

Editorial: Social Work's Role in Promoting Academic Honesty

For social work students and educators, plagiarism is a more serious issue, because it is an ethical issue reflecting on fitness for the profession. However, many students do not view plagiarism as a serious issue related to professional ethics. Many social work faculty members are hesitant to make a serious issue of plagiarism or to relate it to professional ethics. They often cite the fact that “it would be a shame to ruin a promising career” for what “after all has little to do directly with social work practice.” Further, many social work students do not understand exactly what constitutes plagiarism. Sadly, educators often do not agree on what constitutes plagiarism, and this makes it difficult to hold students accountable.

Social work educators must understand clearly what constitutes plagiarism and develop policies that are clear and unambiguous to deal with the issue. These policies must clearly link plagiarism to the *Code of Ethics* and must be transmitted to students in a way that removes ambiguity about the results of plagiarism. Departments must apply plagiarism policies consistently. In other words, students must be educated about what constitutes plagiarism and why plagiarism truly is an ethical violation. Faculty also need to understand the various types of plagiarism if they are going to combat plagiarism among students effectively. Helping students understand the relationship of plagiarism to ethical practice is particularly important when dealing with social work students.

It is also important that social work educators do not assume that material on plagiarism is taught in other classes in the college or university. Often, students transfer from other schools, and professors come and go. It is difficult to be sure exactly what students understand about plagiarism without inquiring in each class. It is also helpful to post guidelines about what constitutes plagiarism in the student program handbook and revisit these guidelines in each class.

Social work educators must work to develop assignments that are comparatively hard to plagiarize. This means changing assignments from semester to semester, so students cannot easily use the work of another student and so that students will have difficulty finding a suitable product to carry out the requirements of the assignment on the Internet. Further, educators must oversee the progress of the assignment so that the educator is aware of the steps the student follows to carry

out the assignment. Although it takes far more grading time to grade the individual parts of the assignment, this makes it possible for the instructor to have a good understanding of the student's understanding of the assignment. Often, a simple requirement that an outline and sources be submitted to be cleared by the instructor before work on the major assignment gives the professor a clear sense of the student's capabilities and honesty.

Plagiarism is an ethical issue for social work education that moves beyond university and scholarly requirements. For this reason, social work educators carry more responsibility to teach about plagiarism and other issues of academic honesty than do other educators. The process of teaching students about academic honesty can be used as a way to role model for students methods of working with clients to incorporate in their own professional practice. Plagiarism is a growing problem, partially because of the ease of obtaining material from the Internet. A combination of methods is needed to deal with this important issue.

Lead Us Into Temptation explores the world of cyber-cheating. The author points out that cyber-cheating is big business and links the explosion of cyber-cheating to the explosion of cheating generally in colleges and universities. This article raises issues of the impact of distance learning across cultures and points out that many cultures have not yet recognized much of what is commonly considered to be plagiarism in the United States' educational establishment.

The Fair Use Rule explores issues of intellectual property violations and copyright infringement.

An Interdisciplinary Approach to Preventing Plagiarism looks at the advantages of closer collaborations between librarians and social work educators to emphasize a prevention approach.

Tackling Plagiarism describes the issue of plagiarism and multiple ways to view and approach student plagiarism.

One of the difficulties with the issue of plagiarism is that many students do not see plagiarism as an ethical issue. This article also presents the Internet as a player in making plagiarism easier for the student and harder for the faculty member to detect. Further, strategies to prevent plagiarism are presented briefly, as well as a typology of plagiarists and a description of common faculty responses to plagiarism. A need for a common department policy is presented

along with some elements of a proposed policy. Two reviews of author Robert A Harris' books on plagiarism and a Webography of useful sites are also included.

Teaching techniques to help students avoid plagiarism are included, as well as methods for both discovering plagiarism and dealing with plagiarism when discovered. The editors hope that the contents of this issue will help social work educators reconsider their own roles, foster new ways to think about plagiarism and reconceptualize the importance of all the issues relating to fostering academic honesty in the social work profession.

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