confused with plagiarism behaviours, regardless of whether a student has read the policy. These results may indicate that some students could have reported reading the academic misconduct policy when they had not. Given that social desirable responding was evident in their ratings of self-understanding
plagiarism, this premise is plausible. Alternatively, the participants may have regarded subject-based information as the policy or information overload may have impeded students reading of the policy on academic misconduct.

The importance of these findings for CSU may reside in how students’ engagement with university policy is improved. It does not appear to be sufficient for CSU to provide access to information about university regulations, policies and procedures, as indicated in the student charter. Rather, there appears to be a need for more active engagement with learning about academic integrity, while ensuring that this does not contribute to information overload. These findings support the findings from Chapter 3, where the focus group participants reported to confuse cheating or collusion behaviours with plagiarism.

The current research contradicts some findings of earlier studies regarding widespread uncertainty about what constitutes plagiarism. Noteworthy is the high degree of accuracy in identifying the behaviours that constitute plagiarism in the current study. This finding contradicts Roig’s (1997) early research. He indicates that students lack the necessary knowledge to identify plagiarised text. He suggests that possible criteria used by students to determine whether a text has been plagiarised is the presence or absence of acknowledgement to the original author. He reports that many students seem to believe that, ‘as long as the original author is credited and/or as long as minor modifications are made to the original, the material is generally considered properly paraphrased” (p. 121). In other words, students may perceive that it is proper to take portions of text, perhaps with little or no modification, and to appropriate such text as their own writing. However, in the current
study, when presented with plagiarism behaviours, students were clearly able to identify that plagiarism involved more than just attribution of an author.

Conversely, the current findings appear to support Barrett and Cox’s (2005) findings, which show that confusion seems to reside with being able to discern from a range of academic behaviours, as opposed to knowing what plagiarism is. They find that students categorised the act of copying another student’s work as an act of collusion or framed more positively as collaboration, instead of plagiarism. An explanation put forward by Howard (2000) suggests that the term “plagiarism” is “unwieldy, unstable and insidious” (p. 488). Howard’s (2000) response to address the confusion that abounds is to replace the use of the word “plagiarism” with terms that accurately describe the behaviour undertaken by the student, such as cheating, non-attribution and patchwriting. Findings from the current research support her suggestions but would further deconstruct terms, such as cheating and non-attribution, to reflect concrete behaviour.

Strategies to combat student plagiarism that emphasise students being knowledgeable about institutional policies on academic honesty (Higbee & Thomas, 2002) may not be sufficient. Rather than relying solely on students proactively seeking out the policy on academic misconduct, universities must take a more proactive role, using a wide range of strategies. As a way forward, CSU could address the common factors that may have an effect on the incidence of inadvertent plagiarism among students. These factors, as outlined by James et al. (2002), include helping students to understand the concept of plagiarism and the practical implications in practice, helping students to understand citation and referencing
conventions and addressing some students’ limited academic skills (critical analysis, thesis construction and paraphrasing).

The use of formal workshops may go some way in addressing these recommendations. Educating students about academic integrity may have a greater effect on helping students differentiate between the behaviours that make up the academic misconduct policy. Thus, a university-wide, systematic approach with an educative focus may have a greater effect on improving students’ understanding of academic misconduct, as opposed to an expectation that students read the policy. This call to use an educative approach is not novel. Rather, a range of authors have expressed similar sentiments (Carroll & Duggan, 2005; Ellery, 2008; Gullifer & Tyson, 2010; Howard, 2002; McGowan, 2005c), calling for greater use of education strategies alongside detection and punishment. Future research may benefit from the formal evaluation of a training program as a means to reduce the incidence of plagiarism.

Although this research has resulted in some clear implications for academic integrity at CSU, the case study approach does have some limitations. Findings, assumptions and conclusions, while informative, may not be generalisable to other higher educational settings. Nevertheless, given the idiosyncratic development of academic integrity policy in higher education institutions and the dearth of a standardised, agreed on definition of plagiarism, one could argue that developing generalisable results is difficult, hence, the justification of case study methodology. Consequently, this research extends our understanding of student (dis)engagement with academic integrity policy and the resultant lack of understanding of the
behaviours that make up academic integrity at one institution, in particular, confusing plagiarism with collusion and cheating.

**8.4 Conclusion**

Carroll (2005c) argues that institutions must take some responsibility for understanding “where and when students find out about plagiarism” (p. 39). This advice may seem prudent, as it appears that half of the participants in this study have gained some knowledge about academic misconduct without reading the academic misconduct policy and have performed better at discerning plagiarism behaviours than those participants who have read the policy. This finding challenges our first premise that problems with plagiarism might be attributed to students not reading or understanding plagiarism policy documents. Rather, students’ understanding of plagiarism and how to avoid it requires much more than knowing what is in the policy documents. Instead, the focus should be on teaching academic integrity and the behaviours that one must engage in to demonstrate the mastery of competent and disciplinary-specific writing and avoiding those behaviours that are not in line with this (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995).
Chapter 9:

Assessing Fear of Inadvertent Plagiarism

9.1 Introduction

The confusion with identifying plagiarism from the behaviours that make up the academic misconduct policy appeared to contribute to feelings of uncertainty expressed by students in the focus group study reported in Chapter 3. Students in the focus groups expressed anxiety concerning a number of issues, including not fully understanding what plagiarism and other academic integrity behaviours are, not being certain about the acceptable citation guidelines at CSU and confusion about the appropriate conventions of referencing within their specific discipline. These issues caused considerable anxiety for the majority of students interviewed. Students in the focus groups also expressed the belief that, despite having knowledge about the university regulations, plagiarism could still occur unintentionally. These findings parallel that of other research that explores students’ perceptions of plagiarism (Ashworth et al., 1997). It is posited in the current research that the fear of unintentional plagiarism appears to underpin the expressed anxiety.

The focus group participants, described in Chapter 3, also expressed having a lack of clarity regarding intellectual property and paraphrasing. Participants expressed uncertainty regarding paraphrasing ideas after taking notes from books, journals and the Internet and combining this knowledge with personal ideas or perceptions. The problems with paraphrasing may be exacerbated by the different and sometimes conflicting expectations of academic staff. In a study of faculty beliefs about plagiarism and paraphrasing, Miguel Roig (2001) asks college instructors to identify plagiarised text from several passages and finds
substantial differences between college instructors’ identification of plagiarism. He concludes that “a significant proportion of professors maintain criteria for correct paraphrasing that may be viewed by some of their colleagues as plagiarism” (p. 313). Roig suggests that “the absence of a general operational definition for paraphrasing leaves plenty of room for disagreement as to when a paraphrase might be considered an instance of plagiarism” (p. 320). Thus suggesting that, if faculty members have difficulty in deciphering paraphrasing conventions, the task could be bewildering for students, therefore, creating anxiety about unintentional plagiarism.

Breen and Maassen (2005) also find an element of anxiety expressed by students for inadvertent plagiarism. They conduct a two-phase project, with focus groups held in Phase 1 to enable the development of learning materials in Phase 2. Underpinning some of the anxiety around plagiarism expressed by their participants, is poor skill development, insufficient policy and students feeling stressed about correctly paraphrasing and wanting to use more quotations, as a result. Breen and Maassen (2005) posit that the expressed anxiety around plagiarism is exacerbated by the confusion of what constitutes plagiarism and the perceived sanctions that might be incurred because of the unintentional act. Their findings parallel those reported in the qualitative study in Chapter 3 and the survey results discussed in Chapter 7 in the current research.

Fear of inadvertent plagiarism may be considered a factor that actually inhibits or prevents plagiarism. Research finds that the fear of being caught plagiarising is perceived by students to affect their job security, negatively affect their career and result in embarrassment (Love & Simmons, 1998). These beliefs were also evident among the policing students that
formed some of the focus groups described in Chapter 3. For example, committing plagiarism within the policing program was believed to result in dismissal from the police force, therefore, negatively affecting the participant’s career choice. The threat of dismissal created much expressed anxiety about inadvertently plagiarising and what participants perceived was a disproportionately severe penalty.

Findings from the focus group research with the policing participants need to be read with some caution, as their experiences are context specific to their career pathway. Similarly, findings from Love and Simmons (1998) also need to be read with some caution, as the research was conducted with only a very small group of students (six in total) who were enrolled in postgraduate studies and, therefore, may only be applicable to this small group. However, McCabe’s (1993) research, which includes a much larger sample, finds that the fear of consequences deters plagiarism. The more consistent staff and administration are at managing plagiarism, the more likely that the fear of being caught will inhibit it. Power (2009) reports that students purposefully avoid plagiarism not only because they fear detection but also because they find it easier to complete the assignment without resorting to plagiarism. Power (2009) further reports that, while there are other considerations that students weigh up (such as having respect for the instructor, enjoying writing, feeling guilty if they plagiarise and having a sense of morality), fear was reported as the greatest deterrent.

While other factors are examined that may contribute to students’ fear of inadvertent plagiarism, such as being disorganised (Beasley, 2004), possessing poor time-management skills (Thomas, 2004), having a tendency to procrastinate (Beasley, 2004; Love & Simmons, 1998) and lacking the necessary scholarly competencies (Beasley, 2004; Love & Simmons,
1998), a review of the literature found little research that specifically examines student’s fear of inadvertent plagiarism.

Building on the results from the focus group research discussed in Chapter 3, this chapter will address the following research questions:

1. How fearful are students of being accused of plagiarism?
2. How fearful are students of inadvertent plagiarism?

**9.2 Method**

**9.2.1 Sample and procedure.**

A detailed description of sample characteristics, ethics approval and procedure can be found in Chapter 6.

**9.2.2 Measure of fear of inadvertent plagiarism.**

The items used to measure students’ perceived prevalence rates are detailed in Chapter 5.

**9.3 Results**

On average, participants ($N = 3,405$) rated their fear as a medium level of fear of being accused of plagiarism ($M = 5.40, SD = 3.16$). Compared to the level of expressed fear of inadvertent plagiarism in the focus groups, this finding is somewhat lower than anticipated. However, there is a large amount of variability within these ratings given the large standard deviation. The percentage of students who rated their fear as being extremely scared of an allegation of plagiarism (ratings $>9$) was 23% ($n = 782$), while 14% ($n = 496$) were not scared (ratings $< 2$).
Data were also analysed to determine whether differences in student characteristics influenced the perceived fear of being accused of plagiarism. Means and standard are reported in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1

*Perceived Fear of Allegation of Plagiarism by Sample Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Fear of allegation of plagiarism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2,264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance mode</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On campus</td>
<td>1031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance education</td>
<td>2294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Alpha set at .01 given the large sample size. Means with same subscript differ significantly at $p < .01$ by Tukey’s post-hoc.

There was a significant difference between scores for males ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 3.13$) and females ($M = 5.77$, $SD = 3.05$), $t(3,322) = 9.74$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed), with females
rating a higher fear of an allegation of plagiarism. The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 1.13, 95% CI: −.900 to 1.35) was small to medium (Cohen’s $d = .37$).

There was no statistically significant difference in fear of allegation of plagiarism scores between the four faculties (arts, business, education and science), $F(3, 3,212) = 3.22, p = .022$. This suggests that, while mean scores for students from the Faculty of Science were slightly higher for fear of an allegation of plagiarism, students across all faculties were fairly consistent in their fear of being accused of plagiarism.

As shown in the table, there was a significant difference between scores for distance-education students and on-campus students, $t(2,179.793) = −6.12, p = .000$ (two-tailed). However, the magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = −.693, 95% CI: −.915 to −.471) was small (Cohen’s $d = .22$).

There was a statistically significant difference between the year of study (year one to postgraduate) and how participants rated fear of inadvertent plagiarism, $F(4, 3,226) = 3.95, p = .003, \eta^2 = .0004$. The effect size, calculated using eta squared was small. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) test revealed that fear of inadvertent plagiarism appears to be at its highest in first year and then decreases as year of study increases (see Table 9.1). First-year students differed significantly only from postgraduate students.

While a significant difference was found between distance-education and on-campus students and first-year and postgraduate students for fear of inadvertent plagiarism scores, the effect sizes were quite small. That is, any intervention program would not need to address
attendance mode or year of study as factors in reducing the fear of inadvertent plagiarism among the student body. However, these findings are logical and interesting. That is, many first-year students tend to be school leavers and are not only developing intellectually and academically but also may be negotiating other important developmental situations (for example, developing identity, professional pathways, health and wellbeing and peer relationships). The writing process at university, while important, is only one component of their acculturation into academic life. However, writing is perceived by academics as a fundamental component of learning and assessment in all disciplines in higher education. Therefore, enabling good writing is a priority for academic staff, as it enhances student learning and develops both their critical thinking and active problem-solving abilities (Bean, 2001). As such, it is not surprising that so much emphasis is placed on good academic writing and the accompanying citation conventions. However, prior experiences and academic strategies may not adequately prepare first-year students for the rigour of academic writing, hence, increasing their fear of inadvertent plagiarism.

9.4 Conclusion

The results of this chapter demonstrated how fearful students were of inadvertent plagiarism and supported the focus group findings discussed in Chapter 3. Female students reported a significantly higher fear of inadvertent plagiarism allegation than males. Despite mean scores for students from the science faculty being slightly higher for fear of an allegation of plagiarism, low effect sizes indicate that students across all faculties are fairly consistent in rating their fear of being accused of plagiarism as medium. Finally, on-campus
students reported a significantly higher fear of inadvertent plagiarism allegation than distance-education students did.

It is posited and supported by the focus group findings that not understanding the style requirements required for citation or knowing the rules and regulations to adhere to when writing an academic paper is central to the fear. Moreover, despite allowances made in the academic misconduct policy for intent, students believed that unintentional plagiarism resulted in the same consequences as intentional plagiarism. This was evident across all focus groups, regardless of year of study or discipline.
Chapter 10:

Perceived Seriousness of Plagiarism

10.1 Introduction

Plagiarism has been a long-standing concern for higher education institutions, as evidenced by the plethora of literature devoted to the subject over the last decade. Publicised accounts in the media further highlight the detrimental effects of plagiarism. These include the erosion of trust in and respect of university courses and damage to the perceived professionalism of university graduates and university reputations (Cizek, 2003). Consequently, academic institutions are turning to their academic integrity policies, assessment practices, education programs and deterrence strategies to examine their approach to managing academic integrity. Specifically, it is argued that sanctions should be severe enough to bring about change in student behaviour (Kiehl, 2006).

Increasing the severity of sanctions to deter the occurrence of certain behaviours is based on deterrence theory. Supporters of this theory believe that individuals choose to obey rules after considering the gains and losses of their actions (Taylor, Walton & Young, 1973). If the sanctions for committing a particular behaviour are perceived to be severe, then individuals may be less likely to engage in it. Thus, the degree to which students perceive plagiarism as serious may have direct consequences regarding whether they engage in it. This claim is put forward by researchers who find a relationship between the frequency of engaging in academic misconduct behaviours and the perception of the seriousness of those behaviours. The academic integrity literature suggests that the less serious the behaviour is
perceived the more likely a student will engage in it (Brown & Howell, 2001; Hughes & McCabe, 2006a; Lim & See, 2001; Nuss, 1984).

Literature on PSP appears to follow two major lines of enquiry: comparing the seriousness of plagiarism with other academic misconduct behaviours and comparing staff and student ratings of the seriousness of plagiarism. Research focusing on students’ PSP relative to other academic misconduct behaviours, such as collusion and cheating (Evans & Craig, 1990; Lim & See, 2001; McCabe & Trevino, 1996; Payne & Nantz, 1994), indicates that plagiarism is regarded as less serious than blatant cheating but more serious than collusion. The consequences of these beliefs is that, if plagiarism is considered a trivial problem and is not perceived to be wrong, then students are more likely to plagiarise (Barnett & Dalton, 1981; Evans & Craig, 1990).

Other lines of enquiry that compare staff and student ratings on PSP indicate that staff and students may hold different beliefs about the seriousness of specific academic misconduct behaviours and appropriate levels of punishment (Higbee & Thomas, 2002; Roberts & Toombs, 1993). For example, Hughes and McCabe (2006a) find that staff perceived a range of academic misconduct behaviours as more serious than undergraduate students did. With regards to collusion, undergraduate students perceived it to be a less serious behaviour than staff did. Comparable findings in an Australian study by Brimble and Stevenson-Clarke (2005a) indicate that, compared to academic staff, students perceive various acts of misconduct as less serious and, therefore, believe that it should result in lesser penalties. Common to these studies is the theme that, compared to students, staff tend to perceive plagiarism as more serious. One implication of this is that students may be accused
of academic misconduct when they believe that they are using acceptable academic standards
(Higbee & Thomas, 2002).

These findings are noteworthy because plagiarism is regarded as a serious academic
offence by institutions whose academic misconduct policies characterise plagiarism as theft
(Sutherland-Smith, 2008). Parameswaran and Devi (2006) also use the analogy of crime to
describe plagiarism, suggesting that, like crime, the severity of plagiarism is judged on the
type of act and the perpetrator’s intent. Moreover, they argue that plagiarism “is a crime
that...violates laws, university rules, and (some say) morals” (p. 263). They further argue
that, just like different types of crime where some are deemed more serious than others, there
can be different types of plagiarism that are also judged on a continuum of seriousness.

Meanwhile, managing plagiarism in higher education necessitates developing sound
policy that specifies how deterrence and detection of student plagiarism will operate
(Parameswaran & Devi, 2006). The administration of these policies is what speaks to the
seriousness of plagiarism. Hence, the responsibility to detect and act on a potential case of
plagiarism resides with the academic staff member responsible for the unit of study.
However, there is the possibility for misinterpretation of the academic misconduct policy by
individual staff members. There is also the potential for acts of academic dishonesty to be
perceived to lie on a continuum of severity (Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003), thereby leading to
inconsistent approaches to managing plagiarism. These different and often conflicting
approaches to applying academic policy affect students’ PSP (Gullifer & Tyson, 2010). That
is, if there is no consistent approach applied to address plagiarism across a university, then it
may not be considered serious by students.
As previously indicated, studies examining PSP generally compare different types of behaviours that are considered academic misconduct. However, Gullifer and Tyson’s (2010) focus group study suggests that students compare the seriousness of plagiarism to common offences rather than other academic misconduct acts. In this context, plagiarism is not perceived to be particularly serious. Further, the crime-based discourse evident within Gullifer and Tyson’s (2010) study highlights the role of the perceived intent of the plagiarist. Accordingly, students in the study indicate that the deliberate copying of material without acknowledgement should deserve harsher penalties than careless referencing.

If the word “plagiarism” is ensconced in a discourse of crime, this may suggest a moral basis when assessing PSP. Morality is described as underpinning beliefs that guide an individual to make decisions that are deemed good or bad or right or wrong (Myrick, 2004). It is developed through socio-cultural influences and personal understanding. In this context, student beliefs about cheating and plagiarism may be framed as a moral issue, where PSP is influenced by friendship, interpersonal trust and peer loyalty that justifies plagiarism (Ashworth et al., 1997). Therefore, the act of plagiarism is potentially framed as a moral issue, based on whether the act to engage in plagiarism is considered right or wrong. PSP is then based on the context of the act (e.g., peer influences and intent). If this is the case, then plagiarism may not be regarded as a serious academic issue (one that breaches scholarly authorship and attribution of knowledge).

10.1.1 Measuring perceived seriousness of plagiarism.

Relatively little work has been done on measuring students’ PSP relative to other criminal or deviant acts. Measuring the perceptions of seriousness of these behaviours has
traditionally resided in the criminal justice literature. As stated by Warr and Stafford (1983), judgements of seriousness influence the degree to which different crimes are feared and, therefore, affect the perceptions of appropriate sanctions. Such judgements drive public perceptions on the appropriate penalties for those crimes. Policymakers are able to respond to the public’s perceptions by developing or amending policy and advocating for changes to sentencing (Hoffman & Hardyman, 1986). Crime seriousness research also investigates the degree of social consensus on the perceptions of seriousness of crime (Rosenmerkel, 2001; Rossi, Waite, Bose & Berk, 1974; Stylianou, 2003; Warr, 1989). Of particular interest is whether this consensus is reflected in the sanctions administered in the criminal justice system.

In a substantial review of this body of research, Stylianou (2003) suggests that there are two important characteristics associated with perceptions of seriousness of crime: consequences and wrongfulness. The most salient characteristic is the perceived consequence of crime. Thus, violent behaviours that result in bodily harm are generally regarded as most serious, followed by property offences. The second characteristic that affects how seriousness ratings of crime are perceived is the wrongfulness of the act. That is, the extent to which behaviour is still negatively sanctioned, even though it is without negative consequences. Thus, victimless crimes (academic misconduct would fit here) are judged not on the extent to which they cause harm but on the extent they violate the moral standards of society, that is, the extent to which they are morally wrong (Stylianou, 2003). However, when measuring the seriousness of crime, researchers tend to treat seriousness as measuring one underlying uni-dimensional construct.
Warr (1989) on the other hand argues that judgments of seriousness take into account more than one dimension. He states that historically, researchers investigating the seriousness judgements of crime overlook the consequence of wrongfulness and harmfulness when making judgments of seriousness. Therefore, in order to investigate the consequences of both, Warr examined the wrongfulness and harmfulness of three types of crime: property, personal and public order. He suggests that wrongfulness is the “moral culpability or blameworthiness that would accrue to the individual committing the act” (p. 796) and that harmfulness is the “harm or damage that the action brings upon the victim” (p. 796). His research examines how seriousness judgements are formed, concentrating on the contribution of wrongfulness and harmfulness to seriousness judgements.

Participants in Warr’s (1989) study rated 31 offences according to their seriousness, wrongfulness and harmfulness. When analysing the data, Warr (1989) noted that the participants fell into two groups when responding to the wrongfulness of an act. He found that a substantial minority (26%) of the participants gave a maximum wrongfulness rating for nearly all of the items. He labelled these participants “non-discriminators” because they had a tendency to rate all offences as equally wrong on moral gravity. For these participants, seriousness was correlated with harmfulness (wrongfulness is constant). Moreover, non-discriminators perceived crimes to be slightly more serious and more harmful than discriminators. Conversely, discriminators had a tendency to perceive seriousness of crime as being contingent on the wrongfulness of the act, rather than on the harmfulness of the act.

Warr (1989) concluded that “rather than combining wrongfulness and harmfulness in some manner, these participants [discriminators] tend to attend to the dominant feature of the
crime—either its wrongfulness or harmfulness—in judging seriousness” (p. 810). Thus, when deciding on the seriousness of crime, Warr (1989) found that respondents relied on the category of the crime (property, personal, public order) when making a judgement based on either the harmfulness or wrongfulness of that crime. He also found that wrongfulness and harmfulness are strongly correlated. A finding that had implications for the future use of the measure.

Recent research that examined cultural differences in adolescent perceptions of the seriousness of delinquent behaviours also suggests that it can be difficult to ascertain what participants are rating when they are asked to respond to a range of behaviours—harmfulness, wrongfulness or legal aspects (Tyson & Hubert, 2003). Tyson and Hubert (2003) further suggest that harmfulness is a more objective measure and, therefore, is more likely to increase consensus on seriousness ratings. Conversely, focusing on the dimension of wrongfulness increases the difference of opinion among participants (Vogel, 1998). Therefore, in their research, Tyson and Hubert (2003) suggest that assessing the wrongfulness of an act is more likely to represent the individual’s personal feeling about the behaviour. Therefore, in keeping with Vogel’s (1998) assertions, they operationalised seriousness as the wrongfulness of a behaviour.

Drawing from the findings of studies such as Tyson and Hubert (2003) and Warr (1989), the concepts of seriousness and wrongfulness may be most relevant to plagiarism, as it is assumed that it is a victimless crime. Applying this framework to plagiarism, PSP may be related to how wrong the behaviour is perceived to be, rather than how harmful it is perceived to be. Moreover, the use of wrongfulness to assess PSP is more likely to capture
how a student feels about the serious nature of plagiarism and why. Accordingly, this current study extends on Gullifer and Tyson’s (2010) findings related to PSP by heavily drawing on the work of Warr (1989) and Tyson and Hubert (2003) to inform PSP. Specifically, the current research addresses the following research questions:

1. How serious is plagiarism perceived to be relative to other criminal acts?
2. In their PSP, do students discriminate between moral wrongfulness and seriousness?

10.2 Method

10.2.1 Characteristics of the sample.

The population of interest comprised all current domestic students enrolled at CSU, which is a regional university in Australia. All eligible students \( N = 30,092 \) were invited to complete an online survey of which this study was only a small component. Of the 4,477 respondents who started the survey, 3,405 provided sufficient information to allow analysis (see Table 10.1). Thus, the sample represented 11% of the overall population of domestic CSU students.

10.2.2 Procedure.

Approval from the CSU Human Ethics Research Committee was obtained and an email was sent inviting students to complete an anonymous online survey. The survey took 20–30 minutes to complete and data were collected over a two-week period. Once emails were sent, email addresses were deleted from the email server. Students were not directly asked if they had ever plagiarised.
Table 10.1

Comparison of Sample Characteristics as a Percentage of Population Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage of sample (%)</th>
<th>Percentage of population (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td><em>N</em> = 3,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1,060</td>
<td>13,709</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2,264</td>
<td>20,950</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>932</td>
<td>6,541</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>9,267</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>6,945</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>8,041</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance mode</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On campus</td>
<td>1031</td>
<td>13,332</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance education</td>
<td>2294</td>
<td>21,327</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of study*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>828</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>842</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>745</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>472</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate students</td>
<td>344</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *The official population figure included the new enrolments for the same year that data were collected but were not included in the study. Therefore, the official population figure is greater than the figure for the population of students sourced for the study.

*No population statistics available
10.2.3 Measure of seriousness.

The scale used in this research comprised of 13 delinquent behaviours from Tyson and Hubert’s (2003) seriousness measure. These behaviours ranged from minor acts of deviance (making a nuisance phone call) to major acts (selling drugs, such as cocaine, heroin or ice). Three of the most violent items were based on serious criminal acts from Warr’s (1989) seriousness scale (murdering someone), and the remainder were generated from the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy (e.g., copying text without using quotation marks or acknowledging the source). The list also included two items that could be considered cheating behaviours (e.g., submitting an essay bought off the Internet) (see Table 10.2). Participants were required to rate the seriousness of these behaviours varying on an eleven-point scale ranging from zero (least serious) to 10 (most serious).

Participants were also asked to rate on an eleven-point scale how morally wrong they perceived the three plagiarism items to be from zero (least morally wrong) to 10 (most morally wrong). As this scale was part of a much larger survey, the final length of the survey prevented the measuring of moral wrongfulness ratings for all items. Therefore, only the three plagiarism items were rated. Nevertheless, this was consistent with the focus on differentiating whether students formed PSP based on perceptions of seriousness alone or on moral wrongfulness.

In light of Warr’s (1989) findings relating to non-discriminators, the current study also examined whether participants discriminated between the wrongfulness of the three plagiarism items. Any participant who rated the wrongfulness of all three items as greater
than nine was deemed a non-discriminator. In total, 313 students (9% of the sample) fell into this category.

To eliminate the possibility that non-discriminators demonstrated a pattern of response style, their responses on the wrongfulness items were compared with their responses to another eleven-point rating scale (the Writing Apprehension Scale) completed as part of a larger study. There was statistically significant difference between rating scores for writing apprehension and moral wrongfulness ratings, \( t(304) = 6.99, p < .001, d = -.57 \). This finding suggests that non-discriminators were not responding extremely to all items in the questionnaire.

**10.3 Results**

Means and standard deviations ranked in order of seriousness for individual items and mean ratings for all behaviours are reported in Table 10.2.
Table 10.2

*Mean Perceived Seriousness of a Range of Deviant Behaviours Ranked from Most Serious to Least Serious*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>All participants $(N = 3,284)$</th>
<th>Non-discriminators $(n = 298)$</th>
<th>Discriminators $(n = 2,986)$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Murdering someone</td>
<td>9.96 (0.41)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.94 (0.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Participating in a gang rape</td>
<td>9.96 (0.34)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.96 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sexually assaulting someone</td>
<td>9.90 (0.48)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.94 (0.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Selling drugs, such as cocaine, heroin or ice</td>
<td>9.52 (1.14)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.91 (0.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Driving a car while drunk</td>
<td>9.39 (1.12)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.85 (0.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Hitting someone without a reason</td>
<td>8.77 (1.65)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.76 (0.99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Purposely damaging something that does not belong to you</td>
<td>8.70 (1.40)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.62 (1.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Knowingly buying, selling or holding stolen goods</td>
<td>8.41 (1.74)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.74 (0.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Breaking into a building</td>
<td>8.38 (1.72)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.63 (1.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Submitting an essay bought off the Internet</td>
<td>8.24 (1.99)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.75(.95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Cheating on an exam</td>
<td>8.15 (1.92)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.71 (.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Stealing something worth $50</td>
<td>8.11 (1.90)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.56 (1.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Spraying abusive graffiti on a public building</td>
<td>7.96 (1.94)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.43 (1.32)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. *Paraphrasing whole chunks of text in an assignment without acknowledging the source a  
   7.06 (2.43)  14  9.55 (1.11)  12  6.30 (2.33)  14

15. *Making up false reference citations  
   6.48 (2.67)  15  9.35 (1.31)  15  6.19 (2.60)  16

16. Using marijuana  
   6.27 (2.99)  16  8.33 (2.56)  18  6.06 (2.95)  15

17. *Copying text without using quotation marks or acknowledging the source b  
   6.15 (2.71)  17  9.27 (1.36)  16  5.84 (2.61)  17

18. Making a nuisance phone call  
   5.70 (2.90)  18  8.10 (2.35)  19  5.46 (2.85)  18

19. *Paraphrasing a few sentences in an assignment without acknowledging the source c  
   5.59 (2.75)  19  8.90 (1.62)  17  5.25 (2.61)  19

20. Downloading music from the Internet without paying for it  
   4.76 (3.08)  20  7.81 (2.58)  20  4.45 (2.96)  20

21. Copying a DVD  
   4.46 (3.01)  21  7.27 (2.87)  21  4.18 (2.88)  21

22. Skipping lectures  
   3.23 (2.76)  22  5.56 (3.15)  22  2.99 (2.61)  22

Average rating  
   7.50 (1.33)  9.14 (0.84)  7.34 (1.26)

Note. * denotes plagiarism items as per the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy. 
*# denotes academic misconduct items.

a,b,c There was a significant difference between scores for discriminators and non-discriminators for all three plagiarism items, p < .001.

Table 10.2 presents the means and standard deviations for all behaviours across the categories of all participants (non-discriminators and discriminators). As shown in the table, the average rating of seriousness for the non-discriminator group was greater than that for the discriminator group (M = 9.14, SD = .084 v. M = 7.34, SD = 1.26, out of a maximum of 10). This difference was significant, t (442.02) = 33.32, p < .001, d = 1.50.

The results indicate that violent offences were rated as most serious compared to the other categories of offences for all participants. The item perceived as most serious by both
groups was participating in a gang rape ($M = 9.96$). Discriminators also rated murdering someone as equally serious ($M = 9.96$), followed by sexually assaulting someone ($M = 9.88$). The items that were ranked as least serious involved downloading music and copying DVDs, behaviours commonly referred to as pirating. The means for these two items for the non-discriminator group was greater than that of the discriminator group ($M = 7.81$ cf. $4.45$, and $M = 7.27$ cf. $4.18$, respectively).

The three plagiarism items, in comparison to the 19 other items, were ranked 14th, 17th and 19th for all participants (from 22). The mean ratings for these items were also greater for the non-discriminator group than the discriminator group ($M = 9.24$, $SD = 1.24$ v. $M = 5.97$, $SD = 2.32$, out of a maximum of 10). This difference was significant, $t(558.28) = 40.03$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.45$. For both groups, the plagiarism item ranked as most serious was “paraphrasing whole chunks of text in an assignment without acknowledging the source”. This item was followed by “copying text without using quotation marks or acknowledging the source” and “paraphrasing a few sentences in an assignment without acknowledging the source” ($M = 8.90$ cf. $5.46$).

For all students, relative to other criminal acts, the plagiarism items were ranked as less serious than those behaviours that have the potential to endanger other people’s lives or result in the stealing or damaging of property. However, while there was relative consensus on the rankings of behaviours, non-discriminators still rated plagiarism behaviours as equally serious to a range of other criminal offences. For example, for non-discriminators, the mean difference between the items “participating in a gang rape” and ”paraphrasing whole chunks
of text in an assignment without acknowledging the source” was only 0.41 compared to a difference of 3.66 for discriminators.

Means and standard deviations for ratings of moral wrongfulness of the plagiarism items for all participants (non-discriminators and discriminators) are shown in Table 10.3. Given the way the non-discriminators were identified, their mean scores are obviously very high and have no variability. However, the mean scores for the discriminators are lower, differ across the three items and have relatively large variability, as demonstrated by the standard deviations.

Table 10.3

*Mean Perceived Moral Wrongfulness of Plagiarism Items Ranked from Most Serious to Least Serious*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>All participants</th>
<th>Non-discriminators</th>
<th>Discriminators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrasing whole chunks of text in an assignment without acknowledging the source</td>
<td>M (SD) 7.64 (2.30)</td>
<td>M (SD) 10.00 (.000)</td>
<td>M (SD) 7.35 (2.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying text without using quotation marks or acknowledging the source</td>
<td>M (SD) 6.76 (2.54)</td>
<td>M (SD) 10.00 (.000)</td>
<td>M (SD) 6.44 (2.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrasing a few sentences in an assignment without acknowledging the source</td>
<td>M (SD) 5.98 (2.71)</td>
<td>M (SD) 10.00 (.000)</td>
<td>M (SD) 5.57 (2.51)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The correlations between the ratings for the seriousness of plagiarism items and the moral wrongfulness of plagiarism items are shown in Table 10.4. As shown, the correlations were large, which is consistent with the findings of Warr (1989). These findings suggest that
the high degree of correlation between these items could be indicative of measuring the same underlying construct, indicating that rating the seriousness of plagiarism behaviours appear to be inextricably linked to judgements of moral wrongfulness.

Table 10.4

*Correlations between Moral Wrongfulness Items and Seriousness Items*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Moral wrongfulness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrasing a few sentences in an assignment without acknowledging the source</td>
<td>.720**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying text without using quotation marks or acknowledging the source</td>
<td>.679**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrasing whole chunks of text in an assignment without acknowledging the source</td>
<td>.648**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: **p < .01 (two-tailed)*
10.4 Discussion

The aim of this chapter was to assess PSP specifically. It addressed the following research questions:

1. How serious is plagiarism perceived relative to other criminal acts?
2. In their PSP, do students discriminate between moral wrongfulness and seriousness?

Evident in the results was that participants rated offences involving actual or threatened harm to another person more seriously than offences involving harm to property or potential harm to the individual engaged in the act, such as using marijuana or academic misconduct. Regarding academic misconduct, it is clear that, relative to the other behaviours and blatant forms of cheating (e.g., submitting an essay bought off the Internet and cheating in an exam), plagiarism appears to be rated on the least serious end of the scale by all participants. These low seriousness ratings of plagiarism support literature that indicates plagiarism is regarded as less serious than blatant cheating (Evans & Craig, 1990; Lim & See, 2001; McCabe & Trevino, 1996; Payne & Nantz, 1994). Moreover, relative to the other behaviours, plagiarism items are located within the bottom nine behaviours.

The low seriousness rankings of the plagiarism behaviours support findings from focus group discussions that found students did not perceive plagiarism to be as serious as the university is perceived to treat it and, relative to other criminal acts, was not perceived to be serious at all (Gullifer & Tyson, 2010). The potential implication of students’ rating plagiarism as not very serious has been posited to increase the probability of students engaging in it (Barnett & Dalton, 1981; Bunn, Caudill & Gropper, 1992; Evans & Craig, 1990).
When comparing the current results with those of other studies, it is apparent that blatant cheating behaviours (submitting an essay bought of the Internet and cheating in an exam) are perceived to be more serious than other forms of academic misconduct (copying text without using quotation marks or acknowledging the source and paraphrasing a few sentences in an assignment without acknowledging the source) (Lim & See, 2001; McCabe & Trevino, 1996; Payne & Nantz, 1994). However, for a minority of students (the non-discriminators), plagiarism is conceived to be very serious. It is likely these students may be less likely to engage in plagiarism.

When examining the academic misconduct behaviours, non-discriminators rated the cheating type of behaviours (submitting an essay bought off the Internet and cheating on an exam) as more serious than the discriminators did. However, both groups ranked the cheating behaviours more seriously than the plagiarism behaviours. Noteworthy is that plagiarism behaviours were ranked as only slightly more serious than copyright infringements. These behaviours are more commonly known as pirating of music and DVDs. The key point here is that contemporary generations may perceive authorship and ownership differently to previous generations, as they live in an era where textual ownership is less obvious because of the ease of access provided by advancing technological mediums (Brandt, 2002). The advent of readily accessible Internet and the rise of digital technologies have challenged the idea of media and textual ownership.

The digital revolution has influenced a generation who have become, what Prensky (2001) termed the “digital natives”, a generation who are “native speakers” of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet’ (p. 1). Prensky (2001) is referring to
students who are proficient in the use of digital technologies. By the time students attend university, it is reasonable to assume that they are highly computer literate and are proficient with using the Internet, downloading a range of media and using a range of software packages. The ability to use new technologies has had an unintended consequence and that is using the Internet to plagiarise material (Hinman, 2002). Moreover, if copyright infringement is not perceived to be serious, the availability of online material may tempt students who need passing or higher grades to plagiarise. However, this is not the case for all participants, with non-discriminators consistently rating all behaviours more seriously than discriminators.

In this research, the terms “non-discriminators” and “discriminators” are used to describe how students rate the moral wrongfulness of plagiarism; however, to examine the broader implications of this research, it may be useful to explore why there are distinct differences in how PSP are made. The current research proposes an explanation based on a moral code of ethical decision making, with clear differences in how these ratings are derived between discriminators and non-discriminators. This explanation can be found in the ethical theories of moral behaviour that question how individuals ought to behave in relation to one another. In the broadest sense, they define what qualifies as right and wrong behaviour. These ethical theories or philosophical perspectives are a useful starting point (Fine & Ulrich, 1988).

Ethical theories posit an explanation for the morality of human action and suggest that moral decisions are derived from either a deontological or utilitarian perspective (Fine & Ulrich, 1988). From the deontological perspective, certain actions are inherently right as a matter of principle because the action embodies an intrinsic rightness, regardless of the
consequence of that action (Fine & Ulrich, 1988). Thus, paraphrasing a few sentences in an
assignment without acknowledging the source is perceived to be the wrong thing to do, even
if doing so will greatly enhance grades. Conversely, this behaviour would be deemed very
serious as a matter of principle.

The contrasting perspective of utilitarianism suggests that certain actions should be
taken because the consequences of that action provide a net benefit (costs v. benefits) (Fine
& Ulrich, 1988). When actions, such as plagiarism, are judged based on their consequences,
utilitarian theory accounts for those decisions. Thus, if the consequence of committing
plagiarism is not perceived to be serious, then there may be a higher probability of engaging
in it, contingent on the benefit (e.g., higher grade). However, if plagiarism is judged on how
it conforms (or not) to some set of obligations (or rules), arguably deontological ethical
theory may explain why it would be perceived to be so serious and, accordingly, may reduce
the probability of engaging in it.

It is possible that, for the participants categorised as discriminators, judging the
consequence of an act of plagiarism, rather than the nature of that action itself, is important in
formulating PSP. According to the utilitarian framework, the consequences of plagiarism
may be evaluated according to the effects on all people involved and not just on its effects on
one or two individuals (e.g., the effect on the author of the text and the potential effect on the
academic staff member). Thus, an act of plagiarism may be deemed to have either negligible
consequences to other individuals or substantial consequences. On this basis, plagiarism may
not be considered to have an effect on others so may not be considered serious. Thus, it is
conceivable under these conditions that plagiarism may be considered a viable option for students.

Conversely, non-discriminators may perceive that an author has a right to attribution and this right should not be violated, regardless of how much that violation may benefit the person breaching the policy in the university environment. Deontological theorists believe that something other than the consequences of an action determine its morality. Therefore, in determining the ethicality of a behaviour, how the behaviour affects all the individuals involved is not considered (Fine & Ulrich, 1988). Within this deontological framework, plagiarism is an act that breaches an author’s right to attribution and also violates the academic misconduct policy. Therefore, plagiarism should not be engaged in, regardless of gain or benefit. Thus, it is not surprising that non-discriminators’ PSP are high. The implication of this finding is that students who morally condemn academic misconduct report the lowest frequencies of engaging in it (Cochran, Chamlin, Wood & Sellers, 1999).

Finding that a moral basis underpins the rationalisation of ethical conduct is not entirely novel. St Granitz and Loewy (2007) find that, when reviewing the records of students that were charged with plagiarism, justifications for the transgression are based on a range of theories of ethical reasoning. The three most used justifications are deontology, situational ethics and Machiavellianism. They also find that blame is also likely to be apportioned to external factors. What is novel in this current research is the proposition that PSP may also be explained by deontological or utilitarian frameworks. That is, students draw from these ethical frameworks to inform their judgements of the seriousness of a range of behaviours.
The findings from the data also show that offences involving actual or threatened harm to another person were perceived as relatively more serious, with the higher seriousness rating accompanied by low standard deviations. Conversely, the least seriously ranked behaviours had larger standard deviations. The implication is that there is a high degree of consensus for the perceived high seriousness of the top five behaviours that were likely to endanger the life of others (participating in a gang rape and selling drugs, such as cocaine, heroin or ice), a finding consistent with Tyson and Hubert’s (2003) research. When examining the behaviours with more variability (such as plagiarism), discriminators judge the seriousness of plagiarism based on the consequence of committing plagiarism (which may be assumed to be victimless), rather than based on the nature of plagiarism itself.

Conversely, non-discriminators will judge seriousness based on a moral obligation to follow certain principles that cannot be violated, regardless of the benefit. Thus, for non-discriminators, offences will be rated as equally serious with little variability between seriousness ratings for each offence (as is evident in these findings). In this regard, plagiarism is perceived to be as serious as offences against person and property. On the other hand, discriminators appeared to have greater variability in their ratings of seriousness, therefore how they each arrive at that decision may be very different, hence the variability in the ratings.

University strategies to deter plagiarism also draw from similar ethical frameworks. University policies and codes of ethics can be considered deontological tools in the higher education context, since it is expected that all stakeholders will abide by the codes set forth by that institution. All stakeholders have a moral obligation to follow the principles within
the policy. For example, some university strategies aim to promote academic integrity in a manner that motivates students against plagiarism (Hinman, 2002). A virtues approach to deterring plagiarism refers to creating a “campus ethos of integrity” (Willen, 2004, p. 57). Three examples of how this has been done includes, but is not limited to, the adoption of honour codes (McCabe et al., 2002; Roig & Marks, 2006), a requirement for students to include a signed statement of authenticity with their assessments (James et al., 2002) and the use of academic integrity policies (Crown & Spiller, 1998; McCabe & Trevino, 1996; 1997).

For a virtues approach to work, it must also be accompanied by modelling of ethical behaviour by staff members (Carroll & Duggan, 2005). That is, all subject materials must evidence citation practices that acknowledge the work of others. Moreover, staff members are encouraged to engage in educative practices that promote academic integrity and emphasise the value of learning (Malouff & Sims, 1996; Willen, 2004). Arguably, a reliance on students engaging with a virtues approach may not be sufficient to deter plagiarism. Relying on students adhering to the academic misconduct policy or honestly authenticating their own work may only appeal to a minority of students who draw on deontological frameworks for deciding what constitutes right or wrong behaviour. For a vast majority of students, who may be more inclined to reason based on utility, the potential benefit of engaging in plagiarism may outweigh any cost.

A sobering reality is that, despite the benefits of using a virtues approach to deter plagiarism, a publicised, large-scale cheating scandal highlighted the limited success of this approach. The University of Virginia came under public scrutiny in 2001 when a physics professor, Lou Bloomfield, discovered that 158 papers were suspected of being plagiarised
(Stem, 2001). The problem for the university was that, since 1842, it had exhorted the benefits of its ethical standards as guided by their honour system. The honour system was (and is) regarded as one of the most successful traditions held by the university. The university had a zero tolerance for lying, cheating and stealing, with students excluded permanently for these transgressions. The publicised failure of the honour code called into question the reliance of a deontological framework to inform plagiarism deterrence. Other cases have since come to light with large numbers of plagiarised cases (see Patton, Johnson, Bimber, Almeroth & Michaels, 2004).

10.5 Conclusion

While there is abundant literature on academic integrity, there appears to be little that examines seriousness ratings of plagiarism relative to other criminal acts. This anomaly is noteworthy given the criminal discourse inherent in university policy, which also guides deterrence and detection procedures. Results from this study indicate that a minority of students will perceive any act of academic misconduct as wrong, regardless of consequence. However, the majority of students may weigh up the costs relative to benefits of the consequence of academic misconduct to make their judgements of seriousness. The current findings suggest that there is considerable agreement on the relative ordering of the behaviours, with greater consensus for the most serious behaviours. A minority of students rated the seriousness of nearly all the behaviours as most serious. These ratings appeared to be based on perceiving the moral wrongfulness of the behaviour. Drawing on the ethical frameworks of deontology and utilitarianism provides a theoretical lens from which to
explain the potential reasons for these ratings. To deter students from engaging in plagiarism, their PSP must be changed.

The traditional strategy of treating plagiarism as a deviant act situates the behaviour in a criminal discourse. The problem with this is that, relative to other criminal acts, plagiarism is not perceived to be serious by the majority of students. Situating plagiarism within a criminal discourse is not working, which is evidenced by the on-going prevalence rates of students engaging in it. The costs of engaging in academic misconduct need to be perceived to be greater than any academic gain that might result. It is only by engaging students in the parlance of ethical scholarship by formally introducing university-wide, short, course-based workshops on academic integrity, that the judgements of seriousness can be changed, which may have an add-on effect of reducing plagiarism. To do this, an educative approach that embeds academic integrity in an ethical framework is paramount. Orientation of students into an academic discourse requires an introduction of the importance of the academic integrity policy as a tool to aid scholarly writing in a proactive and systemic manner.
Chapter 11:

Students’ Perceptions of University Applied Sanctions for Plagiarism

11.1 Introduction

Plagiarism, as discussed in Chapter 10, appears to be situated within a dichotomy of two discourses: teaching and learning or crime and punishment, the latter being more dominant (Hartle, Kimmins & Huijser, 2009). The teaching and learning discourse has emerged over the last few years, as writers begin to challenge the effectiveness of the dominant position in reducing the incidence of plagiarism (McGowan, 2005b). These two very different ways of conceiving plagiarism result in different approaches when it comes to strategies for managing this behaviour (Hartle et al., 2009).

The crime and punishment discourse conceives plagiarism as deviant behaviour. For instance, Grossburg (2008) notes, “the language and labels of criminal violation permeate all discussions of plagiarism and define it in most people’s minds. It is considered theft, the act of stealing another’s words or ideas and therefore one of the most serious of all academic crimes” (p. 161). Staff are expected to monitor and police this academic crime, with any transgression investigated by referring to the rules and regulations on how to sanction the violation (McGowan, 2005c). Further embedded within the rules and regulations is the typical rhetoric of crime and punishment. Students face a range of sanctions, from a warning to suspension or expulsion from the university. Given the legal context in which plagiarism
resides, a discussion about sanctions for plagiarism requires a short review on theories that explain social order in general.

11.1.1 Deterrence theory.

Social order relies on a legal system that, at its core, is embedded within a utilitarian framework, a rationale choice theory of criminal behaviour (Becker, 1974). This theory posits that an individual will consider the gains and losses of engaging in criminal behaviour and that the threat of punishment deters rational individuals from engaging in crime. Becker (1974) proposes that individuals will engage in crime when the expected utility from committing the crime is greater than the expected utility from not committing the crime. The utility component, as discussed in the previous chapter, is informed by the gains and losses of committing the crime (i.e., the benefit of the crime v. being caught and punished). Implicit within this model is the assumption that a person has a choice whether to commit an act and deterrence rests on avoidance because of the fear of punishment. Thus, the individual’s knowledge and choice is the critical focus of deterrence, with a reliance on the criminal justice system to influence that choice (through threat and punishment).

Central to the rational choice model is making the act of crime or deviance a less viable option for the individual considering engaging in the act. Overall, the criminal justice system does provide a deterrent effect; however, enhancing sanctions or improving the chances of apprehension will augment any additional deterrent benefits. Nagin and Pogarsky (2001) support this notion, indicating that increasing the certainty of punishment and not just the severity of punishment will be a greater deterrent to crime. Their research examines the likelihood of drink driving and finds that the certainty of punishment is a better predictor of
deterrence than severity. They find that increasing the probability of apprehension by 10% reduces the likelihood of drink driving by 3.5%. Conversely, the combined effects of certainty and severity outweigh that of severity alone.

Since then, other researchers have concurred that certainty of punishment is more salient than the severity of punishment in reducing the probability of engaging in a criminal act (Doob & Webster, 2003; Kleck, Sever & Gertz, 2005; Tay, 2005). A comprehensive review from a ten-year period examining the deterrence effect of changes to penalty severity concludes that there is little evidence to suggest that harsher sentences reduce crime (Doob & Webster, 2003). This finding is attributed to the individual’s perception of risk not changing as a function of severity of punishment; rather, the individual’s perception of risk changes contingent on the certainty of punishment (Kleck et al., 2005; Pogarsky, 2002). For example, a study by Tay (2005) finds that increasing the number of random breath tests would result in a significant decrease in the number of serious road accidents caused by alcohol, despite the low apprehension rate. Thus, the threat of certainty of apprehension for drink driving would be a general deterrent, rather than a specific deterrent of apprehension of offenders.

To achieve general deterrence of driving while under the influence of alcohol, the increase in probability of apprehension needs to be broadcast to potential drink drivers through mass media campaigns. Doing so would increase the perceptions of increased apprehension for driving while intoxicated. It is this perceived risk of being apprehended that is touted to be critical to the success of legislation and enforcement of driving under the influence of alcohol (or drugs) (Jonah & Wilson, 1983).
11.1.2 Deterrence theory and plagiarism.

When applying the deterrence model of crime to plagiarism, sanctions may deter plagiarism in two ways. First, the severity of the sanctions may influence potential plagiarists to weigh up the risks and benefits of the consequences of plagiarism. However, many cases of plagiarism are managed informally by the academic member who convenes the subject; thus, sanctions are often not publicly known (Devlin, 2006; Simon et al., 2003). Moreover, it is rare that a university would publicise acts of plagiarism and the resultant sanction because of privacy restrictions. Therefore, increasing the severity of sanctions is likely to have little effect if students do not believe that they will be caught for their actions.

Second, increasing the certainty of being caught may deter potential plagiarists. Thus, if there is a greater likelihood that a student will be caught plagiarising, then it is less likely that they will engage in it. To illustrate, research conducted with 210 business undergraduates by Buckley, Wiesley and Harvey (1998) finds a strong negative correlation between the probability of being caught and penalised. Specifically, participants perceive the average student will engage in unethical behaviour 76% of the time if the probability of being caught is zero, 30% of the time if the probability is 50% and only 4% of the time if the probability is 100%.

However, in university settings where the screening of assignments by computerised plagiarism detection programs is not used, many cases of plagiarism have gone unnoticed. A potential explanation for the low detection rates could be related to staff or student attitudes towards plagiarism. For example, in research findings by Genereaux and McLeod (1995), students identify two influential determinants of cheating: permissive instructor attitudes
(care or do not care) and low instructor vigilance (high or low). By logical extension, an instructor with a do-not-care or low-vigilance attitude would give potential plagiarists the impression of a low certainty of being caught plagiarising. Other research finds that the perceived staff indifference to cheating indicates to potential plagiarists that, if they are caught, then pleading ignorance or being stressed may excuse the behaviour (Paterson, Taylor & Usick, 2003). Moreover, students’ perceptions of the risks and benefits of engaging in plagiarism may be informed by their own experiences, that is, engaging in plagiarism without being caught or observing others plagiarising without being caught, thus, reducing the perception of the risk of being caught (Ogilvie & Stewart, 2010). All of these factors may negate the perceptions of risk of engaging in plagiarism.

Research findings for the effect of certainty and severity of punishment as a significant deterrent of plagiarism have been mixed. For example, some research has found no effect of certainty and/or severity of punishment on research participants’ intentions to engage in academic misconduct (Cochran et al., 1999; Ogilvie & Stewart, 2010). The explanations put forward for the effect of severity suggest that participants may not have an informed perception of the consequences of academic misconduct from which to construct their perceptions of severity (Ogilvie & Stewart, 2010). A potential consequence of this lack of information may be that participants perceive the sanctions as highly punitive or very mild, therefore affecting engaging in plagiarism. Other research has found that increasing the severity of sanctions does not have a significant effect on the probability of cheating (Nagin & Pogarsky, 2001).
Cochran et al. (1999) finds that self-imposed sanctions, such as having strong perceptions of the moral wrongfulness of engaging in academic misconduct and experiencing shame, are more important variables in deterrence. A similar moral basis was found to inform moral wrongfulness judgements of plagiarism for a minority of participants reported in the survey findings in Chapter 10. Therefore, it is not surprising that high scores on moral wrongfulness of plagiarism judgements act as self-imposed sanctions to deter students from engaging in plagiarism. In other words, those students who believe that engaging in plagiarism is morally wrong, regardless of any potential benefits, will be less likely to engage in it.

There are two major problems when applying deterrence theory to plagiarism. The first is the assumption that individuals will rationally consider the consequences of their actions prior to engaging in plagiarism. This assumption may not consider time pressure, a common problem that can affect ethical decision making (Moberg, 2000). The associated stress when under time pressure increases the likelihood of engaging in ballistic decision making, as students may not consider the consequences of their decisions (Dorner, 1990). Therefore, it is possible that, under these conditions, students will not be deterred by either the certainty or severity of sanctions because, under such stress, they may not consider the costs and benefits of engaging in plagiarism. This is mainly because plagiarism may not be rated very serious to begin with, as found in the survey results reported in Chapter 10. However, research finds that, if there is a high certainty that plagiarism will be detected, then students may be less likely to engage in it (Bunn et al., 1992; Leming, 1980; McCabe & Trevino, 1997).
The second problem of applying deterrence theory to plagiarism is that, for deterrence models to have an effect, potential offenders need to be aware of the possible sanctions and consequences of their behaviour prior to committing an offence. However, the criminology research finds that the general public are inclined to underestimate the severity of the sanction imposed (von Hirsch et al., 1999; Williams, Gibbs & Erickson, 1980). Noteworthy and contrary to findings from criminology is that participants from the focus groups overestimated the penalty given for plagiarism; however, they reported favouring milder penalties for any breaches of the policy (see Chapter 3). Further, as reported from the survey data on perceptions of prevalence in Chapter 7, when the participant personally knew a student who had been caught plagiarising, the reported penalties were generally quite mild, resulting in a caution and counselling or loss of marks for an assignment. When the knowledge about the person caught plagiarising was hearsay, the penalty was more severe and tended to result in failing a subject and being cautioned. The implication here is that students receive conflicting information when it comes to knowing what penalties are given for students who plagiarise. The consequence of which negates the deterrent effect of sanctions.

Given the focus group participants’ perceptions that sanctions at the university for plagiarism were very serious (see Chapter 3) and the potential that their perceptions have to act as a deterrent to guide the process of plagiarism prevention, the current research proposed to examine the students’ knowledge and awareness of sanctions administered at CSU. Therefore, this chapter will address the following research questions:

1. What are the perceived sanctions applied by the university?
a) Are the perceptions of applied sanctions understood differently depending on
gender, year of study, faculty and mode of study?

2. What is the perceived certainty that students who intentionally plagiarise will be
caught?

**11.2 Method**

**11.2.1 Sample and procedure.**

A detailed description of sample characteristics, ethics approval and procedure can be
found in Chapter 6.

**11.2.2 Measure of perceived sanctions for plagiarism.**

The items used to measure students’ perceived prevalence rates are detailed in
Chapter 5.

**11.3 Results and Discussion**

The sanctions scale (including all 17 items) has good internal consistency, with a
Cronbach alpha co-efficient of .88. The mean sanction score ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 0.72$) reflected
a mild sanction. Higher scores indicated severe penalty ratings (ranging from one to eight).

Preliminary analysis revealed significantly non-normal skewness (1.43) and kurtosis (4.53).
Based on the non-normal distribution, non-parametric tests were employed for examining
associations between variables. Means and standard deviations are reported for individual
items in Table 11.1 and mean sub-scale scores for the four different categories of academic
misconduct are reported in Table 11.2.
Table 11.1
Mean Perceived Sanction Scores for Academic Misconduct Behaviours Ranked in Descending Order of Severity by Type of Academic Misconduct (N = 3,404)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Descriptive statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plagiarism Items</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submitting the work of another person, which has had only minor changes, without acknowledging the source</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.04 1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reusing, in whole or in part, the work of another student</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.58 1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying passages from textbooks, journals or the Web without acknowledgement</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.79 1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking ideas from a source, such as a brochure, advertisement, television program or radio program, and using them as your own without acknowledgement</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.67 1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying actual text without using quotation marks</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.40 1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cheating Items</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying the answers of another student in an examination</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.48 1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking unauthorised materials into an examination</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.20 1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making changes to an assignment that has been marked, then returning it for re-marking, claiming that it was not correctly marked</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.82 1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falsifying data obtained from experiments, surveys or similar activities</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.45 1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collusion Items</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing the whole or part of an assignment with another person</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.37 1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing another student, who has to submit an assignment on the same topic, access to one's own assignment</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.20 1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the notes of another person to prepare an assignment</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.79 1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supplementary Items (careless referencing)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making up false reference citations</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.72 1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.13 0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citing sources that have not actually been read</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.85 0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving out a reference</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.74 0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formatting a reference contrary to your discipline’s preferred reference style</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.73 0.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two of the cheating behaviours (“copying the answers of another student in an examination” and “taking unauthorised materials into an examination”) \( (M = 4.48 \) and \( M = 4.20 \), respectively) obtained the highest sanction scores. The supplementary items (careless referencing) were perceived to incur the lowest mean ratings.

The plagiarism behaviour that was perceived to incur the most serious mean sanction score compared to the other plagiarism behaviours was “submitting the work of another person, which has had only minor changes, without acknowledging the source”, which was followed by “reusing, in whole or in part, the work of another student” \( (M = 4.04 \) and \( M = 3.58 \), respectively). The sanction scores for these behaviours equated to “failed subject and cautioned or reprimanded” and “awarded zero marks and cautioned/reprimanded/resubmit”, respectively. A possible explanation for the higher perceived sanctions for these two plagiarism items, relative to the other plagiarism items, could be that there is a perception of wrong-doing to another student or individual. The other three plagiarism items emphasised taking text from different media, perhaps suggesting a victimless act, which may explain the lower mean sanction scores.

Mean scale scores were obtained for the four different categories of academic misconduct (plagiarism, cheating, collusion and supplementary items) and are reported in Table 1.2. As shown, cheating and plagiarism behaviours were perceived to incur more severe penalties than collusion and supplementary items.
Table 11.2

Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for Scores on the Different Sub-Categories of Academic Misconduct Behaviours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheating</td>
<td>3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plagiarism</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collusion</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean sanction score</td>
<td>2.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Range of scores for all: min = 1, max = 8*

The figures indicate that cheating items were generally perceived to be sanctioned more seriously than plagiarism, followed by collusion and then the supplementary items (careless referencing). On average, the perceived severity of sanctions scores for plagiarism equated with the penalty “awarded zero marks and cautioned or reprimanded overall”. The perceived sanction scores for a first time breach of the listed academic misconduct behaviours were on the midpoint of the spectrum.

Regarding the first research question that examined the participants perceptions of penalties applied by the university, the results indicate that the highest penalty equated to failing the subject with the possibility of a fine. Cheating and plagiarism behaviours attracted higher penalties compared with collusion behaviours or careless referencing. This finding is in contrast to the qualitative findings reported in Chapter 3, where students clearly articulated their belief that the university applied serious penalties for plagiarism, which included exclusion from the university.
Examining the findings from the criminological research developed over the last few decades has consistently shown that enhancing the certainty of punishment produces a stronger deterrent effect than increasing the severity of punishment. Thus, individuals who perceive that sanctions are more certain tend to be less likely to engage in criminal activity. To illustrate, research examining crime and punishment trends across three nations (US, UK and Sweden) fails to find an effect for severity (Farrington, Langan & Wikstrom, 1994). Considering these findings from the literature, it may be of no great concern that students in the current study did not perceive the university applied sanctions as very serious. Rather, it is posited that enhancing the certainty of punishment produces a stronger deterrent effect than increasing the severity.

11.3.1 Associations between variables.

A Mann-Whitney U test is used to test for differences between two independent groups on a continuous measure. It is the non-parametric alternative to the t-test. The test indicated that perceived sanctions for plagiarism for females ($Md = 3.00, n = 2,255$) were significantly higher than those for male participants ($Md = 2.80, n = 1,054$), $U = 979,239.50$, $z = -8.20, p < .001$. The effect size can be described as small ($r = 0.14$). The Mann-Whitney U test also revealed significant differences in the perception of sanctions scores between distance-education students ($Md = 2.80, n = 2,283$) and on-campus students ($Md = 2.80, n = 1,027$), $U = 1,115,851.50$, $z = -2.23, p = .026$, resulting in a small effect size ($r = 0.04$).

Despite the small effect size, it is interesting to note an emerging pattern of perceptions about plagiarism from the female participants. Female participants know of more students who plagiarise (see Chapter 7), report a greater fear of allegations of plagiarism (see
Chapter 9) and rate plagiarism to be more morally wrong than males (see Chapter 10).

Therefore, it is interesting to note that they also perceive that the university would apply stronger sanctions for plagiarism.

Kruskal-Wallis tests revealed no significant difference in perceptions of the severity of sanctions for plagiarism across members of the four faculties and also for year of study. Thus, students across all faculties and in all years of study are fairly consistent in perceptions of university sanctions for a range of academic misconduct behaviours.

### 11.3.2 Certainty of sanctions.

Participants estimated the percentage of students who intentionally plagiarised in one academic year, with the results reported in Table 11.3.

Table 11.3

| Participants’ Estimates of Percentage of Students Who Intentionally Plagiarise in One Academic Year |
|---|---|---|---|
| Estimate of students who intentionally plagiarise | $F$ | Percentage of sample | Cumulative percentage |
| 50–70% | 50 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| 40–49% | 158 | 4.7 | 6.1 |
| 30–39% | 361 | 10.6 | 16.8 |
| 10–29% | 926 | 27.3 | 44.1 |
| 6–9% | 725 | 21.4 | 65.4 |
| 1–5% | 880 | 25.9 | 91.4 |
| Less than 1% | 293 | 8.6 | 100 |
| Total | 3,393 | 100 | 100 |
Overall, it appears that, compared to the official university figures for students charged with plagiarism (less than 1%), almost half of the sample estimated that between six and 29% of students intentionally plagiarise. Nearly a third of the sample estimated the figure to be as high as 10 to 29%. Approximately 17% of the sample estimated that anywhere from 30 to 70% of students intentionally plagiarise. Less than 10% of the participants were close to the official university figures for students sanctioned for plagiarism.

Participants then estimated the probability that a student will be detected intentionally plagiarising. As shown in Table 11.4, the sample was reasonably evenly divided.

Table 11.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Probability that a student will be caught intentionally plagiarising (%)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Percentage of sample</th>
<th>Cumulative percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>38.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>71.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>99.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The greatest number of students \((n = 552)\) estimated the probability of being caught plagiarising was 10\%, and 15\% \((n = 522)\) of the participants believed that there was a 50\% chance of being caught intentionally plagiarising. More than 38\% of the participants believed this figure to be higher.

These student estimates suggest that participants greatly overestimated the probability of being caught plagiarising in comparison to the official university figures.

As shown in Table 11.5, more than one quarter of the participants estimated that 10\% of students received a serious penalty once caught (defined as failing the subject, being suspended or being excluded from university, in the questionnaire for that item). Moreover, more than 40\% of the participants estimated that 50\% or more of students caught plagiarising would receive a serious penalty. That is, these participants believed that a student who is caught plagiarising will either fail the subject or be excluded from the university. Thus, for the majority of participants, the estimated penalties are quite high.
Table 11.5

Participants’ Estimates of Percentage of Students Who Received a Serious Penalty When Caught Plagiarising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated percentage of students who receive a serious penalty when caught plagiarising (%)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Percentage of sample</th>
<th>Cumulative percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>95.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,395</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: As indicated in the questionnaire, a serious penalty refers to failing the subject, being suspended or being excluded from university.

It appears from these data that perceptions of certainty of being caught and punished for plagiarism are reasonably high. Comparing these figures to Buckley et al. (1998), who find a strong negative correlation between the probability of being detected and engaging in unethical behaviour, it is plausible to posit that participants who perceive a higher probability of detection may be less likely to engage in plagiarism.

It is interesting to note the relatively even spread of responses when participants were asked to indicate their perceptions of how many students are caught plagiarising in one
academic year. Students’ estimates may be influenced by the veracity of the source of their information. Information can be subjective and, in the absence of official university figures, it may be founded on anecdotal peer information and staff reports. Thus, students may have a tendency to overestimate detection rates as a result. In assessing the efficacy of using punishment to deter plagiarism, it may not be helpful to have official statistics on detection and punishment unless prospective plagiarists are aware of them. That is, the individual’s assessment of the prospect of apprehension is an important factor in deterrence.

As indicated by Carlsmith, Darley and Robinson (2002), for deterrence models to work, it is important that misdemeanours are publicly punished and that the punishment is severe to deter potential wrong doers. However, this aspect of deterrence is missing at CSU, with official cases of plagiarism and the resultant sanctions not officially communicated to the student body. Therefore, one must assume that students’ knowledge of the incidence of plagiarism and the resultant sanctions is obtained informally via peer networks and staff disclosure.

This lack of credible and official information may result in students erroneously perceiving that the sanctions applied to students who plagiarise are highly punitive. As indicated from the qualitative findings reported in Chapter 3, when there is paucity of information, rumour tends to fill the void as a source of information. Conversely, students who perceive that plagiarism is an acceptable behaviour are more likely to perceive that engaging in plagiarism to obtain the required grades is a viable option. As seen in the current findings, the majority of participants believed that up to a third of the student body intentionally plagiarises, a very high proportion. Moreover, in an environment where
plagiarism is seen to be an acceptable behaviour, a student may feel at a disadvantage if they do not engage in similar behaviour (McCabe & Trevino, 1993). The implication of this is the normalisation of the behaviour that is being deterred.

11.4 Summary

The aim of this chapter was to examine students’ perceptions of the sanctions applied to academic misconduct, with a particular focus on plagiarism and perceptions of the certainty of being caught and punished. The proposition that plagiarism rates respond to the risks and benefits of engaging in it rests on deterrence theory. Deterrence theory asserts that individuals will respond to the incentives created by a justice system (commonly discussed within the criminal justice system). As outlined in the introduction to the chapter, it is generally accepted that formal sanctions do have some kind of deterrent effect on behaviour. The severity of the sanctions may influence potential plagiarists to weigh up the risks and benefits of the consequences of plagiarism. However, it is also desirable to ensure that all students learn about the consequences of violating the misconduct policy through public communication.

Evident in the current findings were that students perceived sanctions applied by the university for the plagiarism items were more serious if the source of the plagiarised text belonged to another student or individual but milder if the source of plagiarism was text from other media, presumably an unknown author. This is in contrast with the focus group findings. In response to the first research question, cheating and plagiarism behaviours were perceived to incur more severe penalties than collusion and supplementary items. The most severe penalty perceived to be administered by the university was “failed subject and
cautioned or reprimanded” (a serious penalty). There were no major differences for gender, year of study, mode of study or faculty affiliation on perceptions of university applied sanctions.

In response to the second research question, the majority of participants perceived the likelihood of detection of plagiarism was more than 50%. However, this knowledge may have been based on anecdotal information or hearsay (as found in Chapter 7).

The present findings have the potential to inform university policymakers of the importance of increasing perceptions of certainty of plagiarism detection at CSU that are not founded on anecdotal information. Currently, the use of plagiarism detection software is not universally applied across the university. Building on the theoretical understanding of deterrence theory, strategies that may work include increasing the chances of detection by introducing the consistent use of plagiarism detection software in a two-stage process. The first involves requiring students to scan their own work as part of the assignment submission process and to include their scanned report as part of the grading process. This process will clearly demonstrate to the student the reliability of the detection software to detect plagiarised text. It also provides students with the opportunity for remedial intervention of their writing skills, thus, providing an educative pathway, as opposed to a punitive one.

The second stage involves staff members scanning student work but only if the staff member deems it necessary. This approach places the responsibility for managing and detecting potential plagiarism within the student’s control. This process would also reliably indicate to students the certainty of detection of plagiarism should a staff member require the student work to be scanned. Alongside this process is the importance of official
communication about the status quo of plagiarism and academic misconduct. In other words, reporting on the official figures of cases that have been detected and punished. These strategies work towards increasing students’ subjective perceptions of the certainty of detection, as a pathway to reducing engagement in plagiarism.
Chapter 12:

Assessing Writing Apprehension and Resentment

Originality and autonomy as values are based on an ideology which tends towards individualism and competition, rather than community and cooperation, independence rather than interdependence, analysis rather than synthesis, commodification rather than intrinsic value. (Angélil-Carter, 2000, pp. 27–28)

12.1 Introduction

The quotation above, by Shelly Angélil-Carter (2000), suggests that authorship, including the practices of attribution, are based on the Western notion of authorship. The dichotomies expressed by Angélil-Carter can present problems for students entering the academic setting where there is an expectation that students do so as an independent and autonomous author. However, contemporary education encourages collaboration, while requiring students to contribute a unique perspective or synthesis of others’ writings. In doing so, a student is required to indicate textual ownership through the argument and logic developed in their writing (often referred to as the authorial voice). Further, it is expected that students are able to cite their sources of knowledge for the reader to discern the origin of the source.

For the students involved in the focus group study discussed in Chapter 3, the institutions reinforcement of this notion of authorship is perceived as an ubiquitous requirement of academic writing. Paradoxically, participants had internalised the institutions’ rhetoric against plagiarism and, therefore, overcompensated in their efforts to avoid it. Spigelman (2000) describes this as students being “caught between what Lunsford and Ede
characterize as an institutional “near obsession” with plagiarism, with its attendant “anxieties of influence”, and their writing teacher’s charge to collaborate” (p. 21). Thus, to achieve academically, students perceive that they must adopt individualistic practices, despite a culture of collaboration.

Adding to the competing practices of collaboration and individualism is the underlying skill of writing, a complex cognitive process influenced by a number of variables, one of which is the student’s attitude towards writing (Rose, 1989). One such attitude is writing apprehension, described by Daly and Miller (1975) as a tendency for students to feel anxious about the act of writing or submitting work for evaluation. It is posited by the qualitative findings discussed in Chapter 3 and further supported by the questionnaire data reported in Chapter 9 that writing apprehension could be exacerbated by students’ fear of inadvertent plagiarism and the university’s overemphasis of the seriousness of plagiarism. Moreover, evidence from the questionnaire findings described in Chapter 9 indicate high levels of anxiety among the participants regarding fear of unintentional plagiarism, despite having some knowledge of what plagiarism may be (as reported in questionnaire data in Chapter 8). Thus, to avoid an allegation of plagiarism, students in the focus groups reported the importance of mastering the skill of attribution.

In any given university system, the differing disciplines or different academic staff within a discipline may draw from any of a number of attribution styles (such as American Psychological Association, Chicago and Modern Language Association), causing confusion regarding the correct style to use, particularly if a student studies across faculties. The focus group discussions described in Chapter 3 highlighted the confusion regarding the use of
different citation styles within the university, as evidenced by the following quotations drawn from the data of the seven focus groups:

Because there are three or four different methods of referencing, as well. You’ve got to know which one the lecturer wants you to use. (Focus Group 2)

What one teacher might say about it, another teacher might be totally different. (Focus Group 5)

Like when you are doing the minor studies and whatever...the essay writing style is completely different. The way that I have to reference things is completely different; it is a completely different style of writing. (Focus Group 3)

Yeah, it is very confusing. They have got a lot of styles here for different…. (Focus Group 6)

I think a set standardised referencing system, particularly in one school of learning, say psychological school or legal school, or something like that, it makes it so difficult when you are working in a degree with multiple schools and subjects and you’ve got about 15 different referencing techniques and they’re changing all the time. I’ve been at uni and where I mostly use the Harvard referencing style or [indistinguishable word] referencing, or footnote, I come here and the whole of referencing has somehow changed. (Focus Group 5)

The comments from these focus groups consistently reiterate the difficulty of knowing which citation practice to use. Consequently, it appeared that the fear of inadvertent plagiarism arose from the expectation that to avoid plagiarism successfully, students must be fully aware of what citation practices to use and know how to account for the ideas and
words used, while developing their authorial voice. Possibly contributing to the expressed angst, as outlined in Chapter 2, are the session reminders reiterating information in the academic misconduct policy and statements in subject outlines that state failure to acknowledge sources correctly will result in sanctions ranging from failure of an assignment to exclusion from university.

**12.2 Writing Apprehension**

There was concern raised by the participants in the focus group discussions about their confidence in being able to write a scholarly paper. Bandura (1995) describes these beliefs as a product of students’ self-efficacy or “the belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (p. 2). Bandura (1995) suggests that these beliefs are determinants to how people think, behave and feel. Implicit in this theory is that high self-efficacy would be demonstrated by a student’s ability to plan, manage, complete and contribute effectively to the process of scholarly writing. Thus, students with a high level of self-efficacy would appear to be confident in facing the challenges of higher education, particular the task of writing and the subsequent attribution of sources. However, from the focus group discussions reported in Chapter 3 and the findings from the questionnaire data that examined fear of inadvertent plagiarism reported in Chapter 9, anxiety appears to exist regarding students’ confidence in expressing their authorial voice, using appropriate citation and, therefore, avoiding plagiarism.

Pajares (2003) describes writing apprehension as being negatively correlated with self-efficacy. Writing apprehension is inversely linked to self-efficacy and may be a potential indicator of deficiency in writing mastery. Participants from the focus groups reported
feeling apprehensive about writing an essay, indicating low confidence or underlying motivational issues indicative of low self-efficacy. Students with a strong sense of confidence may develop a greater sense of interest and attention to writing, greater effort, determination and resilience when challenged, conversely resulting in less apprehension and greater feelings of self-worth towards their writing (Pajares, 2003). This notion of writing self-efficacy was not evident in the discussions within the focus group data reported in Chapter 3.

Research by Daly and Miller (1975) indicates that writing apprehension correlates with SAT (an acronym for a standardised test for college admission in the United States of America, and England) verbal sores, the perceived likelihood of writing success and motivation to take courses on writing. However, in a series of studies, Pajares et al. (Pajares, Miller & Johnson, 1999; Pajares & Valiante, 1997a; 2001) find that, while writing apprehension correlates with writing performance, when self-efficacy beliefs were controlled, writing apprehension was no longer a predictor of writing performance. Therefore, writing apprehension is posited to be mediated by self-efficacy beliefs (Pajares, 2003), a suggestion that is consistent with Bandura’s (1986) work.

To improve writing self-efficacy and, therefore, improve writing performance, writing skills and positive reinforcement of students’ work are important strategies. In an early study of undergraduate students who scored either high (n = 55) or low (n = 55) on writing apprehension, Feigley, Daly and Witte (1981) find that the academic consequences of high writing apprehension is inversely related to the quality of writing, reading comprehension and verbal ability. Moreover, these authors find that writing apprehension is
also inversely related to the length of the written text, the syntactic complexity and the level of maturity evident in the written text. They posit that students who measure high in writing apprehension are not prepared for the rigour of academic writing. Further, students who score high in writing apprehension report that writing is unrewarding and punishing.

When examining the link between writing apprehension and academic misconduct, the literature is scant. However, what little research has been conducted suggests an inverse relationship between academic self-efficacy and cheating for middle school students and college samples (Finn & Frone, 2004; Murdock, Hale & Weber, 2001). For instance, Murdoch and Anderman (2006) suggest that cheating varies “as a function of self-efficacy beliefs” (p. 134); that is, when self-efficacy is high for a particular task, then cheating is not a necessary strategy. A student is more likely to engage in cheating while completing a task where they feel a low sense of self-efficacy. In contrast, from findings from the focus group research reported in Chapter 3 and questionnaire items assessing fear of inadvertent plagiarism reported in Chapter 9, it is posited that fear of inadvertent plagiarism may actually increase writing apprehension, affecting writing self-efficacy in the process.

12.3 Resentment

The focus group participants perceived that their writing apprehension was a consequence of their fear of inadvertent plagiarism. That is, participants in the focus groups reported that they had lost some confidence in their essay writing in their effort to avoid plagiarism. The relationship between fear of inadvertent plagiarism and writing apprehension appeared to manifest feelings of resentment. Resentment was also expressed regarding the perceived overemphasis of plagiarism by academic staff. Participants in the focus groups
further perceived that sanctions for plagiarism were too draconian, adding to the feeling of resentment. The focus group findings were partially supported by items in the questionnaire that assessed students’ perceptions of sanctions in Chapter 11, which were moderate to serious for the plagiarism items. These results appeared to be incongruent with the low level of seriousness placed on plagiarism by the participants in the questionnaire findings reported in Chapter 10.

Many of the participants in the focus group study expressed some resentment towards the institution and the academic staff that they believed monitored plagiarism. By logical extension, it would not be surprising if this same level of resentment was evident within the quantitative study, given that participants do not believe plagiarism to be a serious behaviour. The presence of resentment in the students’ understanding of plagiarism is also echoed in Ashworth and Bannister’s (1997) research, whose participants cannot understand why academic staff are tense about plagiarism, especially when it comes to the work of undergraduate students.

Writing apprehension and resentment appear to reflect important consequences resulting from students’ perceptions of plagiarism, which are represented by the four thematic areas derived from the focus group research discussed in Chapter 3 (fear of inadvertent plagiarism, PSP, perceptions of sanctions and confusion). Moreover, writing apprehension is found to be a strong predictor of academic performance in a student’s first language (Pajares & Valiante, 2001). If it is evident that the underlying fear of being detected of inadvertent plagiarism increases writing apprehension, then it may be likely that academic performance may also be affected. Thus, assessing this relationship can have tangible
practical applications. Moreover, participants in Chapter 3 expressed resentment towards the institutions management of plagiarism and the effect that this may be having on their ability to write an academic paper, in the form of decreased self-efficacy (academic consequences) to write an assignment. These two thematic areas will be examined in the following sections. Therefore, this chapter aims to build on the findings in Chapters 3, 9 and 10 by addressing the following research questions:

1. Is there evidence of writing apprehension among the student sample?
2. Is there a relationship between the fear of inadvertent plagiarism and students’ writing apprehension?

Based on the questionnaire findings reported in Chapter 9 and 10 regarding the fear of inadvertent plagiarism and rating the seriousness of plagiarism, a further three questions will examine relationships between these variables:

1. How well do fear of inadvertent plagiarism and PSP predict writing apprehension?
2. Which is the best predictor of writing apprehension: fear of inadvertent plagiarism or seriousness ratings of plagiarism?
3. Are students resentful of the emphasis on plagiarism?

12.4 Method

12.4.1 Characteristics of sample.

A detailed description of sample characteristics can be sourced in Chapter 5.

12.4.2 Sample and procedure.

A detailed description of sample characteristics, ethics approval and procedure can be found in Chapter 6.
12.4.3 Measuring writing apprehension and resentment.

The items used to measure students’ writing apprehension and resentment are detailed in Chapter 5.

12.5 Results

12.5.1 Writing apprehension.

Means and standard deviations for writing apprehension are provided in Table 12.1 and are broken down by the characteristics of the sample. Overall, writing apprehension scores are at the midpoint ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.89$) of the range of scores (zero–10), with higher scores indicating greater writing apprehension.

As shown in the table, greater writing apprehension is most apparent among females, students in the science faculty, students who study on campus and first-year students. There was a significant difference in writing apprehension scores for males ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.81$) and females ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 1.92$), $t (2,155.99) = 4.72$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed), with females reporting greater writing apprehension than males. The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = .33, 95% CI: .19 to .46) was small (Cohen’s $d = .18$).
Table 12.1

*Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for Writing Apprehension Scale by Student Characteristic*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Writing apprehension</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>$M$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1,047</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2,229</td>
<td>4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>918</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>4.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attendance mode</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On campus</td>
<td>1,022</td>
<td>4.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance education</td>
<td>2,253</td>
<td>3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year of study</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>4.44$^a$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>828</td>
<td>4.17$^{ab}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>4.25$^c$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>3.93$^{ac}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>3.81$^{abc}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Means with the same subscript differ significantly at $p < .05$ by Tukey’s post-hoc analysis.

Next, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to explore the effect of faculty affiliation (arts, business, education and science) on writing apprehension. There was no significant difference in writing apprehension scores between the groups, $F (3, 3,164) = 1.25, p = .29.$
There was a significant difference between scores for distance-education students \( (M = 3.99, SD = 1.86) \) and students who attended on campus \( (M = 4.59, SD = 1.89) \), \( t(3,237) = –8.48, p < .001 \) (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = –0.6, 95\% CI: –0.74 to –0.46) was relatively small (Cohen’s \( d = .31 \)). While the effect size was small, it is interesting to note that internal students obtained higher WAT mean scores given their greater fear of inadvertently plagiarising (see Chapter 9) and their perceptions that the university applies more serious sanctions (see Chapter 11) than what distance-education students perceived.

Finally, a one-way between-groups ANOVA was conducted to explore the effect of year of study on participants’ ratings of writing apprehension. There was a statistically significant difference among the year of study and how participants rated writing apprehension, \( F(4, 3,180) = 9.54, p < .001 \). The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was small, \( \eta^2 = .012 \). Significantly different post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD revealed that writing apprehension appears to be at its greatest in first year and then decreases as year of study increases. Postgraduate students differed significantly from first-, second- and third-year students with lower writing apprehension scores. Fourth-year students may also have been postgraduate students and were generally accustomed to academic writing conventions, hence, the possible non-significant difference with postgraduate students.

To estimate the proportion of variance in writing apprehension that can be accounted for by fear of inadvertent plagiarism and PSP, a standard multiple regression analysis was performed. Preliminary analysis was conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. Mahalanobis distance did not
exceed the critical $\chi^2$ for $df = 2$ (at $\alpha = .001$) of 13.82 for any cases in the data file, indicating that multivariate outliers were not of concern.

In combination, fear of inadvertent plagiarism and seriousness ratings of plagiarism accounted for 14% of the variance of writing apprehension, $R^2 = .144$, $F (2, 3,340) = 281.32$, $p < .001$. Standardised ($\beta$) regression coefficients and squared semi-partial (or part) correlations ($sr^2$) for each predictor in the regression are reported in Table 12.2. Evident within the table is a medium positive correlation indicating high levels of fear of inadvertent plagiarism being associated with higher levels of writing apprehension.

Table 12.2

*Standardised ($B$) Regression Coefficients and Squared Semi-Partial Correlations ($sr^2$) for Each Predictor in a Regression Model Predicting Writing Apprehension*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$sr^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear of inadvertent plagiarism</td>
<td>.338*</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seriousness of plagiarism</td>
<td>-0.211*</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *$p < .001

12.5.2 Resentment: Emphasis on plagiarism at CSU

Table 12.3 reports means and standard deviations for the two resentment items that when subtracted from each other made up the discrepancy score. As shown in the table, the first item indicates that, on average, participants perceive a moderate level of emphasis placed on plagiarism at the university. The second item obtained a lower mean score but had greater variance within the sample.
Table 12.3

**Means and Standard Deviations for Resentment Items (N = 3,405)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate the emphasis that CSU places on plagiarism?</td>
<td>6.49</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside the university environment, how important do you think the issue of plagiarism is?</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The discrepancy score indicated that, on average, there was relatively little discrepancy between the perceived emphasis placed on plagiarism by the university, relative to the perceived importance placed on plagiarism outside the university setting ($M = -0.80$, $SD = 3.75$). Eight per cent of the sample ($n = 108$) had a discrepancy score between $-7$ and $-10$, indicating that too much emphasis was placed on plagiarism by the university relative to outside the university for this group of participants. Conversely, only 0.7% ($n = 22$) of the sample scored between 7 and 10, which indicates that there was too little emphasis placed on plagiarism by the university relative to how important it was perceived outside the university environment. In total, the discrepancy scores of a small minority of the sample (8.7%, $n = 108$) indicate a high level of resentment levelled at the emphasis placed on plagiarism by the university, relative to its perceived importance outside the university setting. This finding was unexpected given the amount of resentment expressed within the focus groups regarding the perceived emphasis placed on plagiarism by the university relative to outside the university context.

To explore whether there were differences between groups (gender, faculty, campus, mode of study and year of study) regarding resentment, a series of statistical analyses was
conducted. First, an independent t-test was conducted to explore whether there was a significant difference in resentment scores between males and females. There was a significant difference for males ($M = -0.48, SD = 3.60$) and females ($M = -1.49, SD = 3.98$), $t(1,896.175) = 6.991, p < .001$, with females reporting greater resentment than males. Levene’s test for equality of variances was violated; thus, equal variances were not assumed and the alternative t-value was used. The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 1.006, 95% CI: .724 to 1.288) was small (Cohen’s $d = .27$).

Next, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to explore the effect of faculty affiliation (arts, business, education and science) on levels of reported resentment. There was a no significant difference in resentment scores between the groups, $F(3, 3,212) = 1.605, p = .186$.

Then, a one-way ANOVA explored whether campus of study (Albury, Bathurst, Dubbo, Goulburn, Orange and Wagga) affected resentment scores. Analysing resentment scores of different campuses was conducted because of the high level of resentment expressed within the policing students’ focus groups. Policing students are based at the CSU Goulburn campus. Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 12.4. Interestingly, the two smallest campuses (Goulburn and Dubbo) rated higher resentment scores than the four larger campuses. As indicated, this finding was not unexpected given the expressed resentment during the focus groups held at Goulburn (see Chapter 3). There was a statistically significant difference in resentment scores between the groups, $F(5, 2,745) = 9.763, p = .000$. 
Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in the mean scores between the groups was quite small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .017. Tukey post-hoc comparisons of the six campuses indicated that participants from the Goulburn campus \((M = -3.43, SD = 4.37)\) gave significantly higher ratings of resentment than participants from the other campuses. This finding suggests that while mean scores for students from the Goulburn campus were significantly higher for resentment, the small effect size indicates that these differences may be negligible.

Table 12.4

*Perceived Resentment by Campus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albury</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>-0.63</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathurst</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>-0.97</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubbo</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>-2.03</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulburn</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>-3.43</td>
<td>4.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>-0.51</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagga</td>
<td>1,286</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A t-test was then conducted to analyse whether there was a difference in resentment scores for mode of study (distance or on campus). There was a significant difference between scores for distance-education students \((M = -0.67, SD = 3.78)\) and on-campus students \((M = -1.07, SD = 3.70)\), \(t(3,323) = 2.78, p = .000\), with on-campus students rating higher levels of resentment. The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = .392, 95% CI: .116 to .667) was small (Cohen’s \(d = .11\)).
Finally, a one-way between-groups ANOVA was conducted to explore the effect of year of study on participants’ resentment towards the emphasis on plagiarism. While there was a significant difference between year of study on the participants level of resentment, $F(5, 3,225) = 2.346, p = .039$, eta squared was very small ($\eta^2 = .004$). First-year ($M = -1.02$, $SD = 3.80$) and fifth-year ($M = -1.38$, $SD = 4.08$) students had higher ratings of resentment than the other years. Post-hoc analysis did not reveal any significant differences with the other years. The higher ratings of resentment for the first-year and fifth-year students (who may be returning to study after a long absence) may be indicative of the students orienting into the academic setting.

Participants were also asked to rate how the emphasis on plagiarism at CSU affected their academic writing. The response category ranged from $-5$ to $5$ (extreme negative effect on written expression to extreme positive effect on written expression). This item was re-coded so that $-5 = 0$ and $5 = -10$; thus, the scale ranged from zero to 10 using the same anchors. In this sample ($N = 3,405$), the mean score was at the midpoint ($M = 5.75$, $SD = 2.91$). More than 25% of participants rated the effect of the emphasis on plagiarism at CSU as more than or equal to seven (too much time is spent on referencing), while 46% rated the effect on written expression as less than or equal to three (the emphasis on plagiarism motivates students to take their time when referencing). These findings reveal that, while nearly half of the sample generally believed that the emphasis on plagiarism at CSU had a positive effect on written expression, motivating them to take their time on referencing, a quarter of the sample believed that the emphasis on plagiarism had a negative effect on their writing.
12.6 Discussion

Evidence from the data suggests that there is a medium degree of writing apprehension among the student sample. Female students reported greater writing apprehension than male students did, on-campus students rated greater writing apprehension than distance-education students did and first-year students reported greater writing apprehension than students in more advanced years did. No significant differences were found between faculties. Despite obtaining significant differences, the effect sizes were small, indicating that these differences do not have practical significance in developing strategies to address writing apprehension. However, it is worthwhile to consider these results in light of past literature to extend the current understanding.

Findings in the current research indicate that female students report greater writing anxiety than males. Results from the research literature are mixed and tend to be conducted with primary or high school students. Typically, research examining middle school children finds that female students report greater confidence in their writing skills than male students (Pajares et al., 1999; Pajares & Valiante, 1997a; 2001). However, these differences appear to decrease with increasing age (Pajares et al., 1999). An explanation put forward by Wigfield, Eccles & Pintrich (1996) suggests that gender differences in writing self-efficacy may be a function of modesty, with males being more self-congratulatory in their responses to self-efficacy measures than females. Others suggest a type of response bias for females, who may perceive their judgements as representing more of an ideal goal to girls than boys do (Noddings, 1996).
In contrast, Pajares and Valiante (1997a) find no gender differences in the confidence ratings given by boys and girls, relative to their confidence to complete a variety of tasks when writing an essay (Pajares & Valiante, 1997a). However, further research by Pajares et al. (1999) finds that, while girls rate their writing confidence as low, they consider themselves better writers when they are asked to compare their confidence in writing with that of boys. This implies that there are no clear findings in the literature to support gender differences in writing apprehension.

There is a lack of literature examining the relationship between fear of inadvertent plagiarism and writing apprehension. It is posited in the current research that the increased writing anxiety for female students should be interpreted within the broader context of relationships between variables examined in this thesis, despite the small effect sizes. For example, female participants had a greater fear of allegations of plagiarism and greater resentment than males (see Chapter 9), knew of more students who plagiarised than males (see Chapter 7) and rated plagiarism to be more morally wrong than males (see Chapter 10). Therefore, it is of no surprise that female students rated the sanctions administered by the university as more serious and, hence, had greater writing apprehension than males.

Writing apprehension was also found to be significantly higher for first-year students than other years. Considering this with the findings from the focus group research (see Chapter 3), first-year students generally perceived the university to place a lot more emphasis on plagiarism than schools and were stricter with plagiarism, therefore, increasing their fear of accidental plagiarism (see Chapter 9). It is posited within the current research that fear of inadvertent plagiarism appears to increase writing anxiety. A medium correlation was indeed
found between fear of inadvertent plagiarism and writing apprehension in the current research. That is, as fear of inadvertent plagiarism increases, writing apprehension also increases.

Fear of inadvertent plagiarism was found to be a better predictor of writing apprehension than PSP, a novel finding. Although numerous studies have explored writing apprehension, no study to date has determined if there is a relationship between fear of inadvertent plagiarism and writing apprehension. A limited number of studies examine writing apprehension among high school students (Pajares & Valiante, 1997a), but few studies examine the effect of fear of inadvertent plagiarism on writing apprehension, therefore, providing an avenue for future research to pursue.

The association between students’ fear of inadvertent plagiarism and writing apprehension can be partly explained by the value that is placed on authorship in the academic setting. However, participants in the focus group study (see Chapter 3) spoke about plagiarism as a transgression of academic conventions (e.g., correct referencing) and a fear of breaking the rules, as opposed to understanding the role of scholarship in writing. Thus, participants appeared to believe that a primary characteristic of good academic writing is the ability to cite sources appropriately. Conversely, not knowing how to reference written work appropriately may be equated with bad writing.

Further adding to the anxiety is that some students must also master the often inconsistent citation conventions to successfully avoid plagiarising, a complex task for the novice writer. The CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy, the CSU Student Charter, the subject outlines and information given by lecturers may inadvertently reinforce students’
perceptions that failure to master appropriate citation practices have the potential to result in failure or even exclusion. Another factor adding to the students’ anxiety is the possible expectation from some academic staff that students enrolling in their subject know the appropriate strategies to avoid plagiarism. Consequently, they may only offer reminders to cite sources, as opposed to detailed instruction on how to synthesise the work of others within their own work. Therefore, it is not surprising that high levels of resentment are levelled at the university for the emphasis placed on plagiarism for a quarter of the students in the current research.

With this in mind, it is worth considering the significant difference found for campus affiliation, with students from the Goulburn campus being significantly more resentful than students from the other five campuses are. Despite obtaining a small effect size of the difference, it is worthwhile to consider the potential implications of the significant findings for the university. Students at the Goulburn campus were police in training and the consequences of plagiarism in the first session they believed to be expulsion from the training program. Thus, the high degree of resentment was understandable given that plagiarism was perceived to lead to expulsion from a career pathway. These findings are noteworthy in relation to informing appropriate strategies that may minimise resentment among policing students and decrease writing apprehension. For example, a way to improve the negative perceptions that learning about academic integrity is not applicable outside the university is to develop clear educative links between the concept of academic integrity within the university and its relevance to the ethical principle of integrity in the wider community—a concept of great importance to policing.
Given the small effect sizes for the significant differences in student characteristics in the current research, along with findings from the research literature, practical recommendations to improve writing apprehension by reducing fear of inadvertent plagiarism should not be gender or campus based. Rather, strategies involving all students should be pursued. One way to reduce writing anxiety and the fear of inadvertent plagiarism is to provide students with process goals, which are specific strategies or steps to improve writing confidence and competency (Krause, 2001). For example, developing prewriting skills (writing an essay plan, taking notes, paraphrasing, citing sources etc.), structuring an essay, writing the first draft, and revising the draft can all be considered process goals. Students also require regular feedback on their use of the process goals, which further improves writing confidence and rewards the use of the strategies. It is posited that these strategies should also include education on academic integrity, which underpins the rationale for citation practices, as opposed to education that only focuses on the mechanics of citation practices. The former should emphasise plagiarism as a transgression of academic scholarship—a self-defeating act that violates the process of academic writing.

12.7 Summary

This chapter commenced with an overview of the writing apprehension and resentment found in the focus groups. Bandura (1995) describes these beliefs as a product of students’ self-efficacy. Writing apprehension was found to be influenced by increased fear of inadvertent plagiarism (see Chapter 9) and increased PSP (see Chapter 10), with fear of inadvertent plagiarism the greater predictor. Contrary to the amount of writing apprehension expressed in the focus group study, the current quantitative data only found a medium level
of writing apprehension and only a small amount of resentment levelled at the emphasis on plagiarism at CSU.
Chapter 13:

Phase 3—Testing the Model: A Path Analysis of Students’ Perceptions of Plagiarism

13.1 Introduction

This thesis was an exploration of students’ perceptions of plagiarism. The impetus for this research was to gain a deeper understanding of how students construct plagiarism at CSU. The thesis commenced with a focus group study (see Chapter 3) that posited a concept map to understand the relationship between the themes obtained in the qualitative exploratory study. Chapters 7 through to 12 quantitatively explored each of the themes derived in the original concept map, finding some quantitative support for the themes derived in Phase 1. This chapter proposes to examine the relationships between the variables proposed in the concept map presented in Chapter 4 using path analysis, a multivariate regression model.

A path analysis is a subset of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and was performed using AMOS 20; a software package intended for Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) (Arbuckle, 2009). Path analysis deals only with measured variables and provides a graphical way to represent the assumed relationships between them. In the current research, the measured variables represent the six themes elicited in Chapter 3. Model estimation was used to explore the correlations within the model of students’ perceptions of plagiarism, depicted in Figure 13.1. According to the model proposed in Chapter 4, conceptually independent determinants of students’ understanding of plagiarism include the following:

- confusion about plagiarism (relative to other misconduct behaviours)
fear (of inadvertent plagiarism)

writing apprehension (high levels of apprehension towards assignments that students believe they are not capable of doing well)

resentment (expressed as the discrepancy between the emphasis placed on plagiarism at the university relative to the importance placed on plagiarism outside the university)

perceived seriousness (relative to other criminal acts)

perceived sanctions (perceived university applied sanctions).

In terms of the model represented by the path diagram in Figure 13.1, the more confusion about the term “plagiarism”, the greater the fear of inadvertent plagiarism and the greater the writing anxiety. PSP will increase perceived severity of sanctions, which will increase the fear of inadvertent plagiarism. Consequently, perceived severity of plagiarism, perceived sanctions and fear of inadvertent plagiarism all affect feelings of resentment towards the emphasis placed on plagiarism at CSU.
Figure 13.1: Model 1—Path diagram for students' perceptions of plagiarism.

13.2 Data Preparation

The data for the path diagram in Model 1 comes from the participants described in Chapter 6 and their scores to the questionnaire described in Chapter 5. The variables were developed to assess the validity of the six themes, derived from the focus group data reported in Chapter 3. The data for the variables in the path diagram reflect the six thematic areas discussed in Chapter 3 and are described in Table 13.1.
Table 13.1

Variables in Path Diagram Shown in Figure 13.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>$M$ (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exogenous variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusion</td>
<td>Mean scores from the UPS (specifically the cheating and collusion items) discussed in Chapter 7</td>
<td>0–6</td>
<td>2.88 (1.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seriousness</td>
<td>Mean scores only for plagiarism items discussed in Chapter 9</td>
<td>1–5</td>
<td>6.51 (2.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endogenous Variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Mean scores from the items discussed in Chapter 8</td>
<td>0–10</td>
<td>5.39 (3.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Apprehension</td>
<td>Mean scores from items in the Writing Apprehension Scale discussed in Chapter 11</td>
<td>0–10</td>
<td>4.16 (1.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resentment</td>
<td>Discrepancy Scores from items discussed in Chapter 11</td>
<td>0–10</td>
<td>–.79 (3.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions</td>
<td>Re-coded Mean scores from items discussed in Chapter 10</td>
<td>1–5</td>
<td>2.65 (0.74)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data preparation for path analysis required the management of missing values and normality. Missing data are problematic in SEM techniques, particularly for multivariate methods that require complete data (Carter, 2006). As recommended by Carter (2006), all missing data were identified and listwise deletion was undertaken, resulting in a sample of 3,207 participants.

To address problems with normality for the perceived sanctions data identified in Chapter 11, the scores were re-coded into five categories as indicated below:
Table 13.2

*Categories for the Perceived Sanctions Data Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 = very mild sanction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1–3.99</td>
<td>2 = mild sanction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4–5</td>
<td>3 = moderate sanction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1–7</td>
<td>4 = serious penalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1–8</td>
<td>5 = very serious penalty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**13.2.1 Multivariate normality.**

The majority of estimation methods in SEM assume multivariate normality. Research demonstrates that, while skewness affects tests of mean, kurtosis affects tests of variance and covariance and, therefore, can be detrimental in SEM analyses (Byrne, 2010). As shown in Table 13.3, the negative values or kurtosis range from –.307 to –1.710 and the single positive value is .085, yielding an overall mean kurtosis value of .90. The standardised kurtosis index in a normal distribution has a value of three (larger values indicate negative kurtosis and lesser values indicate positive kurtosis). As indicated by Byrne (2010), computer programs rescale this value by subtracting three from the standardised kurtosis index (three), which makes the indicator of a normal distribution zero. There is no consensus on how large the non-zero values should be to claim extreme kurtosis. However, West, Finch and Curran (1995) suggest that re-scaled kurtosis values equal to or greater than seven indicate kurtosis. Using this figure as a guide, Table 13.3 reveals no item to be substantially kurtotic.
Table 13.3

Assessment of Normality for the Six Variables in the Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Skew</th>
<th>C.R.</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
<th>C.R.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seriousness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-0.522</td>
<td>-12.06</td>
<td>-0.307</td>
<td>-3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.180</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>-1.01</td>
<td>-11.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>0.659</td>
<td>15.23</td>
<td>-0.779</td>
<td>-9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-0.163</td>
<td>-3.78</td>
<td>-1.17</td>
<td>-13.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resentment</td>
<td>-10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.361</td>
<td>8.36</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>0.979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.201</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>-0.336</td>
<td>-3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multivariate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.71</td>
<td></td>
<td>-4.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the distribution of observed variables being univariate normal, West et al. (1995) argue that the multivariate distribution may be multivariate non-normal. An examination of Mardia’s normalised estimate of multivariate kurtosis (–4.94) in Table 13.2 was inspected to assess multivariate kurtosis. Byrne (2010) states that Mardia’s normalised estimate is distributed as a unit normal variate such that large positive values reflect significant positive kurtosis and large negative values reflect significant negative kurtosis. Values greater than five indicate that data are non-normally distributed (Byrne, 2010). The z-statistic of –4.941 is suggestive of normality in the sample. According to Weston and Gore (2006), four steps are necessary in model testing and include model identification, estimation, evaluation and modification.
13.3 Assessing Model Fit

Model estimation was used to determine the goodness of fit between Model 1, shown in Figure 13.1, and the current sample data. The most commonly used estimation method in SEM is the maximum likelihood estimation. It is recommended that various model fit criteria be used in combination to assess model fit. The goal in SEM is to achieve a parsimonious model with a few substantive meaningful paths and a non-significant chi-square value close to the saturated model value (Byrne, 2010). According to Byrne (2010), a number of indices indicate goodness of fit. For each index, goodness of fit is given for the model being tested (the default model), for the saturated model (the just-identified model) and the independence model (all correlations between variables are zero). The fit of the hypothesised model will lie somewhere between the extremes represented by the other two models.

A range of fit indices are recommended to interpret and report the results of SEM (Arbuckle, 2009; Byrne, 2010; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2005; West et al., 1995; Weston & Gore, 2006). These indices include model fit criteria, such as the model chi-square ($\chi^2$), the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), the Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI), the Root Mean Square Residual (RMSR) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI). Each of these will be discussed in the following sections.

The model chi-square ($\chi^2$) is known as the likelihood ratio chi-square or generalised likelihood ratio (Kline, 2005). The chi-square statistic represents the significant discrepancies between the matrix of implied variances and covariance (Arbuckle, 2009). Chi-square is a function of the differences between the observed covariances and the covariances implied by the model. If the chi-square statistic is not significant, then the model fits the data adequately.
(Byrne, 2010). However, if the chi-square statistic is significant, then the model does not fit the data adequately.

Barrett (2007) argues that fit indices do not add anything to the analysis and that only chi-square should be interpreted. The concern being that fit indices may enable researchers to suggest a misspecified model as a reasonable model. Moreover, Hayduk, Cummings, Boadu, Pazderka-Robinson and Boulianne (2007) argue that fit index cut-offs can be misleading and open to misuse. Despite these claims, most leading authors consider fit indices to be valuable but caution against strict reliance on cut-offs (Byrne, 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). This advice is particularly salient for the current study with its large sample, as the smallest deviation of the data from the model will yield a significant chi-square value. For this reason, Byrne (2010) suggests examining a range of goodness-of-fit statistics described in the following sections.

The GFI and AGFI are considered absolute fit indices, with values close to one, indicating a good fit (Arbuckle, 2009). These criteria are based on differences between the observed matrix and the model-implied variance–covariance matrix. The GFI measures the amount of variability in the sample covariance matrix explained by the model. The AGFI accounts for the model complexity by correcting the value of the GFI, based on the degrees of freedom of the model relative to the number of variables (Byrne, 2010). The AGFI has a range of zero to one, and values adjusted for $df$ exceeding 0.95 indicate a good fitting model (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004).

The RMSEA is a parsimony-adjusted index that corrects for the complexity of a model (Byrne, 2010). In other words, if two models equally explain the observed data, the
RMSEA value will be lower for the simpler model. The RMSEA is less sensitive to sample size and distribution and moderately sensitive to model misspecification (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Kline (2005) suggests that the RMSEA is a badness-of-fit index, with higher values indicating a worse fit than lower values (value of zero indicates best fit). The confidence interval (90%) of the RMSEA provides an additional resource to assess model fit. The lower bound RMSEA value of .05 or less indicates a model of close fit, while values between .05 and .08 indicate reasonable fit. If the upper bound of the confidence interval exceeds .10, it is indicative of poor fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1992).

The SRMR is the overall difference between the observed and predicted correlations and, therefore, is a measure of the mean absolute correlation residual (Kline, 2005). The SRMR summarises the amount of discrepancy between the observed data and the model. An SRMR of .00 indicates a perfect fit, while an average value of .08 can be considered an acceptable model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

The CFI compares the relative improvement of the hypothesised model with a more restricted model: an independence or null model. The null model assumes zero population covariances among the observed variables (Kline, 2005). The CFI ranges from zero to one and values greater than approximately .90 may assume reasonably good fit of the hypothesised model (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Table 13.4 provides a summary of the fit indices and their acceptable threshold levels.
Table 13.4

Acceptable Levels of Fit Indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit index</th>
<th>Acceptable threshold levels</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square $\chi^2$</td>
<td>An insignificant p-value</td>
<td>Reflects good model fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>($p &gt; .05$)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normed chi-square $\chi^2/df$</td>
<td>2:1 (Tabachnick &amp; Fidell, 2007)</td>
<td>Value close to .95 reflects good model fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3:1 (Kline, 2005)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)</td>
<td>&gt; .07</td>
<td>Value less than .05 indicates an acceptable model fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodness of Fit (GFI)</td>
<td>&gt; .95</td>
<td>Value close to .95 reflects good model fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted Goodness of Fit (AGFI)</td>
<td>&gt; .95</td>
<td>Value close to .95 indicates a good model fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMSR)</td>
<td>&gt; .08 (Hu &amp; Bentler, 1999)</td>
<td>Value less than .08 indicates an acceptable model fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Fit Index (CFI)</td>
<td>&gt; .95</td>
<td>Value close to .90 indicates a good model fit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Table adopted from Schumacker and Lomax (2004, p. 73–74).

### 13.3.1 Model 1: Full structural model of students’ perceptions of plagiarism.

Model 1 (see Figure 13.1) is a path model consisting of two exogenous variables (confusion and seriousness) and four endogenous variables (sanctions, fear, writing apprehension and resentment). The SEM results for Model 1 are presented in Table 13.5. An examination of the hypothesised model resulted in a $\chi^2$ value that was high and significant (248.02), indicating poor fit between the hypothesised model and data. However, as
discussed earlier, the chi-square statistic is affected by large sample size and should not necessarily lead to rejection of the hypothesised model (Byrne, 2010). Nevertheless, apart from GFI (.976) and SRMR (.0603), all other fit indices are outside acceptable levels. In general, the hypothesised model did not fit the data well.

Table 13.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 1 Path Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>248.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At this point, it is important to note that any decision to re-specify the model using post-hoc analyses reframes any further analysis as exploratory (Byrne, 2010). As the first model was rejected, the focus then turned to detection of mis-fitting parameters in the original hypothesised model—what MacCullum (1986) calls specification searches. Byrne (2010) suggests there are two considerations to be made when considering re-specification of a model: estimation of a targeted parameter must be “substantially meaningful” (p. 90) and the re-specified model should not lead to an over-fitted model. These two considerations will be discussed in the following sections.

A review of the thematic data reported in Chapter 3, along with findings from the questionnaire reported in Chapters 10 and 12, led to the hypothesis that an association may exist between PSP and writing apprehension. That is, writing apprehension scores increase as PSP relative to other crimes decreases. This relationship is supported by the focus group discussions, whereby participants indicated that their written expression suffered because of
the perceived emphasis placed on plagiarism by the university, when they did not think that plagiarism was serious. Examining the bivariate correlations between perceived seriousness and emphasis of plagiarism on academic writing showed a significant medium negative correlation ($r = -0.34$) between the two variables, providing support for the focus group findings. Moreover, examining the bivariate correlations between perceived seriousness and writing apprehension suggests a significantly small negative correlation ($r = -0.16, n = 3,207$).

The theoretical implication of these findings supports the addition of a regression line from perceived seriousness to writing apprehension. Modification indices and standardised residuals were then analysed for misspecified items. AMOS yields two sources of information that enable model misspecification: standard residuals and modification index (Byrne, 2010; Weston & Gore, 2006). An examination of the regression weights indicated that all critical ratios and associated p-values were significantly different from zero and should remain in the model. Review of the modification indices for Model 1 indicated that the largest modification index was for the direct effect of seriousness on writing apprehension ($MI = 138.65$). In conjunction with the argument posited previously, the modification index provides further support for the addition of a regression line from perceived seriousness to writing apprehension, giving rise to Model 2.

13.3.2 Model 2: Addition of a regression path from seriousness to writing apprehension.

The modification of the inclusion of a regression path from seriousness to writing apprehension is represented in Figure 13.2. As shown in Table 13.6, the addition of a regression path from seriousness to writing apprehension returned a GFI (.989) and AGFI
(.963) that indicated the hypothesised model fits the sample data reasonably well. The value of RMSEA (.072) and SRMR (.035) reflected an acceptable level of fit. However, the incremental fit indices for CFI (.925) were below the recommended criteria of > .95.

Table 13.6

*Model 2: Addition of a Regression Path from Seriousness to Writing Apprehension*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$\chi^2/df$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>104.62</td>
<td>17.44</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.989</td>
<td>.963</td>
<td>.925</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.0349</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When theorising about potential relationships between variables, it is posited that writing apprehension may reflect the complex relationship between how students write and how they feel about writing. If they are fearful of inadvertent plagiarism and do not perceive plagiarism to be serious, relative to other deviant acts, then it is not surprising that they would report feeling resentful. It is theoretically consistent that writing apprehension has implications for feeling resentful about the emphasis placed on plagiarism. A review of the modification indices for Model 2 supported this reasoning, indicating that writing apprehension was also significantly related to resentment.
Figure 13.3: Model 2—Path diagram with the addition of a regression path from seriousness to writing apprehension.

An examination of the AMOS output of the revised model, including factor weights and recommended modification indices, supported the addition of a regression path from writing apprehension to resentment to improve model fit. Thus, a regression path was added to the model from writing apprehension to resentment, resulting in Model 3 (see Figure 13.3).

13.3.3 Model 3: Addition of regression path from writing apprehension to resentment.

An addition of a regression path from writing apprehension to resentment resulted in a chi-square (43.87) that was outside the recommended range. However, as indicated, the chi-square statistic is sensitive to large sample sizes. Inspection of the fit indices of Model 3 indicated good results. The absolute fit indices of GFI (.995) and the AGFI (.981) indicated a
good fit and were above the recommended threshold of .95. The RMSEA point estimate was < .05 (.049), with a 90% confidence interval ranging from .036 to .063 and a p-value for the test of closeness of fit equal to .507. This represented a good degree of precision and was within the recommended tolerance of > .07. The SRMR (.0252) was also within the recommended range of > .08 and the CFI (.970) was above recommended value of 0.95 or over. Thus, this model best fit the data.

Figure 13.3: Model 3—Path diagram showing the addition of a regression path from writing apprehension to resentment.

To summarise, Model 1 was rejected because the data failed to fit the model. Theoretically, the addition of a regression line from seriousness to writing apprehension was meaningful and statistically improved model fit, giving rise to Model 2. Despite showing some improvement, Model 2 also resulted in poor fit indices. The addition of the regression line from writing apprehension to resentment was proposed to be theoretically meaningful.
and consistent with the focus group data reported in Chapter 3. Inspection of model fit indices indicated Model 3 best fit the data.

According to the standardised regression weights for Model 3 (see Table 13.7), confusion of plagiarism positively predicted (.12) fear of inadvertent plagiarism, and fear of inadvertent plagiarism positively predicted writing apprehension (.33). PSP negatively predicted writing apprehension (−.20). In other words, as seriousness scores decreased, writing apprehension increased. This relationship is consistent with the finding of resentment expressed by the participants in the focus groups. To illustrate, evident in both the qualitative and quantitative data is that plagiarism was not perceived to be a serious issue, either within the university or outside the university; however, sanctions for plagiarism were perceived to be relatively serious. Therefore, writing apprehension increases when there is a disjuncture between how serious plagiarism is perceived and the penalties that are perceived to be applied. Given that the perceptions of university applied sanctions positively predicted fear of inadvertent plagiarism (.07) and perceptions of seriousness predicted (.22) perceptions of sanctions, it was not surprising that writing apprehension positively predicted resentment (.14).
Table 13.7

*Standardised Regression Weights for the Relationships between Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship between variables</th>
<th>Standardised regression weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of seriousness—perception of sanctions</td>
<td>.224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of inadvertent plagiarism—confusion</td>
<td>.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of inadvertent plagiarism—sanction</td>
<td>.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing apprehension—perceptions of seriousness</td>
<td>(-.199)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing apprehension—fear of inadvertent plagiarism</td>
<td>.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resentment—perceptions of seriousness</td>
<td>.323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resentment—writing apprehension</td>
<td>.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resentment—sanction</td>
<td>(-.050)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**13.4 Conclusion**

The hypothesised model proposed at the commencement of this chapter was not supported (Model 1). Consequently, theoretical reasoning supported by post-hoc analyses provided opportunity to explore regression paths within the model further. The fit of Model 3, with particular reference to CFI (.970) and RMSEA (.049), indicated a good fit. This final model presented plausible relationships between the variables. Any further incorporation of parameters into the model would result in an over-fitted model.

However, it is important to note that SEM takes a confirmatory approach to analysis of the relationships within the model. As the initial model was inadequate, the tenability of
the relationships in Model 1 was rejected. Given the complexity of SEM, it is not unusual to find poor model fit of the proposed model. The decision to re-specify and re-estimate Model 1 indicated a focus on exploratory analysis. Two important factors were considered prior to proceeding with the re-specification of Model 1. The first was to determine whether the estimation of the target parameter was substantially meaningful and the second was to determine whether the re-specified model would lead to an over-fitted model. Having methodically worked through the process of evaluating a fit of a hypothesised model, the feasibility and statistical significance of all parameter estimates were considered.

There are a number of limitations recognised with SEM. The limitations relate to the use of path analysis to decompose the relationships between the variables and to test the credibility of the model. An issue evident in the current research is that many of the variables examined in the proposed initial model were not directly observable. Constructs such as writing apprehension, resentment, fear and the self-reported behaviours are latent constructs. Thus, the use of single indicators to capture the complexities of such variables in full may not have been adequate. Rather, the use of multiple indicators for each latent construct may improve the variance accounted for in the model.

Although questionnaire research is a common quantitative approach to data collection, there are problems associated with this method. The items developed to measure the constructs could be further developed in future research to improve reliability of the underlying measures, even though the variables in the research model contain the dimensions derived from the focus group discussions. For example, some of the variables may not have adequately measured the students’ general attitudes towards fear, sanctions or resentment.
Different measures of these variables may have produced different results to those reported here. The path model assumed that each variable within the model manifested the theoretical concept underlying it and was reasonably free from measurement error. However, as is evident in the current research, the majority of the variance within the model is not accounted for by the model. The final model indicated that, with further development and refinement of the measurements development that underpin the model, the model could be further strengthened with regards to regression weights.

The choice of variables and pathways represented will limit the SEM’s ability to recreate the sample covariance and variance patterns that have been observed in nature. Because of this, there may be several models that fit the data equally well. Despite these limitations, the SEM approach enabled a useful understanding of the relational data of students’ perceptions of plagiarism.
Chapter 14:

Conclusion

14.1 Introduction

As this doctoral research draws to a close, I reflect on what motivated me to pursue this research and whether I was able to answer the questions that drove it. The impetus for this research was partly influenced by my dismay of finding instances of plagiarism among my students’ work and contemplating on how I could address it. As a new academic, I was quite motivated to try and solve this problem. A few years later, I realised just how complex an issue like plagiarism is and that one academic alone cannot address it. I have learnt that it requires a concerted effort by all stakeholders.

The research was also influenced by staffroom conversations that centred on questions of how we (academic staff) can stop students plagiarising, that is, plagiarism being a behavioural problem of the student. Anecdotally, this belief was common among staff and created heated debate on where the responsibility for plagiarism should lie. But what did students think? What is plagiarism to them? How big a problem is it from their perspective? As a psychologist, I knew that it was essential to obtain an individual’s perception and understanding of an issue or problem before commencing. I also know how important it is to identify where a person is situated in relation to their insight of a problem, which would increase the probability of successful change towards the problem. Likewise, I decided that it was necessary to develop a good understanding of student perceptions’ of and attitudes towards plagiarism in order to develop strategies that may increase positive attitudes or behaviours towards academic integrity in the academic setting.
From a chance discussion with a senior colleague about my experiences of managing plagiarism and how my understanding of plagiarism sat within local staff discourse, my interest in trying to understand how students perceived plagiarism began. Therefore, this doctoral research commenced with an exploratory focus group study examining CSU students’ perceptions of plagiarism to further my scholarship in teaching and develop a greater understanding of how students perceived plagiarism. The focus group research led to a mixed-method design, referred to as a pragmatic paradigm (Kroll & Neri, 2009), that enabled both ontological and epistemological questions to be addressed within the case study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The research questions were addressed by using a sequential exploratory design, based on the premise that an exploration of students’ perceptions of plagiarism at CSU was needed, that included both quantitative and qualitative phases.

The first phase comprised of seven focus groups of self-selected undergraduate students who represented different disciplines across two different years of study: first and third year. From the focus group discussions, six themes of students’ constructions of plagiarism were identified: confusion, fear, perceived sanctions, perceived seriousness, academic consequences and resentment. From the findings of the focus group research, a concept map of the relationships between the themes was developed (see Figure 13.1). This concept map laid the foundation for quantitatively exploring the validity of those themes and the relationships between them.

Each theme was then statistically examined in the second phase of the research program (see Chapters 8 through to 12). To do this, a questionnaire was developed to explore each of the six themes in detail, with additional items and scales derived from the literature.
The third and final phase comprised of using the data from the self-completed survey and analysing it using path analysis in AMOS—an SEM program (see Chapter 13). Each theme will be summarised in the following sections by examining both the quantitative and qualitative data.

**14.2 Confusion**

There was evidence in the focus groups that, except for the verbatim copying of text, many participants were confused as to what behaviour constituted plagiarism. The theme suggested that participants acknowledged an existence of a concrete, agreed on definition of plagiarism somewhere and were able to express some understanding of the more obvious instances of plagiarism. However, while the discussion between students demonstrated basic understanding of the behaviours that constitute plagiarism, there was also a degree of misunderstanding. There was great confusion over the grey areas, such as citation of ideas, understanding the concept of common knowledge and the sharing of information between students.

The qualitative findings were supported by the quantitative data reported in Chapter 8. That is, participants who responded to the survey confused the academic misconduct items of cheating, collusion and referencing with plagiarism behaviours. This finding indicates that the participants were not familiar with the academic misconduct behaviours as defined in the CSU Student Academic Misconduct Policy. A potential explanation for this is that only 50% of the participants reported reading the academic misconduct policy at CSU. Noteworthy was the finding that reading the policy made little difference in being able to differentiate between the different types of academic misconduct. This finding suggests that, even if a
student reported reading the policy, the document was either not clearly understood by the student or, perhaps, the student had confused reading other university documents as policy.

The implication of these findings is that, despite claims in the literature that clear definitions of plagiarism and well-developed institutional policies about plagiarism enable greater understanding of academic integrity (Lampert, 2008); this study’s findings indicated that students are not engaging with the Policy. That is, despite the availability of and constant reminders to read the academic misconduct policy, confusion abounded over what behaviours constituted plagiarism. A more holistic approach is required.

Of note was that the most frequently cited primary source of information on plagiarism, across the entire sample, was lecturers, thus, emphasising the important role that lecturers have in educating students about academic integrity. This finding also indicates how potential inconsistencies in the teaching of academic integrity can have far-reaching consequences for how well plagiarism is understood. More importantly, the emphasis within the CSU Student Charter on the expectation that students are responsible for sourcing, reading and understanding the academic policy is clearly not working as a preventative measure against plagiarism.

14.3 Fear

The quantitative data reported in Chapter 9 did not find support for the high levels of fear of inadvertent plagiarism reported in the focus group discussions. Rather, on average, participants scored a medium level of fear of being accused of plagiarism. Fear in the focus groups reflected the anxiety expressed by all students regarding the possibility of committing unintentional acts of plagiarism. This expressed fear appeared to be exacerbated by the
discussion on defining plagiarism; that is, students were not entirely clear on what plagiarism was. There might have been substance to this fear if there was only a 50% chance that they had read the policy and, if they did, they may not have comprehended what behaviours make up plagiarism according to the policy.

An explanation that may account for the lower fear of inadvertent plagiarism scores than expected points to an interesting phenomenon that may have been operating in the focus groups. The atmosphere of a focus group may create groupthink (Janis, 1972), where the discussion of the fear of inadvertent plagiarism may be influenced and inflamed by a vocal participant and then the rest of the focus group goes along with that perception. Groupthink is defined as “a strong concurrence-seeking tendency that interferes with effective group decision making” (Forsyth, 2009, p. 40). It was interesting to note the increasing level of agreement when participants began to discuss their fear of inadvertently plagiarising. The focus group members began to express a common fear of inadvertent plagiarism that spiralled into concerns about penalties, which related to their perceptions of university applied sanctions. This was particularly evident in the policing students’ focus groups. Students became quite vocal and expressive as the implications of plagiarism were discussed. Voices became noticeably raised and heated as they explored (hypothetically) the potential devastating effect on their lives if they accidently committed plagiarism. The group members appeared to feed off each other’s emotional reactions, causing the panic to escalate. Groupthink may explain why, the questionnaire findings for the same variable of interest was lower than what was anticipated, compared to the level of expressed fear of inadvertent plagiarism in the focus groups.
Although the quantitative data did not find strong support for the high level of fear expressed in the focus groups, it did elucidate which students were more prone to holding fear of inadvertent plagiarism. The quantitative data indicated that female students reported significantly higher scores for fear of inadvertent plagiarism allegation than males did. Despite students from the science faculty having higher mean scores for fear of an allegation of plagiarism, low effect sizes indicated that students across all faculties were fairly consistent in rating their fear of being accused of plagiarism as medium. Campus affiliation did not seem to affect scores for fear of an allegation of plagiarism. Finally, on-campus students reported significantly higher fear of inadvertent plagiarism allegations than distance-education students did. Thus, female students were more fearful than males and on-campus students were more fearful than distance-education students were.

14.4 Perceived Sanctions

When examined together, it is apparent that the focus group data produced perceptions of the seriousness of sanctions far greater than that reported in the questionnaire data. It was interesting to note that participants in the focus groups appeared to be certain that engaging in plagiarism would result in failing a subject or being expelled from university, which in the policing groups was heightened because of the threat of dismissal from the police force, even when there was little official evidence to support this view.

Given the preceding discussion of the influence of groupthink in the focus groups, it was not surprising that focus group participants believed that sanctions for plagiarism were too draconian and harsh. The participants compared sanctions for plagiarism with sanctions for some types of criminal activity. For example, focus group participants compared
plagiarism with driving under the influence of alcohol, arguing that the cost of the former (being excluded from university) was disproportionately harsher when compared to the crime (plagiarising a few words). Participants in the focus groups believed that an act of plagiarism would automatically lead to expulsion from the university, regardless of the intent or the context of plagiarism. This belief was most prominent in the policing students’ focus group and was an accurate belief within their training context. Arguably, the fear expressed by participants not only related to inadvertent plagiarism but also to the often incorrect understanding of the application of penalties to plagiarism.

In comparison to the focus group data, the quantitative data (see Chapter 11) did not find evidence to suggest that the majority of participants believed that a case of plagiarism would result in expulsion from the university. Rather, plagiarism behaviours in the questionnaire data were perceived to be penalised with a caution or awarding of zero marks for the assessment task. However, plagiarism behaviours that involved a third party (for example, submitting work of others) were perceived to be dealt with more seriously and the average scores equated to failing the subject, a finding more in line with the focus group discussions. Thus, participants perceived that the highest sanction imposed by the university for plagiarism would be to fail a subject, followed by being reprimanded and cautioned. This penalty is still considered serious within the academic misconduct policy. Cheating and plagiarism behaviours were perceived to incur more severe penalties than collusion and supplementary items. The supplementary items (careless referencing) were perceived on average to incur no penalty.
One possible explanation for the apparent difference between the qualitative and quantitative findings, particularly for the policing students, can be derived from group polarisation theory. In essence, group polarisation occurs when individuals in a group make more extreme decisions or begin to hold more extreme attitudes of the phenomenon under discussion (Sunstein, 2002). The term refers to a shift within the group discussing the phenomenon. As a shift in attitude or perception occurs regarding the phenomenon, the members of the group may come together towards a more extreme position. The effect reduces any variance in perceptions or attitudes of the phenomenon, as individual difference begins to decrease and produce agreement on more extreme beliefs (Sunstein, 2002). While there was evidence of a group polarising effect across all focus groups, it was particularly evident within the two policing student focus groups.

14.5 Perceived Seriousness of Plagiarism

The quantitative analysis of the questionnaire indicated that plagiarism behaviours were not perceived to be serious. The plagiarism behaviours were rated low and ranked among the least serious of all behaviours. The low seriousness rankings of the plagiarism behaviours supported findings from the focus group discussions, indicating that students did not perceive plagiarism to be as serious as the university treated it and, relative to other criminal acts, was not perceived to be serious at all.

Participants in the focus groups reported that, unless a student had intentionally plagiarised, they did not believe that plagiarism was a serious act. Instead, participants described their belief that most cases of plagiarism were errors and not purposely done. Therefore, they expressed resentment towards the university’s rules and regulations, which
they believed were draconian. As a result, students in the focus groups tended to shift their resentment towards academic staff whom they believed were too strict in their emphasis on plagiarism and citation practices. To illustrate, participants reported that academics were too pedantic about attribution and citation practices, to the point of being too exacting about grammatical correctness of the citation outputs. Thus, the participant discussions appeared to reveal a mismatch of expectations between academic staff and students when it came to citation practices, with participants perceiving that academics treat plagiarism far more seriously than students do. Focus group participants also appeared to compare the seriousness of plagiarism to common criminal offences, rather than other academic misconduct acts. In this context, plagiarism was not perceived to be particularly serious.

The questionnaire data (see Chapter 10) enabled a deeper exploration of the PSP by obtaining an overall picture of how seriously plagiarism is perceived compared to other types of academic misconduct and being able to contrast the academic misconduct behaviours with other and deviant acts directly. In relation to academic misconduct, it was clear that, relative to the other behaviours and blatant forms of cheating, plagiarism appears to be rated by the majority of participants on the least serious end of the scale, a finding congruent with the discussions in the focus group. Relative to the other criminal behaviours, the plagiarism items were located within the bottom nine behaviours. Copying a DVD and downloading music were rated as the least serious of all the behaviours; thus, it is not surprising that plagiarism is not considered serious in this context. Perhaps what makes plagiarism slightly more serious are the constant reminders not to engage in it.
These low seriousness ratings of plagiarism support literature that indicates that plagiarism is perceived as less serious than blatant cheating. However, it was interesting to note that a small minority of questionnaire participants consistently rated the plagiarism behaviours as most serious. To examine the broader implications of why there were distinct differences in how perceptions of seriousness were made, an explanation based on a moral code of ethical decision making was proposed. It was proposed that these high ratings seemed to be based on moral reasoning. Drawing on the ethical frameworks of deontology and utilitarianism provided a theoretical lens from which to explain the potential reasons for these ratings. That is, it was posited that, for the small group of participants who consistently rated most of the behaviours as most serious, it appeared to draw from a deontological perspective.

14.6 Resentment and Writing Apprehension

The low seriousness ratings seemed to affect feelings of resentment towards the emphasis placed on plagiarism at CSU and on writing apprehension. Indeed, the final path model discussed in Chapter 13 found a relationship between perceived seriousness and resentment and perceived seriousness and writing apprehension. These associations made logical sense given that the focus group participants expressed resentment at the emphasis placed on plagiarism at CSU, relative to their low PSP. Their resentment towards the institutions approach to plagiarism lay in the belief that they [student body] were the victims of institutional anti-plagiarism laws. Noteworthy was that these laws were described by the focus group participants as focusing on the mechanics of citation requirements.
Consequently, plagiarism was perceived to be more about the stylistic requirements of citation than about due acknowledgement to the creator of a piece of work.

The negative consequences of the emphasis on plagiarism were the effect that this was having on participants’ assignment writing. In other words, participants reported spending more time worrying about referencing to avoid plagiarism than on the goals of writing and the writing process. This finding was partly supported in the quantitative results reported in Chapter 12, where more than 25% of participants rated the effect of the emphasis on plagiarism at CSU as negative on their writing. The implication of the perceived emphasis of plagiarism on academic writing was that the participants were more concerned about inadvertent plagiarism that may result in punitive measures, instead of remedial intervention. For example, participants expressed concern that, despite their best efforts, there was a distinct probability of accidentally using a phrase or sentence from a book, lecture or journal without acknowledgement.

Evidence for the association between fear of inadvertent plagiarism and writing apprehension was found in the quantitative data. A medium correlation between fear of inadvertent plagiarism and writing apprehension was evident. In combination, fear of inadvertent plagiarism and seriousness ratings of plagiarism accounted for 14% of the variance of writing apprehension. This finding was not surprising because the association between fear of inadvertent plagiarism and writing apprehension was also found in discussions between participants across all seven focus groups. The discussion between students in the focus groups reported a loss of confidence in being able to write a paper because of the fear of failure and not understanding what plagiarism meant. Therefore, it was
posited that students may eventually give up trying to write a good academic paper and may not invest as much effort or any effort at all, as predicted in the learned helplessness model discussed in Chapter 3. The remedy for reducing the fear of inadvertent plagiarism and improving confidence in writing was articulated by the focus group participants as a need for education on plagiarism, as opposed to receiving speeches on plagiarism.

While there appeared to be evidence that some participants in the focus groups felt an inhibition of learning that affected their ability to express their ideas fully and freely, evidence from the quantitative data reported in Chapter 12 suggests that it was not as extreme as that expressed in the focus groups. As indicated previously, the focus group discussions may have been influenced by group processes. Nevertheless, female students reported greater writing apprehension than male students, on-campus students rated higher writing apprehension than distance-education students and first-year students reported greater writing apprehension than students in more advanced years. No significant differences were found between faculties.

14.7 Testing the Model

As articulated thus far in this chapter, the findings have been mixed with regards to finding strong quantitative support for the qualitative findings. For example, while confusion was evident in both the qualitative and quantitative findings, the variables that measured fear, sanctions and seriousness were not rated as highly as expected given the vigour of the discussions in the focus groups. Writing apprehension and resentment were also not rated as highly as expected. Given the quantitative data did not strongly support some themes from the focus group data, it was not surprising that the original theoretical model did not fit the
data well. However, engaging in a process of theoretically informing alternative relationships between the variables and having model fit indices support these relationships resulted in the testing of another two models. Theoretical and statistical support for the third model resulted in a good fit between the model and data reported in Chapter 13 (see Figure13.3). The final model did not deviate substantially from the original hypothesised model. Two changes were made from the original model. The first was an addition of a regression path from perceived seriousness to writing apprehension and the second was an addition of a regression path from writing apprehension to resentment.

Despite some problems with the original model, the final model presented a theoretical understanding of students’ perceptions of plagiarism. The final model holds theoretical validity in that the relationships posited were evident in the focus group discussion. To illustrate, the final model indicated that being confused about what behaviours constitute plagiarism increased participants fear of inadvertent plagiarism. For example, questionnaire findings, reported in Chapter 8, indicated that confusion was evident across the sample. The confusion with identifying which behaviours from the academic misconduct policy were plagiarism was associated with a medium level of fear (see Chapter 9).

Fear of inadvertent plagiarism in the model is also influenced by the perceived severity of sanctions as applied by the university. As indicated in Chapter 11, the average perceived severity of sanctions score for plagiarism was equated with the penalty “awarded zero marks and cautioned or reprimanded”, a penalty considered mild from the range of possible penalties available. Given the findings reported in Chapter 10 that indicate plagiarism is not perceived to be very serious and the findings reported in Chapter 11 that
indicate sanctions are perceived to be mild, it is not surprising that these two variables, perceived seriousness and sanctions, have a low association with fear of inadvertent plagiarism (see Chapter 13). The interesting implication for the association of perceived seriousness, perceived sanctions and fear of inadvertent plagiarism is the potential for plagiarism to be perceived as low risk behaviour in which to engage. That is, the behaviour is not perceived to be serious, the costs are not perceived to be high and, therefore, the perceived fear of engaging in it is quite low.

As shown in Chapter 13, both perceived seriousness and fear of inadvertent plagiarism are associated with writing apprehension. This finding is logical within the model given that plagiarism is not perceived to be serious by students. However, survey participants perceived that the university treats plagiarism very seriously given the perceived emphasis that is placed on citing work in academic writing, hence, the association with writing apprehension. The less seriously participants perceive plagiarism, the more they resent the emphasis the university places on plagiarism and the more it affects their writing apprehension. Writing apprehension was scored, on average, at the midpoint in the questionnaire (see Chapter 12).

Resentment in the model was influenced by perceived seriousness, perceived sanctions and writing apprehension. The less seriously plagiarism was perceived the greater the resentment. Similarly, mild sanctions were associated with greater resentment, probably because of the perceived emphasis placed on plagiarism by the university. Greater writing apprehension was associated with higher resentment. Therefore, while the original model
resulted in a poor fit with the data, theoretically informing alternative relationships supported by modification indices resulted in the third and final model.

14.8 Implications

The unpacking of students’ perceptions of plagiarism has enabled insights that have potential implications for policy and education at CSU and, potentially, other higher education institutions. Participants in the focus groups and the questionnaire research demonstrated great difficulty in being able to discern plagiarism from the other academic misconduct behaviours of collusion and cheating, as defined in the CSU policy on academic misconduct. This problem may be the result of the way that plagiarism is managed and discussed within the institution itself. For example, there is disproportionate emphasis placed on plagiarism, while collusion and cheating are not emphasised to the same extent. Thus, plagiarism is treated as the archetype of academic misconduct. For example, an entire brochure and website is dedicated to avoiding plagiarism at CSU (McVilly & McGowan, 2007), as opposed to an approach that emphasises promoting academic integrity at CSU, which should exemplify all the academic misconduct behaviours.

A way forward for any institution is to take on a holistic approach to academic integrity by implementing three strategic changes that involve policy revision, educative strategies and improved detection procedures. Each of these strategies will be discussed in the following sections.

14.8.1 Implications for policy revision.

Since the inception of the current research program, there has been innovative research conducted in Australia that has led to follow-on projects and strategies that address
some of the concerns raised in this thesis (Bretag, Mahmud, East et al., 2011; Bretag, Mahmud, Wallace et al., 2011; Bretag et al., in press; Bretag et al., 2010). For example, recent research examining 39 academic integrity policies across Australian universities noted that these Academic integrity policies place a disproportionate amount of responsibility on students (95% of policies) compared to staff (80% of policies)((Bretag et al., 2013). The same research only found one university where everyone was responsible for academic integrity. The authors conclude by stating that “a holistic approach acknowledges that not only is academic integrity more than an individual responsibility, universities have a role to play in developing student perceptions and understandings of academic integrity” (Bretag et al., in press, p. 4). Findings from the current research support this assertion.

The implication for policy revision at CSU is to revise the academic misconduct policy and student charter so that all members of CSU are responsible for academic integrity. To revise the academic misconduct policy at CSU, it is proposed that those responsible for policy development should draw from the work of Bretag, Mahmud, East et al. (2011). Their work aims to deliver a shared understanding of academic integrity across the university sector in Australia by aligning academic integrity policies across Australian universities. To successfully accomplish this, five core elements of exemplary academic integrity policy are proposed (Bretag, Mahmud, East et al., 2011). It is posited in the current research that these core elements should be used as part of the review process of the CSU policy.

The five core elements of academic integrity proposed by Bretag, Mahmud, East et al. (2011) are access, approach, responsibility, detail and support, with each element given equivalent priority. The authors stress the importance of shared values with all stakeholders
as the main purpose of an academic integrity policy that should be grounded in a convincing and clear commitment to academic integrity. The core elements have been defined as follows:

- **Access**: the policy is easy to locate and read; it is concise and comprehensible.
- **Approach**: there is an upfront, consistent message throughout the entire policy, indicating systematic and sustained commitment to values and practices of academic integrity.
- **Responsibility**: the policy details responsibilities for all stakeholders (not just students).
- **Detail**: there is extensive but not excessive description of breaches, outcomes and processes.
- **Support**: there are proactive and embedded systems to enable implementation of the policy. (Bretag, Mahmud, Wallace et al., 2011, p. 5)

Drawing on these core elements as a scaffold to revising the policy at CSU is a reasonable step forward and addresses many of the concerns raised in this thesis.

Previous research by McCabe et al. (1999) suggests that staff members and students are more likely to support academic integrity policy when they are embedded within the campus culture. Thus, it is important that collaboration between different organisational units within the university work together on revising the policy, providing continual education to the student and staff body and promoting academic integrity in resource material so that it is consistent and universally supported.
14.8.2 Implications for education.

Throughout this research project, there has been an undeniable push to prioritise education as a strategy for reducing plagiarism. Currently at CSU, there is no unified, holistic, educative approach that acculturates students into the discourse of academic writing. Rather, education on academic writing tends to be piecemeal and contingent on the individual lecturer. As a way forward, the institution may overcome some of the issues highlighted in both the qualitative and quantitative data by considering the development of a holistic, university-wide approach. A system is required where students are exposed to the principles of academic integrity that encompass the development of scholarship—learning about the principles of academic writing and the development of the authorial voice and, with it, the place of attribution.

A way forward would be to introduce the concept of academic integrity within the first orientation week at university (Roberts & Hai-Jew, 2010). As suggested by McCabe et al. (2001), academic integrity is effectively addressed at the institutional level. They suggest that students should be addressed by executive university staff regarding the significance and value of academic integrity to academic scholarship. New students are then able to internalise the importance of ethical scholarship and commence their university experience with a positive attitude about the need for academic integrity.

The current study found that relying on students to read the academic misconduct policy does not educate students about academic integrity. Indeed, as reported in Chapter 8, participants who indicated that they had read the policy did not perform better at understanding what behaviours were indicative of plagiarism than those students who had not
read the policy performed. Participants who performed better at identifying the plagiarism behaviours reported that they tend to learn about plagiarism primarily from their lecturers or from workshops (see Chapter 8). Based on these findings, it is recommended that, within the first month of commencement at university, compulsory learning modules that educate students on scholarly writing, inclusive of the importance of academic integrity, are completed by all students. Alongside this education strategy should be a concerted effort to actively integrate students into the university community by using this time to remind the entire university community of the importance of academic integrity. For example, the university could hold a university-wide campaign, such as Academic Integrity Week, a strategy successfully used in many northern hemisphere higher education institutions (see Colorado State University, n.d). This would further reinforce the importance of academic integrity at the institution. It is vitally important for all members of staff to be actively involved and engaged in the process.

**14.8.3 Implications for detection at CSU.**

When a student plagiarises, the institution should be enforcing the policy consistently. As noted in Chapter 11, deterrence theory suggests that for plagiarism to be discouraged, the underlying cognitive mechanism should be the expectation that there is a high probability that students will be caught and a severe penalty will be the consequence. Thus, increasing the probability of detection and severity of the penalty will further increase the potential costs of engaging in plagiarism relative to benefits. It is important to note, that since the inception of this research, the use of plagiarism detection software has increased. At the time of data collection, detection software was not common and relatively unknown to students. This
aspect of detection may have implications for changing underlying cognitive mechanisms of detection by increasing the expectation of detection if a student plagiarises.

Building on the theoretical understanding of deterrence theory, Chapter 11 concluded by offering a two-stage process of detection. The first stage requires students scanning their own work as part of the assignment submission process and then including their scanned report as part of the grading process. The second stage involves staff members scanning the student work only if the staff member suspects plagiarism. This approach places the responsibility for managing and detecting potential plagiarism in the student’s work within the student’s control. This process would also reliably indicate to students the certainty of detection of plagiarism should a staff member require scanning of student work. It will also serve as an educative strategy by clearly indicating where the plagiarised text is and the importance of paraphrasing. While this strategy may already be in use by different staff members and schools within the university, it needs to be consistently used across the university.

To improve the deterrence of plagiarism, it is also important to communicate the number of cases of academic misconduct detected in a university teaching session to the academic community, as well as the type of sanctions delivered, without breaching the privacy of individual students. Incidents of academic misconduct often go unreported (Graham et al., 1994), which has been variously attributed to either staff not understanding the university policy or a lack of support from administrative staff (Nonis & Swift, 2001; Vandehey, Diekhoff & LaBeff, 2007). Students who perceive that others are plagiarising with relative ease (McCabe & Trevino, 1996) are more likely to engage in it themselves
(Allen et al., 1998). Therefore, if students believe that other students are getting away with plagiarism and that those who are plagiarising are less likely to be detected, then they are more likely to risk plagiarising themselves.

14.9 Significance of the Research

Although there has been a plethora of research conducted on plagiarism and academic misconduct over the last two decades, only a few studies have conducted an case study into students’ perceptions of plagiarism at one institution. The current thesis contributes to the growing body of research on academic integrity by examining students’ perceptions of plagiarism in-depth at one institution, using mixed methodology. The focus groups enabled a rich description of how students understand plagiarism at CSU. The obtained themes enabled the construction of a questionnaire to increase the validity of the constructs under study. Based on the themes from the qualitative study, the research also posited a theoretical model of understanding students’ perceptions of plagiarism. While support was not found for the original theoretical model, it was posited that a third model was theoretically valid. The findings from this thesis can inform higher education institutions of the importance of understanding the implications of institutional policy, education practices and detection polices as a holistic approach to plagiarism management. Specifically for CSU, the findings from this thesis have the potential to inform strategic management of plagiarism and promote academic integrity tailored to that institution’s needs.

14.10 Recommendations for Future Research

Additional research investigating CSU staff’s understanding of the academic misconduct policy and how academic staff perceive plagiarism is also suggested to develop a
comprehensive and holistic understanding of perceptions of plagiarism at CSU. Research identifying staff culture and perceptions of academic integrity at CSU would enable a more comprehensive understanding of how potential recommendations would be adopted and supported. If the recommendations are taken on board by CSU, then future research should focus on evaluating the effect that these recommendations may have on reducing plagiarism at CSU. For example, research would be needed to determine the success that students and staff would have with using plagiarism detection software, the effect of education strategies and the overall effect of deploying a revised policy.

14.11 Conclusion

This closing chapter provided an overview of the thesis findings and the implications for policy revision, education and detection of plagiarism. In closing, CSU does not face an insurmountable challenge in promoting academic integrity. Rather, the institution must recognise that academic integrity is a shared responsibility for all stakeholders and should not be contingent on detection and punishment strategies alone. The last word goes to one student from the focus group discussions who emphasised the importance of teaching and learning when it came to academic integrity:

It also comes down to [this], this is a learning institution and if you can’t learn how to actually do an essay and do it [properly]…therefore, they’ve got to give you some leniency and show you…point you in the direction of “where’ve you got that information from?” “Oh, I got it from here.” “Oh, but you didn’t reference that.” So it’s a learning experience as well.
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### Appendix A: Formal CSU Letter to Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Sent:</th>
<th>09-JUL-2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
<td>CSU Policies and Regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message:</td>
<td>Please do not reply to this automated eBox message.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All enquiries should be directed to Student Central, contact details at [http://www.csu.edu.au/student/central/](http://www.csu.edu.au/student/central/)

**University policies and regulations**

Dear student,

The policies and regulations of the University that frame your study are contained in this eBox statement and in the Subject Outlines for the subject(s) you are studying. The policies and regulations are:

- Academic conduct
- Special consideration
- Assessment regulations
- Variations to assessment
- Subject Outline as a reference document.

Please take time to read these policies and regulations. They are posted to your eBox in compliance with the Academic Senate’s policy on Subject Outlines. These policies and regulations should be read in conjunction with others that are contained in the Subject Outline of the subject(s) you are studying.

**Academic conduct**

The University expects that you, as a student, will be honest in your studies and research and that you will not do anything that will interfere with or frustrate the studies and research of other students. In particular, you are expected to:

- acknowledge the work of others in your assignments and other assessable work;
- not knowingly allow others to use your work without acknowledgment;
- report honestly the findings of your study and research; and
- use only permitted materials in examinations.

Details of expected academic conduct are provided in:

- the Student Academic Misconduct Rule;
- the Academic Progress regulations;

Students are also expected to be responsible in the use of University facilities and resources and to abide by University rules concerning the Library and electronic resources.

- the Rule of the Library; and
- the Code of Conduct for Users of Electronic Facilities.

Copies of the Rule of the Library and Code of Conduct for Users of Electronic Facilities can also be obtained from the Library or the Division of Information Technology (DIT) Service Desk.

Penalties for breaching the above Rules and Code include suspension or exclusion from the University.
Students also have expectations of the University and of other students in the cooperative endeavour of studying. Details of these expectations are provided in the Student Charter.

**Special consideration**

Academic regulations provide for special consideration to be given if you suffer misadventure or extenuating circumstances during the session (including the examination period) which prevents you from meeting acceptable standards or deadlines.

Applications for special consideration must be submitted in writing and include supporting documentary evidence. Such applications should be sent to the Student Administration Office.

For further information about applying for special consideration please refer to Part C3 - Special Consideration Regulations of the Academic Manual.

**Assessment regulations**

The assessment practices of all University subjects are conducted in accordance with the University’s Assessment regulations.

**Variations to assessment**

Should it be necessary to vary the assessment in this subject, you will be notified in writing by the Subject Coordinator, or Subject Convenor where one is appointed. The variations to assessment include variations to the assessment tasks and/or assessment procedures for assignments, examinations and any other assessment task published in the Subject Outline.

The variations will be communicated only after the Subject Coordinator or Subject Convenor has obtained approval from their Head of School.

The overriding principle is that such changes will not disadvantage students and is made in accordance with the Awards, Courses and Subjects policy (Part L6.3, Section 1.4) of the Academic Manual.

**Subject Outline as reference document**

This Subject Outline is an accurate and historical record of the curriculum and scope of your subject. University policies (L6.3 – 1.3.8(f)) require that you retain a copy of the Subject Outline for future use such as for accreditation purposes.
Appendix B: Charles Sturt University Student Charter

The purpose of the CSU Student Charter is to help students understand what it means to be a student member of the CSU community, including the expectations students and the University may have of each other.

The Student Charter aims to encourage active partnership between CSU and its students in learning and teaching, professional practice, research and the life of the University community.

CSU’s values

All members of the CSU community are expected to value:
- Intellectual independence and freedom of inquiry
- The discovery, refinement, preservation and dissemination of knowledge
- Engagement with professions and communities through responsiveness, partnerships and inclusiveness
- Social justice including ethical practice and global citizenship
- Economic, social and environmental sustainability, including the responsible stewardship of resources and
- The well being and development of staff and students

Expectations

- Students can expect: to be treated with respect and tolerance and to pursue academic goals without fear or intimidation access to information about University regulations, policies and procedures including research and study requirements and that they will be applied appropriately the opportunity to engage with accessible and effective teaching and professional practice and to interact with researchers and research outcomes.
- University staff to interact with students with honesty, integrity and in a timely manner
- recognition of the intellectual property rights of students to their work
- opportunities to contribute to the organisational and cultural life of the University and to be represented and actively involved in relevant University committees
- opportunities to provide feedback for the improvement of the University
- a student centred approach to the provision of services including information technology, library and student support a safe and healthy University environment

The University expects students to:
- behave in a manner that demonstrates respect and tolerance
- adhere to University rules, regulations, policies and procedures
- actively and positively participate in teaching, learning, professional and research activities
- interact with the University with honesty, integrity and in a timely manner
- recognise the intellectual property rights of the work that others produce individually or in partnership with them
- contribute to the organisational and cultural life of the University and to the work of relevant University committees
- provide solicited and unsolicited feedback for the improvement of the University use University services responsibly.

Date: 8 May 2013
Source: http://www.csu.edu.au/student/charter/
Appendix C: Student Academic Misconduct Policy

STUDENT ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT POLICY

1. PREAMBLE

1.1 Scope
This Policy applies to academic misconduct as defined in clause 2 below allegedly committed by students enrolled in subjects or undertaking research at the University.

The Policy does not apply to general (i.e., non-academic) misconduct by students which is dealt with under the Student General Misconduct Rule. The falsification of University records such as transcripts or testamurs pertaining to the student will be dealt with under the Student General Misconduct Rule.

1.2 Definitions

1.2.1 Dean
Unless specified otherwise, “Dean” means Dean of the Faculty responsible for the subject or research in which academic misconduct is alleged to have occurred.

1.2.2 Head of School
Unless specified otherwise, “Head of School” means the Head of the School responsible for teaching the subject in which academic misconduct is alleged to have occurred.

1.2.3 Student
“Student” means a person who at the time the alleged academic misconduct occurred was enrolled in a research program or was enrolled in a subject offered by the University which is a component of a course leading to an award of the University, irrespective of whether the student is enrolled in a course.

1.2.4 University
“University” means Charles Sturt University or an institution affiliated with Charles Sturt University.

1.3 External Authorities
Nothing in this Policy abrogates a person’s right or the University’s right to refer at any stage alleged academic misconduct to authorities external to the University.

1.4 Precedence
This Policy takes precedence over any other regulations or Policy’s dealing with academic misconduct by students made in pursuance of the Charles Sturt University Act, 1989.

1.5 Right of Enrolment
A student alleged to have committed academic misconduct shall be entitled to remain enrolled at the University during the investigations conducted in accordance with clause 4 below.

1.6 Academic Misconduct and Graduation
Where a student has received an award of the University for which the subject in which the academic misconduct occurred was a component and as a consequence of that misconduct the student is failed in the subject, then the award shall be rescinded, the student’s name shall be deleted from the Register of Graduates and the student shall be required to return the testamur and final transcript to the University.
1.7 Time
Where an extension of time is required for any stage of the misconduct process, and this extension is not
allowed for already in the Policy, an application for this extension must be made to the Deputy Vice-
Chancellor (Academic).

2. ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

2.1 Definition
Academic misconduct is acting in a way, or attempting to act in a way, or assisting another student to act
in a way which could reasonably be expected to defeat the purpose of a learning experience or an item of
assessment or an examination. Academic misconduct will normally be evidenced by plagiarism, cheating
or collusion.

a) Plagiarism
A student plagiarises if he or she gives the impression that the ideas, words or work of another person are
the ideas, words or work of the student. Plagiarism will include:

(i) copying any material from books, journals, study notes or tapes, the Web, the work of other
students, or any other source without indicating this by quotation marks or by indentation, italics or
spacing and without acknowledging that source by footnote or citation; or
(ii) rephrasing ideas from books, journals, study notes or tapes, the Web, the work of other
students, or any other source without acknowledging the source of those ideas by footnotes or
citations. This could include material copied from a source and acknowledged, but presented as the
student’s own paraphrasing.

Plagiarism is to be distinguished from inadequate and/or inappropriate attempts to acknowledge the
words, works or ideas of someone else, as for example when a student makes a genuine attempt to
reference their work, but has very poor referencing skills. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

- copying unacknowledged passages from textbooks;
- reusing in whole or in part the work of another student;
- obtaining materials from the Web and submitting them, modified or otherwise, as one’s own work;
- submitting work which is derived in whole or in part from the work of another person but which
  has been changed in superficial respects possibly by mechanical means.

b) Cheating
A student cheats if he or she does not abide by the conditions set for a particular learning experience, item
of assessment or examination. Cheating includes, but is not limited to:

- falsifying data obtained from experiments, surveys, or similar activities;
- copying the answers of another student in an examination or allowing another student to copy
  answers in an examination;
- taking unauthorised materials into an examination;
- sitting an examination for another student or having another person at an examination on behalf of
  a student;
• removing an examination question paper from an examination room where this is contrary to instructions;
• improperly obtaining and using information about an examination before an examination;
• making changes to an assignment that has been marked then returning it for re-marking claiming that it was not correctly marked.

c) Collusion
A student colludes when he or she works without permission with another person or persons to produce work which is then presented as work completed independently by the student. Collusion includes, but is not limited to:
• writing the whole or part of an assignment with another person;
• using the notes of another person to prepare an assignment;
• using for an assignment the resource materials of another person that have been annotated or parts of the text highlighted or underlined by that person;
• allowing another student, who has to submit an assignment on the same topic, access to one's own assignment under conditions which would give that other student an advantage in submitting his or her assignment.

3. ALLEGATIONS OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

3.1 Reporting Academic Misconduct
Where a person has reason to believe that a student has engaged in academic misconduct, the person shall provide a signed statement which sets out the information and/or evidence relating to the suspected academic misconduct to the Head of School or to the Dean if the Head of School is implicated in the matter. Where the Head of School discovers the misconduct, they shall refer their statement and evidence to the Dean for action.

Where on the face of that information and/or evidence the Head of School or the Dean believes that the student has a case to answer, the Head of School or an officer authorised by the Head of School or another person appointed by the Dean shall conduct an investigation as provided in clause 4 below.

3.2 Academic Misconduct to be Reported as Soon as Practicable
Information and/or evidence regarding possible academic misconduct shall be submitted as soon as practicable but normally no later than twenty-one days after the incident to which the information and/or evidence relates came to light. However, the Head of School or the Dean may at his or her discretion, accept information and/or evidence later than twenty-one days after the incident to which the information and/or evidence relates. The School and/or Faculty must retain all relevant documentation relating to the case of suspected misconduct for use by any subsequent investigation procedure. This documentation will include the piece of work in which the alleged plagiarism occurred, records of meetings and phone conversations with the student and copies of correspondence, including emails, on the matter.

3.3 Acknowledging Claims of Suspected Academic Misconduct
3.3.1 Head of School
The Head of School shall acknowledge in writing, receipt of a signed statement relating to suspected academic misconduct immediately upon its receipt.
If the Head of School has a conflict of interest in the suspected academic misconduct he or she shall immediately refer the information and/or evidence to the Dean and shall immediately advise in writing the person who provided the signed statement of the action taken.

3.3.2 Dean
The Dean shall acknowledge in writing, receipt of a signed statement regarding suspected academic misconduct immediately upon its receipt from a student or a Head of School.

4. INVESTIGATION

4.1 Initiating Investigations
Investigations into suspected academic misconduct shall be initiated by the Head of School. The Head of School may authorise an officer to conduct the investigation on their behalf and report back to the Head of School.
An officer who teaches or supervises the student suspected of academic misconduct or who could be in some other conflict of interest in conducting the investigation shall not be authorised to conduct an investigation.
Where the Head of School teaches or supervises the student suspected of academic misconduct or could be in some other conflict of interest in conducting the investigation, the Dean shall appoint another member of the Faculty to conduct the investigation.

4.2 Conduct of Investigations
The investigation should involve consulting with the person providing the signed statement, the student or students who are suspected of academic misconduct and any other persons the investigator deems appropriate.
Investigations shall be concluded as quickly as practicable and normally within fourteen days of the receipt of the signed statement. Investigations may be via any medium of communication, although where possible records of such communication should be kept (see 3.2). The person conducting an investigation may seek an extension of time from the Dean to conduct the investigation.

4.3 Report of Investigation
Upon completion of an investigation, the Head of School, or officer authorised by the Head of School to conduct the investigation, shall prepare a report of the investigation which shall contain the findings and recommendations in relation to the matter.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Findings by an Investigator

5.1.1 Findings - No Case to Answer
If, after receipt of the report of an investigation, the Head of School believes the student suspected of academic misconduct has no case to answer they shall within seven days of the conclusion of the investigation:
advise in writing the Dean and the person who provided the signed statement of the enquiries made and the outcome of the investigation; and
advise the student who was suspected of academic misconduct in writing of the nature of the information and/or evidence which led to the investigation, the enquiries made and the outcome of the investigation; and forward a copy of the above advice to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

5.1.2 Findings - A Case to Answer

If, after receipt of the report of an investigation, the Head of School believes the student suspected of academic misconduct has a case to answer they shall within seven days of the conclusion of the investigation advise the student who is suspected of academic misconduct, in writing, of:

- the nature of the information and/or evidence which led to the investigation,
- the enquiries made,
- the findings and recommendation(s) as to the penalty to be imposed under clause 6.1 below that the Head of School intends to make to the Dean, and
- the invitation to the student to provide, within 21 days, a written submission in relation to the findings and the recommendation to be made to the Dean.

Upon receipt of the written submission from the student, or where no written submission is received, at the expiration of the 21 day period in which the student is to provide a written submission, the Head of School shall advise the Dean, in writing, of:

- the nature of the information and/or evidence which led to the investigation,
- the enquiries made
- the findings and recommendation(s) as to a penalty to be imposed under clause 6.1 below; and
- provide the student’s written submission in relation to the finding and recommendation(s), where received.
- When recommending a penalty to be imposed by the Dean the Head of School shall have regard to:
  - the seriousness of the academic misconduct;
  - the experience of the student at University level (i.e. more leniency would be shown in the case of a first year student); and
  - whether or not the student has previously been found guilty of academic misconduct; but
  - the Head of School shall not be bound by any determination of another Head of School whether given in a similar case or not.

The Head of School may also make recommendations to the Dean on matters relating to academic policy and practice arising out of an investigation.

5.1.3 Findings - Vexatious Accusations

If, after receipt of the report of an investigation, the Head of School believes that the person who provided the signed statement did so vexatiously (ie the information and/or evidence supplied was spurious and was provided in order to annoy or upset the student) they shall, if the person providing the signed statement is a student, deal with the student under the Student General Misconduct Rule. If the person providing the signed statement is a staff member, he or she shall be dealt with under the relevant industrial award.
5.2 Findings by the Dean

After receiving a report of an investigation into academic misconduct conducted in accordance with clause 5.1 above and the written submission from the student in relation to the finding and recommendation(s), the Dean may conduct further enquiries and shall within seven days of receiving the report (unless granted an extension of time by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)):

- declare the student not guilty of academic misconduct; or
- declare the student guilty of academic misconduct and take one of the courses of action in (a), (b), (c), (d) or (e) in clause 6.1 below; or
- recommend to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) that one of the penalties in (f), (g), (h) or (i) in clause 6.1 below be applied.

Where the Dean takes action under (a) or (b) above, the Dean shall advise each of the following, in writing, of the finding, the penalty imposed if any, and provide each with a copy of the report of the investigation into the allegation, which will include advice of the nature of the information and/or evidence which led to the enquiry, the student’s written submission and the report of any additional enquiries made by the Dean under this clause:

- the student;
- the person who provided the signed statement;
- the Head of School; and
- the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

When imposing or recommending a penalty under (b) or (c) above, the Dean shall have regard to:

- the seriousness of the academic misconduct;
- the experience of the student at University level (i.e. more leniency would be shown in the case of a first year student); and
- whether or not the student has previously been found guilty of academic misconduct; but
- the Dean shall not be bound by any determination of another Dean whether given in a similar case or not.
- The Dean may also make recommendations to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) on matters relating to academic policy and practice arising out of an investigation.

5.3 Findings by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

After receiving a report from the Dean under clause 5.2 (c) above the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) may conduct further enquiries and shall within seven days of receiving the report (unless granted an extension of time by the Vice-Chancellor):

- declare the student not guilty of academic misconduct; or
- declare the student guilty of academic misconduct and take one of the courses of action in (a) to (i) inclusive in clause 6.1 below.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) shall advise each of the following in writing of the finding, the penalty imposed if any, and provide each with a copy of the report of the investigation into the allegation, the student’s written submission, the Dean’s recommendation to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
and the report of any additional enquiries by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and the Dean under this clause:
the student;
the person who provided the signed statement;
the Dean;
the Head of School.
When imposing a penalty under (b) above, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) shall have regard to:
the recommendation of the Dean;
the seriousness of the academic misconduct;
the experience of the student at University level (i.e. more leniency would be shown in the case of a first year student); and
whether or not the student has previously been found guilty of academic misconduct; but
the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) shall not be bound by any previous determination whether given in a similar case or not.
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) may also make recommendations to the Dean, the Academic Senate or any of its committees, Faculty Boards or the Vice-Chancellor or any other relevant bodies or offices of the University, on matters relating to academic policy and practice arising out of an investigation.
6. PENALTIES
6.1 Possible Penalties
The penalties that may be recommended and imposed in relation to an academic misconduct matter that has been investigated and a finding made in accordance with this Policy are:
that no action be taken against the student; or
that the student be counselled or be cautioned or reprimanded; or
that the student be invited to resubmit the assignment, essay, project or other work or resit the test or examination in respect of which academic misconduct has occurred under the conditions set out in clause 6.1.1 below and be counselled, cautioned or reprimanded;
that the student be awarded zero marks in the assignment, essay, project, test, examination or other work or be awarded zero marks for that part of the assignment, essay, project, test, examination or other work in respect of which academic misconduct has occurred and be counselled, cautioned or reprimanded; or
that the student be failed in the subject under the conditions set out in clause 6.1.2 below and be counselled, cautioned or reprimanded; or
that the student be failed in the subject under the conditions set out in clause 6.1.2 below and be fined an amount not exceeding the maximum fine published each year in the University’s schedule of fees and charges; or
that the student be failed in the subject under the conditions set out in clause 6.1.2 below and be suspended from enrolment in the University under the conditions set out in clause 6.1.3 below; or
a combination of (f) and (g) above; or
that the student be failed in the subject under the conditions set out in clause 6.1.2 below and be excluded from the University under the conditions set out in clause 6.1.4 below.
6.1.1 Resubmission of an Assessment Item

The following conditions apply to the resubmission of an assignment, essay, project or other work or resit the test or examination as a consequence of the application of 6.1 (c) above:

the maximum mark that can be awarded for an assessment item that is completed by the prescribed date and attains the required standard shall be fifty percent (50%) of the marks available for that assessment item.

6.1.2 Failure in a Subject

The following conditions apply to failure in a subject as a consequence of the application of clauses 6.1 (e), (f), (g), (h) or (i) above:

- the grade fail (FL) or unsatisfactory (US) will be recorded for any subject in which a student is failed for academic misconduct;
- a student failed in a subject for academic misconduct shall not be permitted to apply for approved withdrawal (AW) from that subject;
- a student who has been granted AW in a subject and is subsequently failed in the subject for academic misconduct shall have the AW grade changed to FL or US;
- a student failed in a subject for academic misconduct shall not be entitled to a refund of fees nor the cancellation of the Commonwealth Student Contribution liability in respect of that subject.

6.1.3 Suspension

6.1.3.1 Cancellation of Enrolment

A student suspended from enrolment in the University under clause 6.1(g) or (h) above shall have his or her enrolment cancelled after twenty-one days from the date of the notification of suspension.

6.1.3.2 No Refund of Fees

A student suspended from enrolment in the University in a session after the last date for a refund of fees or after the census date for that session, shall not be entitled to a refund of fees nor the cancellation of the Commonwealth Student Contribution liability for that session.

6.1.3.3 Conditions of Suspension

The following conditions apply to suspension:

- Suspension shall be for a specified period not exceeding two years from the date of notification of suspension.
- A suspended student shall not be admitted to a different course or be enrolled as a Single Subject Study Student during the period of suspension.
- A suspended student shall have the automatic right of reenrolment in the course from which he or she was suspended at the completion of the period of suspension.
- Suspension shall not be recorded on a student’s academic transcript.

6.1.4 Exclusion

6.1.4.1 Cancellation of Enrolment

A student excluded from the University under clause 6.1 (i) above shall have his or her enrolment cancelled after twenty-one days from the date of the notification of exclusion.

6.1.4.2 No Refund of Fees
A student excluded from the University in a session after the last date for a refund of fees or after the census date for that session, shall not be entitled to a refund of fees nor the cancellation of the Commonwealth Student Contribution liability for that session.

6.1.4.3 Conditions of Exclusion

The following conditions apply to exclusion:

- exclusion shall be for a specified period of at least two years from the date of notification of exclusion;
- an excluded student shall not be admitted to any course in the University nor be enrolled as a Single Subject Study Student during the period of exclusion;
- an excluded student who wishes to resume study at the University after the period of exclusion shall apply for admission to the University through the relevant admissions office or admissions centre; and
- exclusion for academic misconduct shall not be shown on a student’s academic transcript.

6.2 Decisions

The decision of the Dean to impose a penalty in accordance with clause 5.2, above, shall be final.

The decision of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) to impose a penalty in accordance with clause 5.3, above, shall be final.

6.3 Enforcement of Penalty

If the Dean imposes a penalty on a student under clause 5.2, above, the Dean shall ensure that the penalty imposed has been enforced.

If the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) imposes a penalty on a student under clause 5.3 above the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) shall ensure the penalty imposed has been enforced.

7. REPORTING CASES OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

7.1 Report to Academic Senate

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) shall report annually to Academic Senate on cases of suspected and alleged academic misconduct investigated under this Policy. The following information as appropriate shall be provided for each case reported subject to the provisions of clauses 7.2 and 7.3 below:

- the alleged misconduct;
- the Faculty in which the misconduct occurred;
- the Faculty in which the student was enrolled if it is different to (b);
- the outcome of the investigation;
- the decision of the Dean or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic);

7.2 Public Reporting of Cases

Cases of proven academic misconduct under this Policy may be made public by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). Information made public may include the nature of the academic misconduct, the penalty imposed and the result of any appeal.

7.3 Confidentiality

The identity of students, staff or other persons involved in an investigation of academic misconduct, including the identity of any person alleged to have been in breach of this Policy or found guilty of
academic misconduct under this Policy is confidential so long as the tenets of natural justice are adhered to.

7.4 Central Academic Misconduct File

All documentation relating to student academic misconduct and any investigations conducted in accordance with this Policy shall be retained by the Academic Secretary only in accordance with General Disposal Authority 23 as set by State Records NSW.
Appendix D: Ethics Approval for Focus Groups

15 August 2006

Associate Professor Graham Tyson
School of Social Sciences &
Liberal Studies
BATHURST CAMPUS

Dear Associate Professor Tyson,

Thank you for the additional information forwarded in response to a request from the Ethics in Human Research Committee.

The Committee has now approved your proposal entitled “Student perceptions of plagiarism: A pilot study”. The protocol number associated with the project is 2006/221. Please be sure to quote this number when responding to any request made by the Committee.

You must notify the Committee immediately should your research differ in any way from that proposed.

You are also required to complete a Progress Report form, which can be downloaded from www.csu.edu.au/research/forms/chrc_progress.doc, and return it on completion or by 15/04/2007 if your research has not been completed by that date.

Please don’t hesitate to contact the Executive Officer telephone (02) 6338 4628 or email ethics@csu.edu.au if you have any queries about this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Hicks
Executive Officer
Ethics in Human Research Committee

cc
Appendix E: Focus Group Questions

Go through info sheet, recording and consent form.

Start recording.

Explain that recorder is on.

Preamble:

(Welcome, thank you, etc.). Just a little bit about this project: different people seem to have different ideas of what plagiarism is, what constitutes plagiarism and so on. So we’ve decided to run this project simply to try and get an idea of how students perceive plagiarism—whether different groups of students see plagiarism differently, whether they see it differently to academics. I should stress, it’s not meant to be a confessional, we’re not interested in whether you’ve engaged in plagiarism, but really in, basically, how you perceive it and what you think it is.

So, basically, there are no right or wrong answers in this. I’m not interested in making you all agree with me or even with each other either, so if you want to disagree or debate something that’s said, feel free. I really want to find out how many different ideas are out there, so this is all about what you think.

I’ll be taking a few notes to remind myself of points to come back to.

Get everyone to introduce themselves (course, cat dog person, etc.)

Alright, well on to plagiarism then. I’ve got a number of questions and things I want to go through, so first up, we want to ask you:

1. What is plagiarism? So maybe if we go round again and if everyone can tell me what is plagiarism.
   a) Can it be categorised into different types?
   b) What are they?
   c) (Prime, if no participant can answer the question) Working definition: plagiarism is where a student uses the ideas or words of another person and presents them as if they were the student’s own words or ideas. Plagiarism is the dishonest use of another’s ideas, words, concepts and theories by presenting them as one’s own.

2. What causes students to plagiarise?

3. Is plagiarism common?
   a) if yes, how common do you think it is?

4. How serious is plagiarism?
   a) If consequences, is plagiarism only serious because of the consequences or is plagiarism still serious regardless?

5. What are the chances of being caught?
a) Is that something you’ve been told or a general impression?
Appendix F: Information Statement for Research Participants

Student Perceptions of Plagiarism: Focus Group

Principal Investigators:
Ms Judith Gullifer
School of Social Sciences & Liberal Studies
Charles Sturt University
Panorama Avenue
Bathurst NSW 2795
Ph: (02) 6338 4572

Associate Professor Graham Tyson
School of Social Sciences & Liberal Studies
Charles Sturt University
Panorama Avenue
Bathurst NSW 2795
Ph: (02) 6338 4297

This research project is being conducted to investigate students’ understandings of and attitudes towards plagiarism. This research is being funded by Charles Sturt University.

In this research, your participation will involve taking part in a focus group, where you will be given the opportunity to discuss your opinions, perceptions and experiences of plagiarism. Please allow up to 1 hour for the focus group.

During the focus group, you will not be asked to disclose any personal instances of plagiarism and all discussion will be regarded as confidential. The focus group proceedings will be recorded on audio cassette and transcribed, but your name will not be included. All published results will show combined data only and neither your name nor any other identifying information will be used or published without your written permission. All records from the focus group will be destroyed in accordance with the requirements of Charles Sturt University and the Australian Psychological Society.

You will be asked to sign a consent form prior to participating in the focus group. Participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty or discriminatory treatment. Should participation in the focus group cause you any distress, arrangements can be made for counselling.

NOTE: The Charles Sturt University Ethics in Human Research Committee has approved this project. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the committee through the executive officer:

The Executive Officer
Ethics in Human Research Committee
Academic Secretariat
Charles Sturt University
Private Mail Bag 29
Bathurst NSW 2795
Tel: (02) 6338 4628
Fax: (02) 6338 4194

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Thank you.
Appendix G: Ethics Approval

(SSLS Ethics 2008-1)

Memo
To: Judith Gullifer
From: David Bull, Chair SSLS Ethics Committee
Date: August 19, 2013
Re: Ethics Application 2008/02

Dear Judith,

The Committee has considered your application and, while generally approving of your research, the following points need clarification:

How will anonymity be guaranteed? If participants are solicited by email, what method will be used to ensure anonymity? Will the email refer them to a website? If so, the website needs to avoid logging the names of participants in a way, which identifies their individual responses.

There is an issue with privacy and accessing email addresses. I’ve talked with Julie Hicks, Administrative Officer to the Ethics in Human Research Committee, about this. It’s a bit of a grey area, but she says that other people, who have used email approaches to students, have done so by approaching Student Services or by putting a notice on subject forums and asking students to self select. The latter method is the preferred method.

Some first year students are under 18. The Committee recommends that you include a statement in your information sheet to emphasise that participants must be 18 years of age or older.

Lastly, your survey instrument appears to be a non-standard instrument. Before giving final approval, the Committee will need to view your survey instrument.

I’m happy to discuss any of these matters with you.

David Bull

Response to Ethics Committee

Dear David,

Thank you to the committee for examining my ethics application. I have provided some clarification to the points raised below.

How will anonymity be guaranteed? If participants are solicited by email, what method will be used to ensure anonymity? Will the email refer them to a website? If so, the website needs to avoid logging the names of participants in a way, which identifies their individual responses.

No personal information that can identify a student will be solicited through the completion of the survey. Student names will not be obtained. Email addresses will not be collected for any other purpose than an invitation to participate. Email addresses will be deleted after invitation to participate is sent. The email will refer students to a website and no identifying information will be collected (name, surname, address or email address). The completion of survey will indicate student providing consent to participate.

There is an issue with privacy and accessing email addresses. I’ve talked with Julie Hicks, Administrative Officer to the Ethics in Human Research Committee, about this. It’s a bit of a grey area, but she says that
other people, who have used email approaches to students, have done so by approaching Student Services or by putting a notice on subject forums and asking students to self select. The latter method is the preferred method.

I have contacted student services and discussed obtaining email addresses via the databases. I have been given permission by Geoff Honey to access this information. The following is his response:

Judith,

We are happy to move forward as indicated.

I am informed that we will need to create a specific report to meet your needs, which could take up to a day for someone to create the query. So as long as it can wait until after the Banner upgrade (end of May) then we should be able to handle it.

You will of course need to provide a more detail as to what you actually want. You should contact Ian McDermott, Manager, Systems and Quality Office in early June (he will have the questions on the detail).

Regards
Geoff

Response from Ethics Committee

Dear Jude,

You have answered all the Committee’s questions. Your application is now approved.

Cheers,

David Bull,
Lecturer in justice studies,
School of Social Sciences and Liberal Studies,
Charles Sturt University,
Panorama Avenue
Bathurst, 2795,
Australia.
Appendix H: Copy of Online Questionnaire

At the beginning of every semester you are sent an eBox message titled "CSU Policies and Regulations that outlines is expected of you, as a student, regarding your studies and research. This eBox message provides a hyperlink to Student Academic Misconduct Policy which details the policies and regulations of the University that frame your.Students' academic conduct as part of an introduction to their subject, which is contained in the Subject Outline of the subject(s) you are studying. The following questions will explore understanding of these policies.

Section 1

In recent times plagiarism has been paid a lot of attention due to an apparent increase in incidents. Perhaps you know have heard of, another student who has been caught plagiarising. Please indicate your answers to the following questions:

1. Based on your knowledge please indicate how well you understand what plagiarism is:

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<th>No Understanding</th>
<th>Complete Understanding</th>
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2. Have you read the CSU Academic Misconduct Policy which addresses plagiarism?

☐ Yes Please answer questions 3 and 4 below.

☐ No Please go on to question 5 below.

3. Please rate how clear you think the CSU policy on plagiarism is:

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<th>Extremely Clear</th>
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4. Please rate how fair you think the CSU policy on plagiarism is:

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<th>Extremely Unfair</th>
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5. Please rank the following sources (1 to 5) in order of what your knowledge of plagiarism is based on:

☐ Lecturers

☐ Other Students

☐ Materials in eBox or Subject Outlines

☐ The Academic Misconduct Policy

☐ Other
6. In general, how well do you think students at CSU understand what plagiarism is?

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7. In general, how well do you think CSU staff understand the CSU policy on plagiarism?

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8. In your opinion, how consistent are staff in implementing the CSU policy on plagiarism?

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<th>Extremely Consistent</th>
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9. How would you rate the emphasis that CSU places on plagiarism?

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10. How likely do you think it is that a student will commit plagiarism without meaning to:

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11. In your opinion, how does the emphasis on plagiarism at CSU impact on your academic writing?

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<th>Extreme Negative Impact on Written Expression (i.e. too much time taken on referencing)</th>
<th>Extreme Positive Impact on Written Expression (i.e. motivates spending time on referencing)</th>
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Please go on to Section 2 below.
Section 2

Below are some statements about academic writing. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by circling the appropriate response.

12. My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on an essay.

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13. Expressing my ideas through writing seems to be a waste of time.

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14. I am afraid of writing essays when I know they will be evaluated.

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15. I like to include my own ideas in my essays.

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16. I feel confident in my ability to clearly express my ideas in writing.

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17. I’m nervous about academic writing.

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18. I never seem to be able to clearly write down my ideas in assessments.

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19. I enjoy academic writing.

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20. I often struggle to organize my ideas in a written essay.

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<td>7</td>
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<td>8</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. When I hand in an essay I know I’m going to do poorly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>8</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. Just thinking about a writing assignment makes me feel anxious.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

23. I feel confident in my ability to appropriately reference any sources that I use in my assessments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

24. It’s easy for me to write a good essay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please go on to Section 3 below.
Section 3

In everyday life, some behaviours are considered to be very serious, others not so serious. Below is a list of different types of behaviour. We are interested in your own opinion about how serious each type of behaviour is. If you think it is among the most serious, then circle the number 10 in the space provided beside the behaviour. If you think that the behaviour falls somewhere in between the least serious and the most serious, then circle the number between 0 and 10 that best indicates how serious you think the behaviour is. Remember that the seriousness of behaviour is only a matter of opinion, and there are no right or wrong answers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Least Serious</th>
<th>Most Serious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25. Driving a car while drunk:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Purposefully damaging something that does not belong to you:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Paraphrasing a few sentences in an assignment without acknowledging the source:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Using marijuana:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Stealing something worth $50:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Downloading music from the internet without paying for it:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Sexually assaulting someone:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Making a nuisance phone call:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Hitting someone without any reason:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Copying text without using quotation marks and acknowledging the source:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Knowingly buying, selling or holding stolen goods:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Murdering someone:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Selling drugs such as cocaine, heroin or ice:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Copying a DVD:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Paraphrasing whole chunks of text in an assignment without acknowledging the source:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Breaking into a building:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Cheating on an exam:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Participating in a gang rape:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Spraying abusive graffiti on a public building:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. Submitting an essay bought off the internet:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. Skipping lectures:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. Making up false reference citations:</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please go on to Section 4 below.
Section 4

People may differ in what they consider to be plagiarism. Below is a list of possible scenarios; please indicate whether you consider the behaviour to be plagiarism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47. Copying passages from textbooks, journals, or the Web, without acknowledgement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. Falsifying data obtained from experiments, surveys, or similar activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. Copying the answers of another student in an examination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. Allowing another student, who has to submit an assignment on the same topic, access to one's own assignment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. Copying actual text without using quotation marks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. Making changes to an assignment that has been marked, then returning it for re-marking claiming that it was not correctly marked</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. Taking ideas from a source such as a brochure, advertisement, television program, or radio program, and using them as your own without acknowledgment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. Working the whole or part of an assignment with another person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. Making up false reference citations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. Formatting a reference contrary to your discipline’s preferred reference style</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. Using the notes of another person to prepare an assignment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. Giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. Reusing in whole or in part the work of another student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60. Taking unauthorized materials into an examination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. Submitting the work of another person, which has had only minor changes, without acknowledging the source</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. Leaving out a reference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. Citing sources that have not actually been read</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please go on to Section 5 below.
Section 5

Listed in the table below are behaviours that can occur in an academic setting. Also listed are penalties that can be imposed by the University for these behaviours. Please indicate what penalty you think the University would most likely impose on a student caught doing that behaviour for the first time.

1. No Action Taken
2. Counselling, Caution or Reprimanded
3. Awarded Zero Marks and Caution or Reprimanded
4. Fail Subject and Caution or Reprimanded
5. Fail Subject and Fired
6. Fail Subject and Suspended from University
7. Combination of (6) and (8)
8. Fail Subject and Excluded from University for at Least 2 Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Penalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>64. Copying passages from textbooks, journals, or the Web, without acknowledgement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65. Fabricating data obtained from experiments, surveys, or similar activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66. Copying the answers of another student in an examination.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67. Allowing another student, who has to submit an assignment on the same topic, access to one's own assignment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68. Copying actual text without using quotation marks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69. Making changes to an assignment that has been marked then returning it for re-marking claiming that it was not correctly marked.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70. Taking ideas from a source such as a brochure, advertisement, television program, or radio program, and using them as your own without acknowledgment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71. Writing the whole or part of an assignment with another person.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72. Making up false reference citations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73. Formatting a reference contrary to your discipline's preferred reference style.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74. Using the notes of another person to prepare an assignment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75. Giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76. Reusing in whole or in part the work of another student.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77. Taking unauthorized materials into an examination.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78. Submitting the work of another person, which has had only minor changes, without acknowledging the source?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79. Leaving out a reference.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80. Citing sources that have not actually been read.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please go on to Section 6 below.
Section 6

Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by answering the following questions:

81. Do you personally know any student who has been caught plagiarising?
   
   ☐ Yes Please answer questions 64 and 65 below.
   
   ☐ No Please go on to question 66 below.

82. How many students do you personally know who have been caught plagiarising?
   
   ☐ One
   
   ☐ Two to Three
   
   ☐ Four to Five
   
   ☐ More

83. What was the most severe penalty received?

84. Have you ever heard from a third party about another student who has been caught plagiarising?
   
   ☐ Yes Please answer questions 67 and 68 below.
   
   ☐ No Please go on to question 69 below.

85. How many students have you heard from a third party have been caught plagiarising?
   
   ☐ One
   
   ☐ Two to Three
   
   ☐ Four to Five
   
   ☐ More

86. What was the most severe penalty received?
87. Please tick the box next to the percentage of students you estimate intentionally plagiarise in one academic year:

- Less than 1%
- Between 1% and 5%
- Between 6% and 9%
- Between 10% and 29%
- Between 30% and 49%
- Between 50% and 70%
- More than 70%
- No one

88. In your opinion what is the probability that a student who intentionally plagiarises will get caught:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0%</th>
<th>10%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>30%</th>
<th>40%</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>60%</th>
<th>70%</th>
<th>80%</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

89. Of those students who get caught for plagiarising in one academic year, what percentage do you estimate receive a serious penalty such as failing the subject, being suspended, or being excluded from University?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0%</th>
<th>10%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>30%</th>
<th>40%</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>60%</th>
<th>70%</th>
<th>80%</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

90. Please indicate how scared you are of being accused of plagiarism:

Not At All Scared | Extremely Scared
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

91. Outside the university environment, how important do you think the issue of plagiarism is?

Not At All Important | Extremely Important
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Please go on to Section 7 below.
Hi Geoff,

I am a PhD student currently studying student perceptions of plagiarism. Through a teaching and learning scholarship, I completed a pilot study last year investigating how students perceive plagiarism.

From the discussion among students during the focus groups, we identified six dimensions of perceptions of plagiarism that are outlined under six main headings: confusion, fear, perceived sanctions, perceived seriousness, academic consequences, and resentment. A second analysis of the transcripts found an interrelation between the dimensions. These dimensions and the relationships between them was developed into a concept map (Figure 4.1 represents a concept map demonstrating some plausible relationships among the themes.). In general the focus group data reveals that there is much confusion reported by students about the term ‘plagiarism’. This confusion appeared to increase the fear of inadvertent plagiarism. This was suggested as a consequence of students not understanding some key ideas around the citation of ideas, as opposed to clear understanding of verbatim copying of text, and cut and paste from the Internet. This fear appeared to be augmented by an overestimation of the severity of sanctions, and the perceived seriousness that the university places on the act of plagiarism. Consequently, students reported resentment towards the disjuncture between perceived sanctions administered by the university, relative to the degree of seriousness placed by the students on plagiarism. The other concerning aspect was that students reported negative academic consequences that manifested as a form of academic learned helplessness. This was reported as a decrease in confidence to write an academic paper.

I am currently in the process of commencing my second study, which aims to explore the validity of each of these dimensions using a much larger random sample of students across years and disciplines. To ensure that the results are reliable and valid, thereby reducing error and increasing confidence, I need to organise a stratified random sample to enable increased confidence of the results. That is, I need to draw random samples across year of study and perhaps discipline. To do this, I will need to access a database to randomly select email addresses from a
student database. It is intended that students will be sent an email (by blind CC), inviting them to participate in the anonymous survey (at this stage it is hoped that the survey will be online). No identifying information will be collected. We are interested only in year of study, discipline, gender, and age. Once the time period has elapsed email addresses will be deleted from the system. We are not asking students to tell us if they have plagiarised or if they know of others who have plagiarised. Rather the focus will be on the six dimensions detailed above.

I am not sure of university process that will enable me to collect the data via this method. I have been informed that you are the point of contact. I am happy to be able to discuss my options with you. I am open to suggestion at this stage.

Cheers
Judith Gullifer
Registered Psychologist (NSW)
Associate Lecturer
School of Social Sciences & Liberal Studies
Charles Sturt University
Panorama Avenue
Bathurst NSW 2795
Phone: 6338 4572
Fax: 6338 4401
jgullifer@csu.edu.au
www.csu.edu.au

Response

Judith,

We are happy to move forward as indicated.
I am informed that we will need to create a specific report to meet your needs, which could take up to a day for someone to create the query. So as long as it can wait until after the Banner upgrade (end of May) then we should be able to handle it.
You will of course need to provide a more detail as to what you actually want. You should contact Ian McDermott, Manager, Systems and Quality Office in early June (he will have the questions on the detail).

Regards
Geoff
Appendix J: Letter of Invitation to Participate in Survey

Dear fellow student,

I am a PhD student at CSU and, for my degree, I am undertaking a research project on what students think about plagiarism. I would really appreciate your help with my research in order to complete it successfully.

I have obtained ethics approval to source email addresses that have been provided by the university to send this email to you and other students. I do not have access to any other personal or identifying information.

All that you would be required to do is to complete a short online questionnaire. The questionnaire is about issues related to plagiarism and it is based on responses that were obtained from student focus groups last year. I am NOT interested in whether or not you have ever plagiarised but simply in your attitudes towards plagiarism.

To complete the survey, please click on the link below:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=FOkYj67MfXjbnWrOl_2fiNHw_3d_3d

The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete, and I would appreciate your answering the questions honestly based on your personal understanding of plagiarism. You will NOT be asked if you have ever plagiarised.

I would be grateful if you could complete the survey by 13 November 2009. All completed surveys are completely anonymous and no individual respondent will be able to be identified. The results will be analysed and only aggregate scores will be reported.

I really appreciate you taking the time to participate.

Cheers

Judith Gullifer
PhD Candidate
Charles Sturt University
Appendix K: Information Statement in Survey Monkey

Thank you for your interest in contributing to our knowledge about students’ perceptions of plagiarism. This research project is being conducted to investigate students’ understanding of and attitudes towards plagiarism. The survey will not require you to discuss any aspects of your own behaviour; rather, the focus will be on what you know about plagiarism.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire that will gather information about the topic listed above. Overall, it is expected that this study will only take between 15 to 20 minutes of your time.

To ensure that the data we collect will remain anonymous and confidential, you will not be asked to record your name or any other identifying details anywhere on the questionnaire, nor will any login details be required for online completion. Once collected, data will be analysed in terms of general patterns in all respondents’ behaviour, rather than examining individual participants. At no time will personally identifying information be reported in any publications arising from this research, as personally identifying information is not collected.

NOTE: The Charles Sturt University School of Social Science and Liberal Studies Ethics in Human Research Committee has approved this project. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the committee through:

The Executive Officer
David Bull
Academic Secretariat
Charles Sturt University
Private Mail Bag 29
Bathurst NSW 2795

Tel: (02) 63384570 (02) 63384570
Fax: (02) 6338 4401

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.
Chief Investigator: Judith Gullifer
School of Social Science and Liberal Studies
Charles Sturt University

Supervisor: Associate Professor Graham Tyson
School of Social Science and Liberal Studies
Charles Sturt University

Email: jgullifer@csu.edu.au
Tel: (02) 6338 4771