

# “But You’re not Supposed to Rip it Straight Off”

## Technology, Plagiarism and Dilemmas of Learning

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**Abstract:** In discourses on student plagiarism, how students use technology is often viewed as threatening the quality of education. Students are positioned as plagiarists who copy and paste or download full essays with the explicit purpose of cheating. Their actions are more commonly judged in reference to the need for upholding discipline rather than upholding learning. This paper argues that learning environments are rapidly changing, and these changes introduce increased uncertainty – uncertainty that students need to manage. By assuming that students use technology to cheat, we risk obscuring the real dilemmas which students confront as they strive to manage uncertainty. One aim of this study is to go beyond simplified categorizations of technology use. Instead, we suggest focussing on how students make sense of their use of technology. What do they do in practice? Data was collected via video recording of students’ use of technology in problem-based and collaborative learning. Three cases where students must make sense of their experiences are reported, illustrating uncertainties in learning highlighted by students’ use of technology. Results indicate that students spend considerable time making sense of their assignment. Students who have formulated questions may still be unsure as to what might constitute acceptable answers. Their uncertainty impacts on how they search for and value information and how they manage it, once found, in their writing. They encounter dilemmas as they seek to treat texts in accordance with rules for paraphrasing, attributing and referencing. These dilemmas are inflected by use of technology. Rather than being characterised as blatant attempts to plagiarise (as some concerned pundits might suggest), student actions suggest an uncertainty about how to manage information and to then subsequently write text. The act of plagiarism can be more accurately characterised as a dilemma emergent in students’ attempts to manage their uncertainty.

During the collection of data we were told a story by the mother of a final-year student at a senior high school. She had been asked to give feedback on her daughter's essay and, being a specialist in the subject, gave what she thought was constructive criticism. To her surprise her daughter said she was aware of precisely those weaknesses but if she made these particular improvements she was afraid her teacher would suspect she had been cheating by plagiarizing from the Internet.

Student plagiarism has recently become a focus of attention in the media, research and education. The practice is generally described as a threat to the quality of education because students do not do the work they are supposed to; instead they take credit for the work of others. The student's reasoning in our introductory account betrays another view on plagiarism. Accusation of plagiarism is a danger regardless of whether she attempts to plagiarize or not and she does not trust her teachers to assess her work correctly. Central to her reasoning is her understanding of what makes teachers suspect plagiarism. A student who uses the Internet and hands in excellent work is a suspect. Calculating the risks, she makes sure that her essay is just good enough. In her attempt to manage uncertainty, the good becomes the enemy of the excellent.

### Normalizing the Plagiarist and the Cheat

The central concern of this study is what Hacking (2002) calls making up people. He asserts that experts play an important role in providing statistical grounds for normalizing people in what Foucault (2000a) calls biopolitics. They make up people and sort them into groups, like golf players, or cheats. Studies on plagiarism in the same way play an important role in constructing and mediating an alignment between technology, the plagiarist and the cheat. The aim of this study is to go beyond the categorization of plagiarism and the use of technology exemplified by copy-and-paste as plagiarism or cheating and to study students in action as they work on "research reports".

Questions about actions that can be considered as plagiarism are included in surveys about cheating in such a way that they support the construction of plagiarism as cheating. When Newstead, Franklyn-Stokes and Armstead (1996, p. 231), for example, report that 54 per cent of their English respondents admit to having paraphrased without references, and when Björklund and Wenestam (1999, p. 9) report that 35.8 per cent of Finnish students admit to having copied from books or other publications without giving a reference, this is constructed as cheating. In the US and Canada, 3 % of undergraduate and 2 % of graduate students are considered to be cheats because they admit to having obtained essays from term-paper "mills" (McCabe, 2005a, Table 4). In this discourse, technology is assigned a pivotal role and McCabe (2005b, p. 28) asserts that of the 51 per cent

US and Canadian students who admitted to having cheated on course work, four out of five had done so by copy-and-pasting or downloading from the Internet.

### Writing and Uncertainty

There hardly seems to be a case for arguing that student text does not overlap with text from other authors. Estimates based on reports from trials with text comparison software firmly establish such similarities and indicate that we can expect to find sequences from other texts in as many as around 20 per cent of all student essays (Braumoeller & Gaines, 2001; CAVAL Collaborative Solutions, 2002; Lancaster, 2005) depending on the threshold set for detection. There is however strong support for the opinion that there may be other reasons for similarities and overlaps than an intention to cheat. Insufficient knowledge about the rules (Matalene, 1985), especially for electronic referencing (Gresham, 1996), insufficient mastery of the subject to write about it in one's own words (Howard, 1995), enculturation to different rules for using texts (Kirkland & Saunders, 1991) relative to genre (Angélil-Carter, 2000), insufficient mastery of dialogue, authorship and intertextuality (Thompson, 2002, 2005), unclear understanding of ownership of texts, especially Internet text (Park, 2003), all rank as explanations for plagiarism, but not for cheating.

Thus there are other ways of reasoning about overlaps and similarities that we suggest are prominent in discourses on contemporary students. These students are often described in connection with references to a changing society. There is also a rhetoric about a more complex society (Luhmann, 1988, 2005); where a progressive loss of tradition and social bonds influences the formation of personal identity (Lupton 1999, p. 4); where uncertainty causes people to experience anxiety (Salecl, 2004); forces them to take responsibility for their own lives (Rose, 1999); and to calculate risks in order to manage uncertainty and reduce complexity (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 2000; Bauman 2006). Trust becomes an important aspect of dealing with such issues (Luhmann, 2005) also for students attending different forms of education (Biesta, 2002).

In rhetoric about contemporary and future students, these metaphorical descriptions of society seldom take the form of dystopia. Dealing with vast domains of information, locating information, valuing sources, providing arguments and warrants, presenting unique insights, to give a few examples, are presented as positive challenges (for an example, see *Government Communication 1997/98:176*). Nevertheless rhetoric about new societies, new technology, new types of students and new challenges in education opens for another view of student plagiarism. Säljö (2005, p. 211), for example, sees students' coping strategies, such as copy-and-paste, as responses to being forced into forms of learning, working with types of assignments and information that they do not master. Commenting on one aspect of being a student in an information society, Säljö (2000, p. 242) argues that students' exposure to the rapid increase in

information raises the important question of how you get from information to knowledge and thus from a mode of learning focused on memorization to a mode focused on transformation of information into knowledge. In such a perspective notions about complexity, danger, uncertainty, risk and trust give reasons for looking at plagiarism from another vantage point than that of cheating.

## Studying Plagiarism and Cheating?

Research until recently has to a large extent been satisfied with generating information about the number of students that cheat and reasons for and attitudes towards cheating, thus contributing to normalization. Surprisingly enough, there has hitherto been little research into a possible relationship between what it means to be a student in an information society, learning to use networked technology and write in genres that can be characterized as academic, and student plagiarism. Socio-cultural theorists argue that students' social, moral and cognitive development will depend on the social practices they take part in and what material artefacts they use (Cole, 1996; Säljö, 2005). Student morale in such a perspective is mediated action and drawing on positioning theory, their position as honest or cheating students is mediated by the rights, duties and obligations they can be considered to have in their local moral order. In positioning theory the interest lies in the momentary positions people take up. These positions are approached through the story lines people tell and the actions people perform. A student may take it to be within his or her duty to use modern technology to download information and reuse it by summarizing, paraphrasing and referencing it, but also to have a right to try different ways of doing it and to fail. What kind of position would that make available to the student in the moral order?

Considering our interest in governance and the making up of people, we would argue that this points us towards the relationship between on the one hand human actions and on the other hand moral prescriptions and moral orders. This suggests an interest in the relationship individuals ought to have with themselves and what Foucault calls ethics (Hacking, 2002, p. 115). Foucault shifts the focus from how we are constituted as subjects through how we are acted upon by other agents, which he calls normalization, to how people constitute themselves as agents acting on others. Studying how we turn ourselves into moral agents (in this case through following certain rules for writing) would mean to take an interest in ethical substance (Foucault, 2000b, p. 264). Students writing "research reports", for example, are bound to reason about how different actions in writing are linked to different moral issues. Among these issues are what their teachers call plagiarism and cheating. A second interest, according to Foucault, is the way in which people are invited to recognize moral obligations, their mode of subjection (*mode d'assujettissement*). Are these derived from a code for writing, perhaps in a written instruction, inscribed in the design of software, or mediated through the voice of a

tutor? All are likely to produce insights about the need to put a reference at the end of a text and contribute to what students take to be true about proper conduct. The third concern is the means by which we turn ourselves into ethical subjects, that which Foucault calls self-forming activity or asceticism (*pratique de soi*). How do students go about turning themselves into writers who follow good practice? Do they turn to guides or schedule sessions with their teachers or perhaps reason with their peers about common difficulties? These practices are all part of how we constitute ourselves in relation to ethics. There is a fourth aspect, which concerns the goal or telos of these activities. Foucault describes this as an issue about what kind of subject we aspire to be when we act according to a moral. For instance, should the students become successful, skilled, professional or conforming?

## Methodology and Research Design

Data have been drawn from material collected by the research projects *ICT and Learning in Teacher Training* and *Borrowed Feathers*, funded by the Knowledge Foundation through its research programme LearnIT and the Swedish Research Council respectively. The collected material consists of field notes, student logs and essays, and audio and video recordings.

Data have been prepared to facilitate what Jordan and Henderson (1995) call Interaction Analysis. Since our interest includes the successive downloading of information and work on texts by the screen, activities on the screen have been recorded using screen-capturing software. Video feeds and screen captures have been merged into one video (for a description see Linderoth, 2004, p. 102) and fed into a programme named Transana for transcription and analysis. We have focused on what students do when they work on assignments that have “research reports” as an end product, letting ourselves be guided by research that takes an interest in human conduct, such as ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967, in Garfinkel & Rawls, 2002; Eglin & Hester, 1999), situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and a rhetorical approach to writing and literacy (Duffy, 2003). Instead of trying to find out whether students copy-and-paste and whether this happens intentionally, we have focused on situations where the use of other texts appears as a dilemma, that is, where they provide reasons for and against different actions (Billig, 1997).

Repeating the claim from both socio-cultural and phenomenological perspectives that plagiarism is contingent on culture and history, we would argue that it is important to consider how students reason about writing and their use of technologies.

## The Context

Data collection was conducted in two Swedish gymnasiums (high schools), one private and one public. These gymnasiums are typical in the sense that they have particular profiles evident through their programmes. They have a standard set of

office-type applications for managing and compiling information, working with diagrams, graphs and pictures. None of the gymnasiums had installed special applications to support tasks such as structuring and modelling, information retrieval, transcription, analysis or presentation, but one of them subscribed to a text comparison service that all projects were run through. There are school policies on the use of technology that instruct students on their rights, duties and obligations regarding the use of these resources.

One particular application, the Researcher, was installed by the research team in order to study how students make use of software designed to support work with project reports. Use of this software has been reported elsewhere (Nilsson, Eklöf & Ottosson, 2005, 2006, in press), suggesting that students make limited use of the software. The Researcher does however surface in the present data in ways of interest to this study. The Researcher is a plug-in used to collect and add information from different sources. It has some features aimed at facilitating correct referencing. The software keeps track of and stores information about references added to a student project. Students can also add information, comment, edit, link to other sources and make inclusions. Their raw reports can be exported to a word processor for further editing. At the end of such a raw report a reference list of all the sources used during the collection phase is included.



**Figure 1** The Encarta Researcher plug-in - added resources to the left, highlighted source to the right with the edit function in the same window.

## Students at Work with Projects

Data used in this study were drawn from students' work with project assignments. The students attend the first, second and third/final year at gymnasium, and project assignments where they choose a problem to research within a wider subject area, gather information and compile a report, have been part of their way of working since the first year. Shorter projects, at one of the schools generally one-week projects, are seen as part of a preparation for the 100 point/10-week project mandatory in Swedish gymnasiums and carried out in the third year.

In one of the gymnasiums the method used to set up projects is called Problem Based Learning but at the other no particular label is attached. Projects start with a general introduction to the assignment from the teachers. Introductions include information about the subject area, generally in a lecture format, and in shorter projects students choose within a designated subject area. Students working on their 100-point assignments are free to choose their own subject area. All students are provided with a frame of work. There are instructions pertaining to the format of the assignment; about how to formulate purposes and questions; how to carry out searches; what kind of sources to use and how to value them, and rules about how to write up reports, including rules for referencing. These instructions are also provided as hand-outs. All students are required to hand in a plan for how to carry out their assignments. This plan has to be approved by the teachers and upon approval the students are assigned a tutor. Shorter projects may include only one tutoring session whereas the 100-point project can include many sessions. These sessions are organized around fixed topics such as writing up a background, method and data collection or the writing up of the report. Students keep a log in order to prepare for tutoring sessions. In these logs they record problems they encounter, information they need to provide and other issues relevant to their upcoming tutoring session. Final reports are handed in, but are also presented to fellow students and discussed in seminar-like forums.

## Reasoning About Writing Research Reports

In the first excerpt, Heidi, Arvid and Mats are searching the internet for information about why and how people need to prepare for travel in space. The students approach the issue using a variety of methods. They start by searching in Google for NASA. They proceed searching directly in the NASA search engine for answers to the question: "How do you survive in space?". They alternate between clicking on links and searching Google. All through the session they collect information that they store in different directories reasoning about whether sources can be used or not. We will focus on how they reason about a text that appears to be a match.

Excerpt 1: Space – then it feels kind of as if I am taking his work

Heidi	[skriver in "krav för att bli astronaut" i söktjänsten Google]	[enters "demands to become an astronaut" in the search engine Google]
Heidi	Titta! Fan va bra. Källor också Nä	Look! Shit how great. Sources too. No.
Arvid	Nä	No.
Heidi	Nä det vill jag inte	No, I don't want to.
Arvid	Hmm	Hmm
Heidi	[med eftertryck] nej, det känns som om jag tar hans arbete då liksom lite så, Men annars varför lägger han ut det på Internet?	[with emphasis]No then it feels kind of as if I am taking his work. But if not why does he publish it on the Internet?
Heidi	Ok [Går vidare till nya sidor]	Ok [Moves on to new pages]
Heidi	Så blir du astronaut? [läser högt från sidan]	How you become an astronaut? [reads aloud from the page]
Mats	så blir du astronaut, plugga mycke	How you become an astronaut. Study hard.
Arvid	Oj	Ouch.

Heidi enters the phrase "demands to become an astronaut" in Google and clicks on the second link to a Word document. She immediately recognises this document as of the same genre as the one the group is about to produce. Her comment: "Look! Shit how great. Sources too", indicates that it is a match. It has the type of information they need and it also has a list of references. What is striking is the rapidity with which they come to a decision. Heidi makes two claims about how this decision can be warranted. First she claims that it would feel like taking someone's work. Then she claims that there must be a reason for publishing texts on the Internet. Through the speed of their reaction and their decision they exhibit an understanding that some texts cannot be used.

The meaning of the action of refusing to use the text, linked to acts of appropriation and issues of ownership, we take to be the ethical substance. In discourse on plagiarism this text would be a candidate for students to download and hand in as their own, a ready-to-hand-in essay just a mouse click away (Auer & Krupar, 2001, p. 415). The reason stated by many authors would be that the Napster generation (Barbrook, 2002) does not acknowledge intellectual property rights, or as Wood (2004, p. 238) argues, they "believe firmly that they are moral, honest and ethical people" but just do not see plagiarism as stealing, particularly not if that which they take is taken from the Internet. Students often make small

changes and hand in the text as their own (Alexandersson & Limberg, 2005). They also make summaries and reference texts in ways they believe to be acceptable (see, e.g., Angéll-Carter, 2000; Pecorari, 2003, 2006). The students in this session, however, do not appear to consider it correct to use this text at all. Heidi's comment about publishing on the internet suggests that it is not the danger of violating the author's copyright that is their concern. In discourses on academic writing this would be a danger if the text was used without attribution. Academic codes of ethical conduct however state that texts can be used as long as they are treated according to the rules for borrowing others' texts. In such a perspective the text would at least be a candidate for tapping of facts, quoting ideas, discussing ideas and opinions, and its sources a point of departure towards further information.

The students however agree that this is not a text that can be used. So the students neither take up a position as plagiarists and cheats nor skilled academic writers. Without consulting each other or exchanging a glance they echo, "No". Only thereafter Heidi provides insights to their reaction suggesting that it has something to do with emotions. Her words are uttered with strong emphasis on "No". She argues: "It feels kind of as if I am taking his work". She positions somebody as the owner of the text and expresses as her emotion that using his work would feel like taking what is his. She does not refer to violation of copyright. Instead she expresses feelings about what kind of act they would perform. It would feel like taking somebody else's work. That is her mode of subjection and it is consistent with their instructions. Among the reasons provided for referencing is the argument: "How would you feel if somebody took your text and did not reference it?". The means by which Heidi turns herself into an ethical subject is emotional. The code for writing up assignments invites her to have feelings about the use of other texts and these feelings about right and wrong are the only arguments provided for discarding the source. Rather than engaging in deliberations about their rights and duties as writers to use the text, they resort to emotional discourse about respect for others' feelings.

In the second excerpt the same students are troubled by the relationship between summary, quotation and plagiarism. We will first focus on the sudden entry of this issue and what brings it about.

Excerpt 2 Space: if it was not a quote it was still a quote

Heidi	Vi kanske skall skriva att det är NASA vi tar det ifrån. [Klipper in adressen <a href="http://lsdajsc.nasa.gov/docs/kids/questions/question.cfm">http://lsdajsc.nasa.gov/docs/kids/questions/question.cfm</a> ]	Maybe we should write that we have taken it from NASA [Pastes the address <a href="http://lsdajsc.nasa.gov/docs/kids/questions/question.cfm">http://lsdajsc.nasa.gov/docs/kids/questions/question.cfm</a> into the text]
Heidi	[Skrattar] Kids Questions	[Laughs] Kids' Questions

	[skrattar] oh de	[Laughs] oh them
Arvid	Men det är ärliga svar ju	But they are honest answers aren't they
Heidi	Det är svåra svar, på engelskan också	They are difficult answers and in English too
Heidi	Sen får vi väl göra det som typ ett referat att man markerar all fakta och sen så skriver man om det på sitt eget sätt. På min gamla skola så räckte det med att man bara ändrade varje mening men man hade typ samma fakta. Så så har jag gjort hela tiden	Then we have to do it as a summary that you mark all facts and then write it your own way. In my old school it was enough just to change every sentence but keep the same facts. That, that is how I have done all the time.
Arvid	Så har jag också gjort	I have done that too.
Heidi	Så jag är inte alls van vid så som Elin så jag blev ju så här där på den. Typ nästan alla i klassen blev där. Skrev hon plagiat på	So I'm not at all used to like Elin so I was like here at this. Like almost everybody in the class was. She wrote plagiarism on.
Mats	Ja	Yes
Heidi	Det hade ju ingen ingen förstod ju tog man direkt ur texten även om det inte var ett citat så var det ändå ett citat. Det visste inte jag. Det tycker jag hon kunde	Nobody had. Nobody understood that if you took something directly from a text even if it was not a quote it was still a quote. I didn't know that. I think she could have.
Arvid	Jag tog typ vad säger man fem meningar utan att det stod nånting om läkaren. Så skrev jag av det. Hon bara, plagiat direkt. En hel text för fan. Vi har ju inte vi har ju skrivit om va fan	I took like, what do you say, five, six sentences without writing anything about the doctor. Then I wrote that. She just [wrote], "plagiarism". Directly, a whole bloody text. We haven't. we have written about it. Shit!
Mats	Nu är ju kameran på så sitter vi bara här och snackar skit	Now it's this with the camera, it's on. And we are just talking nonsense.

Heidi, Mats and Arvid spend considerable time searching the Internet for facts that can help them answer the question: "How do you survive in space?". They collect facts and store them in directories they prepare for this particular purpose. Heidi points out that they need to write that NASA is their source, an action that is required by their instructions but is accepted with further deliberations. She proceeds by entering the link to the page she has used when she recognizes that it is a page labelled "Kids' Questions". The meaning of the actions to mark facts, summarize texts and add references linked to acts of plagiarism we take to be the ethical substance. Their quick decision does not escape deliberations and there are things that trouble them. Two claims provide insights to their dilemma. Arvid claims that there is a difference between Kids' Questions and expert answers. He points to a particular of their source, retorting that "But they are honest answers aren't they". Heidi adds that the answers are difficult and that they are written in English and hard for them to understand, echoing arguments present in a number of studies (Boden & Holloway, 2005; Myers, 1998; Shi, 2004; Warschauer, 2000). Furthermore, their instructions do not recommend using sources below their own educational level or using secondary sources. One way to understand this passage then is to look at it as an example of the trouble Swedish students encounter when they deal with information that has not been prepared especially for them, a difficulty that has become prominent with the event of the Internet. What they take to be true is that information written on a children's page but by an expert on space matters may still be acceptable because the answers "are honest".

Heidi suggests that the correct procedure is to mark all the facts and then make a summary of the information. This action is directly modelled on the instructions handed to the students. This is what a moral student would do. Rather than to engage in reasoning about how to construct an original text relevant to the production of texts representative of the "research report" genre, she resorts to rules of thumb for transforming texts. Eventually she also makes relevant the danger of being failed for plagiarism, establishing a new link. Their following reasoning reveals the difficulties the students find in understanding what constitutes the difference between quotations, summaries and plagiarism. Evidence about students experiencing this type of difficulty can be found documented as early as in 1975 (Brown, 1975). Heidi's story line illustrates contingencies in students' experiences of how plagiarism is dealt with in different schools. Heidi claims that at her old school it was allowed for them to reuse texts and only make minor changes to the sentences. At this school there is a different code she needs to follow. She is expected to write a new text using only facts from the old text. Arvid confirms that he too has compiled reports by making minor changes. They account for how the new code has been internalized. They have experienced being accused of plagiarism because they have left too much of the original in their text. Five sentences from another text have caused their teacher Elin to claim that they have plagiarized.

Crucial to the students' understanding of plagiarism is their reasoning about ownership, authorship, summaries and quotes. Heidi makes a remark suggesting that the fact that texts were overlapping was not her way of making sense of what it means to quote. She claims that none of the students understood. They are however incited to recognise it as a moral obligation to use quotation marks and references when texts overlap. This is done through written and oral instructions, but also through essays being failed. These instructions provided codes guiding their actions but could not secure their understanding. What the students experienced at this new school was that: "that if you took something directly from a text even if it was not a quote it was still a quote I didn't know that". To Heidi whether a text should be categorized as her own text, a summary or a quote apparently does not have to do with the overlap.

If intent is action under a description, one way to understand her reasoning would seem to be that it is not taking something directly from a text that constitutes quoting. It is to include text with the explicit purpose of making use of this text to refer to a person. Then the text counts as a quotation to be treated as such. It is under this description that she could be accused of plagiarism (and possibly cheating) should she fail to quote and reference. The other type of understanding she exhibits is that it is not a quote if you just summarize the text using facts and parts of its structure, overlapping parts are not quotes and it is sufficient only to include the source in the list of references. Still it is the voice of Elin that counts. Quotes are quotes and it does not matter whether they actually point to a particular author they refer to or just to a text. What matters is if there is an overlap and they have experienced that such an overlap can result in a failed assignment. Students train themselves during writing, not only about writing but what it means to be a particular type of writer, one who knows when to quote and when not to, and their deliberations during their peer group session provide partial answers to such questions, making it possible for them to go on with their work.

Rasmus, Eva and Stina are editing their text. While Eva and Stina are working on the text by the computer, Rasmus is proof-reading sitting by a bench in close proximity to the others. He suddenly intervenes and expresses doubts about whether their treatment of information is ethical. In the third excerpt we will focus on students' reasoning about authorship and voice.

Excerpt 3 Holocaust: Are we actually allowed to have this included here?

Rasmus	Öm. Vet du vad jag kom att tänka på nu?	Uhm. Do you know what I came to think of now?
Eva	Nej	No
Stina	Nej	No
Rasmus	Får vi egentligen ha med det här? Det är ju egna tankar	Are we actually allowed to have this included here? These are

	ju, eller som vi har skrivit här står ju inte med i “Om detta må ni berätta”. Det med att tolv procent av Sveriges nuvarande befolkning. Får man ha med det?	our own thoughts or like what we have written here is not a part of “Tell ye your children”. This – with twelve percent of the present Swedish population. Can we include that?
Stina	Ja	Yes
Eva	Alltså det är ju bara att vi har gjort om det till en siffra	You know this is only that we have converted it to a number
Rasmus	Ja	Yes
Eva	Alltså ett, ett de ej ju	One, you see, one it is
Rasmus	Bara för att det är lättare att förstå hur mycket det är. Liksom alltså så det är ju tolv procent av Sveriges nuvarande befolkning, Det är ju sjukt mycket.	Just because it is easier to understand how much it is. Like, you know, we have twelve per cent of the present Swedish population. That is just crazy.
Eva	Mmm, det	Mmm, it.
Rasmus	Jag är tveksam till om vi får ha det?	I’m doubtful about whether we can have that
Eva	Så se [Läser tyst från pappret]	Look here [Reads quietly from the paper]
Stina	Det borde ju gå vi har bara gjort om det, men	It ought to work if we have re-made it.
Rasmus	Ja	Yes
Eva	Ja. Men det kan vi ju ha med i analysen i så fall.	Yes. But we can include it in the analysis anyway.
Rasmus	Ja	Yes
Stina	Mmm	Mmm
Rasmus	För jag är nästan säker på att vi inte får ha med det	Because I’m almost certain we can’t include it.
Stina	Ja	Yes

Rasmus points to a section of the text, asking whether what they have written can really be included. His concern is that this particular text is “our own thoughts”. What counts as their thoughts? How much will it take to turn a text that correctly signals the voice of different authors into one with a poor treatment of voice? The meaning of the action of inserting similes or in other way changing the text of

another author linked to the acts of plagiarism and fabrication we take to be the ethical substance. In studies on plagiarism more attention is paid to the number of sentences included without a quote than to students' own insertions into summaries and paraphrases made of other people's texts (for examples of what may count as plagiarism, (see, e.g., Gresham, 1996; Clough, 2003; Mallon, 2001; Pecorari, 2003, 2006) Rasmus objects to the insertion of their examples in a paraphrase. He exhibits an understanding of paraphrasing as an act characterized by the fact that the idea and content of the used and referenced text remains intact. If what they have written is not really a part of the source they have cited it cannot be included. The students start reasoning about how much they can change a source and still claim it is the original source. Stina does not appear to see the inclusion as against any rule. Eva argues that they have only changed something into a number. Rasmus elaborates on what it is that they have done. He presents the merits of their change from the point of readability. They have provided information about how the number of people in camps would translate into a ratio of the present Swedish population, but he is doubtful about whether they can use it in their paraphrase and turns to his papers for support. Since this is just to make it more readable, Stina maintains that they can use it. Eva contributes with an interesting remark that points to another understanding of how students may include their own thoughts in their reports. If they cannot use their example in here, they can recycle it and use it in their analysis. Now the question of paraphrasing is left out. Instead the concern is where in a report they are allowed to speak in their own voice. This is the kind of remark that has a ring of policy statements and instructions about students' written work. They present a compartmentalized view of academic texts. These are seen as consisting of sections with text that express other authors' results quoted, paraphrased or summed up and sections of student text where the students are free to express their ideas, views and examples. The students do not have any instructions that tell them who can speak in the different sections. Instructions for the next level, however, tell the students that the results part must be based only on facts. In the section containing their discussion, on the other hand, they must present their conclusions and can choose to do that in a such a way that they make room for personal reflection.

Whether it is instructions that Rasmus points to when, after consulting his papers, he upgrades his doubt to being "almost certain" is unclear, but Eva's suggestion: "Yes. But we can include it in the analysis anyway" strengthens this case. They cannot include the text where they have placed it. The students go to considerable trouble to make sure that they follow instructions at the expense of engaging in discussions about originality, quality and what makes a text unique. This is the mode of subjection. We have however once again made note of how instructions mediate students work with "research reports". Facing what appears to be a genuinely difficult question, how to avoid plagiarism and fabrication and at the same time present an original work, the students engage in a self-forming

activity. They steer away from what we take to be a more advanced way of expressing voice towards rules of thumb for keeping texts apart. They evidently place a considerable trust in instruction but need to reason about its content. Calculating the risks, they decide not to use their text before discussing it with their tutor. They mark it with a cross and annotate it in order not to forget. Rules of thumb, though not sufficient to eliminate danger for them in the present situation, evidently reduce complexity, but also seem to reduce their ability to produce original texts.

Ken and Mike use the Researcher, a software designed to help them keep track of their sources. They use the possibility to edit and we will focus on a sequence involving reasoning about this feature.

Excerpt 4 Industrialism: but you're not supposed to rip it straight off

Ken	Du kan ju använda dom. Vi har ju fått en massa bra häften. risken med en sån här grej kan inte det vara att man går in och	You can use them. We have been given a lot of good booklets. The danger with an application of this kind, can't it be that you enter and.
Mike	Kopierar	Copies
Ken	nä men att du går in här och sen så står det ju liksom var det kommer ifrån här [pekar på referenserna]	No but that you enter here and then it says here where it's from [points to references]
Mike	Ja	Yes
Ken	och så skriver du in någonting här [pekar på en plats i texten]	and then you write something here [points to a place in the text]
Mike	Ja	Yes
Ken	Mitt i	in the middle.
Mike	Ja men då	Yes but then.
Ken	Av texten	of the text
Mike	men helt plötsligt inte är det inte därför	but then suddenly it's not because.
Ken	Ja exakt	Yes exactly
Mike	Men det är ju inte meningen att du ska ta det rakt av utan det här är som ett referat inte som ett referat det här är som en källhänvisning	but you're not supposed to rip it straight off. This is just kind of, kind of a summary not a summary, it's like citing a source
Ken	Ja okej	Yes okay yes

Mike	så att	so then
Ken	Sen skriver du	then you write
Mike	Det är	it is
Ken	Mer	More
Mike	liksom härifrån	it is like from here
Ken	Ja	Yes

Ken argues that they can use printed matter instead of the Internet. The booklets have been given to them by their teachers so it seems reasonable that they are good and contain material that is useful to their purpose. Mike is using the editor to insert comments about material from Internet sites that they have added to their project. The meaning of the action of editing imported information linked to acts of plagiarism and fabrication we take to be the ethical substance. Ken starts talking about what he perceives to be a danger with the Researcher. He has only started to voice his concern when Mike second guesses him, suggesting he is talking about copying material. Ken explains, demonstrating through pointing to different sections of the screen, that Mike uses the editor to enter into the middle of the text and that the Researcher automatically adds a reference below the text. Could it not be interpreted as if the inserted text has been written by the referenced author? The situation is similar to the one encountered by Rasmus, Eva and Stina. How do you make sure that you signal who is the author? They are encouraged to follow rules for presentation of voice through their instruction. Ken argues that you are not supposed to “rip it straight off”. Texts are to be worked on. They are not quoted directly. So the texts can be seen as summaries. Ken and Mike exhibit an understanding that it matters what is done to a text when it is followed by a reference. It is unclear what incites them to take up that moral position. Ken expresses worries that there is a danger that what they insert will appear to be written by the author automatically referenced by the Researcher. Using the editing feature will then cause them to mislead readers. The design of the Researcher conflicts with his reasoning about references. To Mike the automatic reference appears to be a pointer to a source they have used. The text is to be worked on further, perhaps turned into a summary. It seems to be fully transparent to both students what the Researcher does, but not in terms of how it will influence their text. The concerns expressed by Ken can be described as worries that they will fabricate. Mike instead treats the whole text with amendments and footnotes as a referent pointing to different sources. They engage in a self-forming activity mediated by interface design. There is reason to question whether their rules of thumb are provided by the interface. Pointing, dragging, dropping and clicking supplement their reasoning about how to keep track of authorship and in the end

they agree that as long as they see the report as drafts to be worked on later they are not in danger of confusing authorship.

Svea and Kia are talking to their tutor about referencing sources. Present also is Anders, a member of the research team. Svea and Kia spend considerable time reasoning about when and how to reference texts without demonstrating that they grasp the rules. The meaning of the action of inserting references linked to the act of appropriation and ownership we take to be the ethical substance. We will focus here on a short sequence that we believe illustrates problems with what should be considered to be intertext and how and when the notion of intertext influences referencing.

Excerpt 5 Tutoring: I mean who should you write that it is?

Svea	Men sen så blir det ju lite så att ibland kan man ju fråna sig själv också och då måste man ju skriva, alltså vem skall man då skriva att det är.	But then it gets, it gets so that sometimes you know from yourself too and then you need to write. I mean who should you write that it is?
Kia	Om kolhydrater är en bra energikälla skall jag då? Det läser jag ju i tio böcker, dessutom vet jag det redan	If carbohydrates is a good source of energy should I. then I read that in ten sources plus I already know.
T	Nej men då behöver du ju inte	No but then you don't need to
Kia	Nej	No
Anders	Normalt	Normally
Kia	Det blir ju liksom lite svårt där	It gets kind of difficult there
Anders	Normalt säger man ju att det som kan beräknas som allmännkunskap behöver man ju inte referera till. Och allmännkunskapen ser ju olika ut beroende på vem man skriver för och så	Normally you say that what can be counted as common knowledge does not need to be referenced. And common knowledge looks to be different depending on who you are writing for and so.
Kia	Ja det gör den	Yes it does
T	Men ni har läst ganska mycket också så det beror ju också på vilken målgruppen, så det behöver ni ju inte ha med hela tiden	But you have read a lot too so it depends on what target, the target group, so that you don't need to include all the time if they are already known facts

	om det är kända fakta.	
Kia	Nej	No
Svea	Nej	No

Svea wonders what to do when you write texts and build on things you already know. She describes them as coming from herself and declares that she is uncertain about who to attribute in such a situation and how to write. She seems to be approaching authorship just as Rasmus, Eva, Stina, Ken and Mike, but from the perspective of intertext. Kia illustrates, claiming as a fact that carbohydrates are a good source of energy and that this fact can be found in most sources they read and also that they already know it. The rules invite them to treat references as something troubling. Here they engage in a self-forming activity where they use log books much as Foucault demonstrates that ancient people used *Hypomnemata* (notebooks or aide-memoires, Foucault, 2000c, p. 209) combined with seeking advice from tutors. The tutor provides a simple answer, saying that they do not need to reference. At this point Anders tries to intervene but Kia interrupts stating that it is difficult. Anders picks up on Kia's description of the problem and introduces the problem of common knowledge and starts to elaborate on what common knowledge might be. He does not second the tutor's statement that they should not need to reference. Instead he elaborates on how to treat texts that can be described as common knowledge. That common knowledge does not need to be referenced is presented as the generic rule. Then he particularizes common knowledge as something relative to the readers. Kia accepts this but the tutor makes a comment suggesting that it is both relative to their reading and what is known to the target group. She indicates that their fellow students is the target and gives the advice: "You don't need to include all the time if they are already known". Svea and Kia confirm this and focus is shifted towards other referencing issues. The possible difference between Svea's notion of something that comes from yourself and that which you already know and can be found in most textbooks is not commented on.

What is at stake here is correct referencing. Common knowledge is sometimes presented as difficult for students to come to terms with (Whitaker, 1993, p. 192) causing students to "stumble toward plagiarism". In university and school policies and help pages on the Internet, one finds generic descriptions such as that which can be found in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, or in the case of these Swedish students, *Bra Böckers Lexikon*, can be considered to be common knowledge. Such statements, however, are sometimes qualified with the advice that "when in doubt, cite"

(Princeton University: Not so common) or as in the case of Guelph University, “When in doubt, check with your TA or professor” (University of Guelph: Fastfacts). What is notable in the students’ reasoning here, however, is that two issues seem to be confounded. The first has to do with voice and the question of how to express that which comes from yourself, that which you think you know and have not taken directly from a source. The second issue concerns that which belongs to us all. The first issue is rapidly turned into the other and Svea does not attempt to reformulate her initial question. The mode of subjection apparently consists of rules for writing derived from “academic writing”. Student instructions state that they need to reference each time they include information from other sources if it is not common knowledge. Various different reasons for referencing can be found in university policies. We cite because of copyright rules. We cite because we want to pay tribute to the author. We cite to help others find the source if they want to check on it. We do not give a reference when something is considered to be common knowledge. Svea’s initial question can be understood as: “If I already know the facts do I still have to find somebody who’s voice I can use?”. In the following sequence, however, it is whether they are required to include a reference or not if it is common knowledge that is the topic. What is left out are other possible reasons for deciding to include or exclude a reference. The idea that references to other authors also serve the purpose of validating positions and results is left out. The idea that excessive citation signals poor grasp of the subject area is also left out. The kind of understanding the students accept as a basis for proceeding is of the type we have repeatedly called rules of thumb. This implies that issues of voice, validity, over citation and such can be reduced to a question of what is common knowledge. What the students can deem to be common knowledge once they have taken their own knowledge and the knowledge of the target group into account need not be referenced. In all other cases they should reference. This seems to be quite a complex thing to untangle and yet they are left without an answer to Svea’s question pointing towards how to be an original writer.

## Discussion

Drawing on this account of students’ reasoning, we can now turn to a discussion about making up people, more specifically, about how they constitute themselves as moral agents and take up positions as particular kinds of students. The most important issue here is whether students’ reasoning about writing makes a case for constructing plagiarism as cheating (and positioning students as cheats) or whether it points towards conceptualizing plagiarism as a difficulty students meet when they attempt to write “research reports” (positioning them as learners or novice writers). First we will concentrate on students’ reasoning about ethical substance and what they hold to be true. Then we will turn to technologies to deal with these

worries. Finally we will confront the issue of making up people and the construction of plagiarizing students as cheats against the backdrop of discourses on a changing society.

### The Ethical Substance of Student Reasoning on Plagiarism

In research on plagiarism, a number of practices are presented as plagiarism. Academic organizations express worries about these practices. These worries concern students who are buying, borrowing and downloading papers, what Howard (2000, p. 475) calls fraud. They also concern the patching together of texts, poor paraphrasing, or summarizing, leading to repetition and similarities. Finally they concern students who are leaving out in-text citations, failing to reference what has been added from other sources, misplacing citations and are having other difficulties with attribution, leading to what Howard calls insufficient citation.

What should we make of the examples from our results? We argue that students engage in reasoning about what they have a right to do, a duty to do and what obligations they may have undertaken as students. In that process they link actions to acts. Together they form what Foucault (2000b) calls the ethical substance of their talk. What the students treat as difficulties run parallel to what a number of studies link as student actions, such as copying and insufficient citation, to the act of cheating, sometimes via the act of plagiarism (for example see Bates, Davies, Murphy & Bone, 2005; Björklund & Wenestam, 1999; Newstead, et al., 1996; Sheard, Dick, & Markham, 2003). Ashworth and Bannister (1997) and Ashworth, Freewood and MacDonald (2003) establish another type of link. They suggest that there is a difference between what plagiarism is in research as well as in many other organizational contexts, and what it is in a student's life world. Our data clearly establish still another link. They illustrate that students are troubled by the use of other people's texts, the use of voice, and the placement of references, to take but some examples. These are practical concerns to them and the solutions they reach may have an impact on their grades. There are also ethical concerns constituting an ethical substance. How should they go about their writing if they want to follow the rules of their particular moral order turning into a particular moral agent?

There is one major difference compared with the findings of Ashworth and colleagues. What is noticeable in our data is that students rarely use the word "plagiarism" when they reason about how to write, and they never talk about cheating. Contrary to Ashworth and colleagues, we have not asked students to talk about any particular issue. Their discussion as they work on their projects range from their new hair-cut to the use of a particular source; only occasionally does the concept of plagiarism arise and turn into a topic. It is treated as something one should steer away from, but to a greater extent, the actions that are defined as plagiarism in much research are treated as difficulties to overcome in writing. We take this as an indication that plagiarism and cheating as forms of deceit is less of a

problem for students learning to write in this particular genre. How to write reports correctly is what is troubling them.

### Student Subjectivation and Self-Forming Activities

What invites or incites students to follow rules for working in academic genres? Foucault (2000b, p. 264) glosses the issue, mentioning a number of possibilities such as divine law, natural law, rational rule, or an attempt to give our existence a more beautiful form. There are a number of approaches to this issue in discourses on cheating in research. Laws and rules are frequently mentioned as factors that guide student action and students are usually reported to think that these should be followed (Baird, 1980; Newstead, et al., 1996; Hult & Hult, 2002). Rules may, on the other hand, be considered to be situational (McCabe, 1992) and students to be treating them as guidelines rather than as absolutes (Norris & Dodder, 1979). Sometimes cheating is also treated as an act supported by a counter-culture (Horowitz, 1987). Following that line of reasoning, what invites students to follow rules might as well be something else than national laws or organizational rules and what invites them to break them may well be applications of law.

When our senior high school students write “research reports” they are expected to or required to follow some rules common in course work at an academic level. This is so regardless of the fact that knowledge about academic writing only appears as a goal in Swedish C, a compulsory course in Swedish senior high schools. There are local instructions with requirements that are modelled on the goals for academic writing. Most of the time during the writing process these instructions are kept close to hand, and utterances such as that they are pretty sure they cannot include that text, that a particular source need or need not be referenced, that in-text references are needed or not, are discussed with the instructions readily available. As can be seen, these rules are seldom treated as moral absolutes, but they do not seem to be situational as McCabe (1992) suggests. Students turn to a number of sources in order to get a second opinion. Teachers, especially tutors, are trusted sources. Miller and Parlett (1974, p. 52) described how students preparing for or working on examinations button-holed staff seeking clues for their examinations. This type of activity obviously works also when students write research reports. Now it is supported by their learning environment, by e-mail, forums, logs and scheduled tutoring sessions. Normally, when students remain unsure about the way to solve a difficulty after consulting their instructions, their peers, their relatives or their Internet contacts, they mark their texts and their sources and jot down questions in their mandatory logs. These are discussed in the mandatory tutoring sessions or on other occasions. From what we can see, these deliberations seldom direct students towards what we believe to be the core of academic writing. When students find quick answers they usually refer to rules of the type we have called rules of thumb, and the same is true when they remain uncertain. This way we take it they reduce uncertainty.

## The Cheat, the Plagiarist and the Damned Elusive Academic Writer

We now turn to the categorization of students as plagiarists and cheats and what other positions might be available to them. Categories play an important part in what Popkewitz (1998) calls populational reasoning. Above we have cited some examples of how statistics have been used as a means to describe a particular category of students called cheats. Foucault (1998, p. 139) argues that these descriptions support a particular form of politics, biopolitics and anatomo-politics aimed at governing people. We have followed another interest shared with Foucault (2000b) – how people turn themselves into moral agents, or in terms of positioning theory, how they position themselves. By what right do we call these moral agents for plagiarists and cheats?

In a socio-cultural perspective student activities are contingent on culture and history. The notion that society is becoming more complex is common in many discourses about modern society (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 2000), including discourses about learning in an information and knowledge society (Bereiter, 2002; Brown & Duguid, 2000; Postman, 1996; Warschauer, 2007). The notion that technology is changing the way we learn is a part of these discourses. Technology is often considered to incite and invite students to plagiarize. Computers, the Internet and particular software are heavily used by the students in our study. There is however little that suggests that technology determines the actions of our students. We find a stronger support for the influence of other voices. Students use search services on the Internet to find information that they download, but they lean heavily on their instructions to guide their use and their teachers to support their decisions.

Luhmann (1988, p. 105), writing about the increasing complexity of society, asserted that it was characterized by “unmanageable uncertainty”. Our data demonstrate the complexity of writing research reports and students’ reasoning about these complexities. A number of studies report such difficulties, but use them to provide reasons for student cheating. In our study, however, students position themselves as honest and hardworking individuals trying to find solutions to complex problems rather than as individuals with little respect for academic rules for writing. In Luhmann’s view, complexity can be reduced by such means as calculation of risks and by placing trust. Students’ reasoning about how to work with texts may thus be viewed as attempts at reducing complexity by managing the unmanageable. There are several indications in our material that students try to come to terms with matters for which they do not have an answer. In fact almost all talk about how to write up their assignments revolve around issues where they are uncertain about the acceptable way to solve issues, such as whether to use sources and how to use them in a proper manner, coming to terms with the truth about what it means to write “research reports”.

In a similar manner, students are considered to calculate risk and make rational choices about cheating. In studies on cheating and plagiarism, theories of deviance, notably rational choice theories, and planned behaviour are often considered. Beck and Ajzen (1991) suggest that planned behaviour can account for cheating but several studies indicate that students will cheat if they can get away with it (Beck & Ajzen, 1991; Björklund & Wenestam, 1999; Michaels & Miethe, 1989). Fear of getting caught, on the other hand, is an important deterrent (Bennet, 2005; Savage, 2004). A noticeable thing about the Swedish school system, as opposed to the Swedish academic system and many other school systems, is that there are no formal rules against cheating and plagiarism. Yet students in our study spend considerable amounts of time decoding rules in a manner that suggests that they “see” dangers and calculate risk. From their reasoning, we can understand that there are dangers. Students share experiences about papers that have been failed because their teacher thought they had plagiarized. Being failed, however, should not necessarily be conceived of as disciplinary action, and we should not infer that such an action from the teachers means that they see the student as a cheat. It is also not clear from our material whether students see this as a punishment for cheating or as an assessment of their ability to write reports. It does, however, force them to take the danger of being failed for plagiarism into account.

In our material, students sometimes talk about including material without referencing suggesting that it will probably go unnoticed. This, however, is not the common view. Instead they are cue conscientious and spend considerable time reasoning about how to reduce the danger of being failed. They turn to different sources that may provide solutions to their difficulties, but also discuss whether such calls for help may lower their grades. What should we make of their attempts? Biesta (2002) asks in a criticism of the new language of learning how we “should understand the educational relationship, i.e., the interaction between the teacher and the students” (p. 10). He asserts that education cannot promise any particular result. Instead the relationship must build on trust, violence and responsibility. In learning there is always a danger, for instance as has been illustrated through our data, that students might not make sense of the rules for writing precisely in the way intended by written instructions, tutor instruction or for that matter rules designed into material artefacts. Biesta asks why risk and trust are connected and answers: “Basically because trust is about those situations in which you do not know and cannot know what will happen” (p. 11). He suggests, much as we find, that trust must be a mutual relationship. Considering our data, we find that line of reasoning interesting. Biesta also asserts that violence and responsibility must be a part of the relationship. Being a writer in education in such perspective implies a mutual commitment to the duty of enduring violence and taking on responsibility while at the same time being able to rely on trust and responsibility as being mutual. Drawing on Levinas he speaks of the violence involved in coming into presence, in our material, to constitute oneself as an original, excellent writer

mastering “academic writing”. There is a danger we have hinted at. A narrow focus on rules for summarizing, paraphrasing, quoting and writing references may cause teachers to produce rules of thumb. Students searching for that damned elusive academic writer may lose track and revert to cue seeking and following these rules. That is certainly what the student in our introductory quote was doing, turning what’s good into the enemy of the best.

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