The Internet, Academic Integrity, and College Student Practices: A Contemporary Perspective

This paper investigates one of new media's recent academic controversies, namely students' increasing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in academic settings. Through anonymously surveying undergraduate college students about their positions on academic integrity/misconduct and their own college practices, the study seeks to navigate the technology/society complex by illuminating how we can situate the contemporary education landscape within expectations of student work authenticity and how ethics possibly fit into theories of internet centrism and technological determinism. To answer the study's research question, we designed a survey that we administered to students enrolled in a media law and policy undergraduate course at a medium-sized East Coast university. The survey was administered anonymously on Blackboard, and students received course credit for completing it. The responses of students under the age of 18 were excluded from the study through a pre-screening process. Survey questions totaled 10; they inquired (in this order) about: sources used in research assignments; whether they have previously used paraphrasing computer software in courses and which (if any); whether they believe universities should allow students to use AI-based computer software to improve their assignments and to justify their position; whether they believe universities should use text-matching software to detect originality and to justify their position; the school level when they first learned about plagiarism and other types of academic misconduct; and whether they believe universities are right to apply a penalty for academic misconduct and to justify their position. The survey included both closed-ended questions (required) and open-ended questions (optional). Findings point to thought-provoking notions on how intellectual property, fairness in assessment, and the fruits of technology are perceived and interact within a wider dynamic. The paper also highlights the ongoing nature of a multidimensional debate.

Keywords: *Academic integrity, Artificial Intelligence, Education, Technology, Internet, New Media*

Introduction

> 'New technologies alter the structure of our interests: the things we think about. They alter the character of our symbols: the things we think with. And they alter the nature of community: the arena in which thoughts develop' (Postman, 1992, p. 20).

The devise of the Internet was a turning point in the world of media and communication, bringing to the fore issues about globalization, cultural exchange, as well as access to and circulation of information. Like essentially all phenomena, this digital revolution has come with both fruits to bear and challenges to grapple with. One such challenge is the vivid manifestation worldwide of intellectual appropriation (often in the form of plagiarism),

particularly common among university students when tasked with written assignments.

The continued evolution of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its frequent student use towards plagiarism – with ChatGPT being the most recent centerpiece of this discussion – further complicates the matter, especially that text-matching software (e.g., the more traditional Turnitin and novice ZeroGPT, among others) is seeking to keep pace.

The practice of academic misconduct – be it in the form of plagiarism, collusion, or otherwise – invites into question the genuine level of mind- and character-building that takes place among the younger generations. By extension, it sheds light on how well-positioned the academy is in helping advance the cause of human progress. At the same time, it inadvertently points to the role of other societal institutions – including family and civil society – towards this cause (a suggested future direction of research).

This paper postulates the problem of academic misconduct using various related lenses. One, the basis of the pedagogical expectation of authenticity in student work and how educators and students negotiate the dynamic of ethics as a fundamental standard in assessment. Second, the law and policy framework within the academy (educational institution policy). Third, through surveying sample undergraduates, this study interrogates how college students perceive intellectual property and academic misconduct against a backdrop of increased use of AI in facilitating their writing assignments and how these perceptions elucidate whether university education is serving its purpose in teaching students about academic integrity.

Below, the paper presents the conceptual framework it hinges on followed by the research question, method rationale and protocols, and finally our findings and conclusion.

Conceptual Framework

Academic integrity is the larger umbrella under which belongs the discourse on plagiarism and other types of academic malpractice. Impersonation of another student and forgery, for instance, are standard examples of academic misconduct (Douglas & Watt, 2019).

Aside from vast cyberspace, with the plethora of content it already offers, technologies like 3D copying make extensive reproduction increasingly easier (see Mandel et al., 2016).

Indeed, academic integrity is central to educational institutions' reputation and credibility. The onset of the pandemic-imposed lockdown in 2020 heightened the need to try curbing academic misconduct as students' performance of assessments became less monitored given the online shift (Reyneke et al., 2021). Arguably, there are three distinct forms of plagiarism: copying others' work and presenting it as your own, blending someone else's arguments with your own without acknowledging the original source, and

paraphrasing someone else's work also without acknowledgment (Neville, 2010 in Reyneke et al., 2021).

Holden et al. (2021, p. 2) synthesized the reasons why 'individuals may choose to depart from academic integrity', grouping them into four distinct categories: *individual* (opportunity, incentive and rationalization); *institutional* (presence of a 'cheating culture'); *medium-related* (in-person versus e-cheating, with overall mixed evidence as to which medium features more violations), and *assessment-specific* (formative versus summative, essay versus exam, with more evidence still wanting in those areas to arrive at more settling conclusions).

In Conway and Groshek's longitudinal study of media college students' perceptions of plagiarism and fabrication, journalism students initially recorded higher concern over academic ethics than non-journalism students (e.g., public relations, graphic design, and advertising), even suggesting harsher penalties for offenders. Findings also indicated, however, that said gaps between the two camps narrowed, as non-journalism students eventually exhibited views closer to their journalism peers. Ultimately, the study concluded – based on comparing student views early on in their college careers versus near-graduation, that 'students' ethical beliefs are malleable and the college experience, including internships, student media, and classroom instruction, can bring about a heightened awareness of ethical issues' (Conway & Groshek, 2008, p. 139).

Determining students' prior awareness of plagiarism and what it entails during their early university days as well as communicating with them on the topic frankly come highly recommended as potential effective treatments for the issue. As well, personalizing assignments arguably helps make plagiarism more difficult to commit (Davis, 2011).

In a meta-analysis involving nursing students, '[t]he prevalence and the perceived prevalence of plagiarism were significant predictors of clinical dishonesty' (Fadlalmola et al., 2022: 499), indicating that college behavior is not necessarily unrelated to subsequent conduct in the workplace.

Moriarty and Wilson (2022, p. 22) argue that in handling academic integrity cases against students, both justice (ensuring fairness, due process, alignment of punishment with violation) and consistency (across the system of both process and outcome) are crucial, that the two values are intimately connected to the point where '[c]onsistency creates impartiality, both in perception and reality, and both are important'.

Departing from the foregoing framework, our study poses the following two-fold research question:

(a) How do college students perceive intellectual property and academic misconduct against a backdrop of increased use of AI in facilitating their writing assignments?
(b) How can we contextualize the findings in (a) within literature on the technology/human progress dynamic?

Method

Rationale

To answer the study's research question, we designed a survey (available in Appendix A at the end of this paper) that we administered to 61 students enrolled in a media law and policy undergraduate course at a medium-sized East Coast university. The course is offered to second-year Media Studies students and a mixed group of other majors at various levels of undergraduate studies. This course explores how the law and common practice impact media industries and journalism interests. Topics include the First Amendment, libel, invasion of privacy, free press, fair trial, regulation of obscene and sensitive content, regulation of advertising, ethics, and intellectual property. The survey was administered anonymously on Blackboard, and students received course credit for completing it. The responses of students under the age of 18 were excluded from the study through a pre-screening process.

Survey questions totaled 10; they inquired (in this order) about: sources used in research assignments; whether they have previously used paraphrasing computer software in courses and which (if any); whether they believe universities should allow students to use AI-based computer software to improve their assignments and to justify their position; whether they believe universities should use text-matching software to detect originality and to justify their position; the school level (elementary school or later) when they first learned about plagiarism and other types of academic misconduct; and whether they believe universities are right to apply a penalty for academic misconduct and to justify their position. The survey included both closed-ended questions (required) and open-ended questions (optional).

Among the various advantages of survey method is allowing for: relatively straightforward recruitment and consenting procedures with numbers of participants, gathering 'accurate data about an individual's subjective memories …, knowledge, attitudes…and perceptions about experiences' (Kennedy et al., 2022, p. 2), consistent administration of questions across a sample, and relatively low-cost deployment within rapid timeframes.

Survey Protocols

The survey was administered after acquiring approval from The Institutional Review Board (IRB). Participant students were provided with a consent form (also approved by IRB), which they signed before taking the survey. The survey was administered in a second-year college media law class where the students first received an introduction to the topic of intellectual property law, and then a discussion on its applicability in college education. All 68 students in the class were invited to answer a series of survey questions exploring their understanding of the topic, but only the 61 responses of students over the age of 18 years were used as part of the data for the present

study. The number of respondents declining to answer some of the (optional) open-ended questions is as high as 32, ranging anywhere from 3 unanswered to 32 unanswered.

The selection of study participants was administered through a brief series of questions that screened out underage students and registered written consent from those who agreed to be part of the present research project. Participating students were told that the study posed minimal risk associated with submitting assignments though Blackboard, an online learning management system that guarantees anonymity within its survey function.

Regardless of the nature of their answers and their contribution to the study, students received a standard amount of credit for participating in the classroom assignment even if they opted out of the research portion of it. Coercion was avoided by ensuring that the students' choices regarding participation in the research study did not affect their grades.

The responses were coded as: (a) *supporting* the use of digital or internet-based tools to enhance assignments with no penalty for students doing so; (b) *opposing* the use of digital or internet-based tools for assignments and supporting penalties for students doing so; and (c) *ambiguous* if they comment on the complexity of the question requiring case-by-case or contextual approaches to the use of digital tools and the penalties administered towards students doing so ('it depends,' 'yes, but on the other hand…' – contradictory arguments viewing the question from more than one perspective).

Findings

General Overview

The survey began by addressing the most frequently used sources of information that the participants relied on while completing their course assignments. The format of the question was 'select all that apply,' which is why the sum of results does not have to result in 100%.

In the portion of the survey inquiring about their use of available resources for academic work, half of the respondents indicated that they relied on their university's online library. One- third of the respondents mentioned using Google Scholar, and more than one-tenth of the group (nearly 11%) mentioned JSTOR as a source of information used to complete research assignments for class. Notably, more than 7% of the respondents used the physical library on campus.

Only 1% of all responses to the follow-up question asking to list sources not mentioned as one of the options in a multiple-choice question ('When given a course assignment that involves research, which sources do you most frequently use? Select ALL that apply') referred to other sources such as Wikipedia or Google, and one respondent suggested adding 'official websites of legitimate organizations and official government websites' as a potential source of information for research.

Another background question asked survey respondents if they ever used computer software like Grammarly helping paraphrase sentences and clauses for their college assignments. Approximately 53.4% of all respondents answered 'yes,' with about 45% answering 'no.' The remaining 1.7% of the group left the question unanswered.

In Their Words: Students' (Non)Use of AI in Academic Work

Narrowing down on the use of paraphrasing software for college assignments, the survey asked the participants to list all such programs they have used. For this multiple-answer question, the total sum of percentages did not have to equal 100%.

Almost 45% of valid responses to this question mentioned Grammarly, with nearly 14% naming QuillBot. Nobody reported using Hypotenuse AI, but approximately 1.7% of respondents mentioned using Paraphraser, and about 22.4% chose 'other.' More than 17% of the student participants left this question unanswered.

While surveys are typically used as quantitative research tools, a few additional open-ended questions were employed to provide the respondents with sufficient space for elaborating on their 'yes' or 'no' answers instead of adding a third, often ambiguous 'other' option, or a slot for a non-answer. The analysis of these additional open-ended questions allowed for making more qualitative sense of the quantitative results emanating from the survey.

Therefore, in seeking to capture all possible answers, the survey provided space for participants to add any paraphrasing computer software that was not listed in the previous question. Only one person (or less than 0.02%) mentioned ChatGPT together with QuillBot, the latter coming up only twice among the answers to this question. The rest of the answers appeared redundant or absent.

Three core open-ended questions directly addressed the students' perception of academic integrity, the ethics of using artificial intelligence, and the moral dilemmas associated with penalizing violations of intellectual property rights. One of these open-ended questions was preceded by a yes-or-no question addressing the appropriateness of using computer software based on artificial intelligence, such as ChatGPT, to improve their assignments. Sixty-two percent of respondents answered 'yes' to the question on whether such software is appropriate in the classroom, 36.2 % answered 'no,' and slightly over 1.72% declined to answer.

The subsequent qualitative question about the ethics of using AI software to complete class assignments invited students to take additional time to think about their answers to the previous, open-ended one, and to write down their thoughts more fully.

Comparing the answers to the open-ended question with the frequency of the previous 'yes' or 'no' responses revealed that when addressing the same concept in an open-ended form, more students recognized the ambiguity of the situation regarding the ethics of using AI-based software in academic work. That is, 18.5% of respondents agreed to the statements of the question only in

part, such as: 'Yes, I think that it could be useful, but not for looking up exam answers.'

Partial affirmation was also expressed in responses to survey questions that referred to the appropriateness of using text-matching software to detect plagiarism, and to the questions about the severity of penalties that plagiarizing students deserve, in the respondents' opinion. Open-ended questions thus provided more insight into responses that would have otherwise fallen into the generic categories of 'other' or 'neither,' which often accompany the standard 'yes' or 'no' format.

Navigating the Technology/Society Complex

In their short-answer feedback to the survey questions some of the student answers referred to the inevitability of technological progress in the workplace and hence its appropriateness in the classroom, the uniqueness of the internet as compared to other media, and the equalizing nature of digital technologies that often provide access to knowledge to certain groups of people in places where advanced knowledge would otherwise be out of reach. These responses referred to ethical dilemma consistent with digital media theories known as *technological determinism* and *internet centrism*.

The terms *technological determinism* and *internet centrism* are loosely defined here as theoretical frameworks for some of the respondents' justification of technological takeover leading to the blurring of ethical lines. The question among media scholars is whether technology is driving society towards new moral and cultural standards, or if it is society defining the directions of technological advancement. Lindgren (2022) posits that there is unresolved tension between the two viewpoints, but the duty of intellectuals is to maintain a balance between these opposing approaches to the question.

In his 1992 book *Technopoly,* Neil Postman expressed concerns about technology turning into extensions of the human mind, and eventually taking over. The potential alteration of ethical standards regarding the use of smart technology represents what Postman describes as 'the submission of all forms of cultural life to the sovereignty of technique and technology' (Postman, 1992, p. 52). It appears that the ethical and technical barriers protecting society 'from the masses of information "generated by technology" have crumbled,' leaving humans at the mercy of 'technology itself to protect' the world 'from the monster' (Lindgren, 2022, p. 56)

One of the respondents referred to the accessibility of internet-based technologies with a direct statement: 'I believe students should be able to use these tools because they can help them learn the material even when not in class.'

Others argued that because of its ubiquitous nature, the use of artificial intelligence should be legitimized for all students, not only for those who can exploit it without consequence. While answering an open-ended question about the appropriateness of allowing computer software using artificial intelligence

(e.g., ChatGPT) as a tool for improving college-level assignments, one student wrote:

> 'I think that if these types of software are available to our current society, then we should be able to use them without consequences. It isn't fair to have some students use it because some professors can't detect it, and then other students aren't allowed. I think that students should be given all available materials to be able to I the highest grade they can get.'

Another respondent viewed the ubiquitous nature of the internet leading to the inevitability of its usefulness as a learning tool: 'I feel either way the information we use in essays comes from the internet, we do not know this information before research so why not have a tool to help us with our thought and make it sound better and also make sure we are collecting the correct information.' This example represents a category of student responses that resonate with the media theory of *internet centrism* (Lindgren, 2022):

> 'I feel either way the information we use in essays comes from the internet, we do not know this information before research so why not have a tool to help us with our thought and make it sound better and also make sure we are collecting the correct information?'
> 'The internet has become our most abundant resource and should be encouraged and used to its fullest potential in higher education.'

As exemplified by the student comments above, the theory of *internet centrism* addresses the 1990s predictions about the internet shaping society with "its global reach, its interactivity, and its relative uncontrollability" (Lindgren, 2022, p. 54).

> 'These technologies may also have contributed to lowering barriers to obtaining knowledge and the establishment of social connections' (Lindgren, 2022, p. 54). Curran (2012) argues that society influences the internet much strongly than the internet shapes society, which is why any future predictions of digital technology taking over humanity can be wrong if 'based on inference from the digital technology, rather than from evidence about what people actually do with technology' (Lindgren, 2022, p. 54).

Among reasons listed as arguments in support of banning artificial intelligence in student work, critical thinking stands out as the factor most at risk: 'The use of artificial intelligence removes a student's ability to practice critical thinking skills which is the most important characteristic higher education should provide. AI gives you the conclusion/end product without the student needing to process the information and really get to understand it. The use of AI will lower the amount of effort student's put into their assignments.'

The percentage of respondents declining to answer this open-ended question rose to 5% from the previous value of slightly over 1.72% for the 'yes' or 'no' question regarding the appropriateness of using artificial intelligence or similar software to complete academic assignments. With some

18% of respondents describing their views in the form of a dilemma, a higher portion of the sample – some 42% - stated support for the use of such software in academic work.

Approximately 34% of the answers to this question were negative, which nearly matched the same measure of 36% for the 'yes' or 'no' question. Overall, the answers to the question about supporting the use of AI-based software in classrooms indicate a less than 7% prevalence of the number of students in favor of such use versus those who indicate opposition against it.

One of the responses opposing the use of artificial intelligence in academic work refers to the failures of AI bots in science:

> 'AI bots only know what they have been fed to reproduce. An NPR article showcased that an AI attempted to calculate a theoretical rocket science problem, the result was that the computer needed more variables in order to complete the problem, it couldn't do it. A student who relies on AI is bound to reproduce what someone else has written, which could have been produced by an AI as well resulting in an endless telephone to the point of becoming incomprehensible. If a student cannot write a paper properly then that is a shared failing of both the education system and the student's own laziness and unwillingness to engage in an education.'

Another respondent draws a parallel between learning and professional work, arguing that tools allowed in the real world should also be acceptable in college. The following response was coded as *ambiguous*:

> 'It's difficult to say. Considering Yesterday in Media Writing, a representative from Otsego Media came in to talk to us about character development and revealed that they use AI to come up with [characters] for movies they work on and cited their current one as an example. So, if AI is used in a work environment, then you'd think students should be able to use AI. Well, the difference is that students are in the process of learning to do stuff for themselves, AI will only continue to improve, but it's not perfect, so knowing how to do certain skills by themselves is arguably more important than getting to take the easy way out from the get-go.'

A similar argument is found in one of the responses supporting the use of artificial intelligence as a supplemental tool for learning: 'It could be a good starting point to generate ideas. If it is used in the real world or future workplaces, why should it be banned from academia?'

The ethical lines between allowing and banning artificial intelligence start blurring when student respondents ventured into separating parts from their homework from its entirety:

> 'I think that students should be able to use AI to help with their course work. AI can have a lot of good information and get it to you very quickly. I don't think that we should be able to use AI to do all of our work, for example writing an entire essay. I do think it should be used as an aiding tool for students.'

Lines are also blurring for students who confuse citations with plagiarism: 'Many academic assignments require the use of previous works, so the line of what counts as plagiarism blurs.'

Overall, the respondents' concerns about the use of artificial intelligence-based tools to enhance their academic performance can be summarized by the following comment, coded as *opposing* the use of internet tools: 'It makes students lazy, decreases educational value, takes away authenticity and critical thinking, and constitutes cheating.'

On Policing Academic Misconduct

Moving from student behavior to measures that universities may need to implement as efforts to prevent or penalize plagiarism, the survey addressed the use of text-matching software in a 'yes' or 'no' question and its open-ended follow-up that provided the respondents with time and space to elaborate on their prior comments in more detail. Specifically, the question prompted to elaborate on universities using Turnitin or similar text-matching software to test the originality of student work by first agreeing or disagreeing with such use, and then explaining their positions.

Slightly more than 65.5% of all respondents agreed with the appropriateness of using plagiarism detecting software at universities, with almost 32.8% replying 'no,' and an almost consistent 1.72% of respondents declining to answer this question as they did to several others.

When the same concept was presented in open-ended form, almost half of all answers – 49% - supported the use of text-matching software to prevent plagiarism in class. With 20% of all responses stating opposition to such measures in academia, as much as 19% of answers addressed the ambiguity of the situation by tackling possible errors in text-matching procedures, the chances of inadvertent plagiarism, and the ubiquitous presence of internet-based tools in other aspects of life, which made their use in academia seem almost inevitable.

The proportion of missing or N/A responses to the open-ended question about the use of text-matching software is significantly more, at 13%, than the 1.72% of blank answers to the previous 'yes' or 'no' question on the same topic. The highest number of blanks may be explained by the optional nature of this open-ended question that allowed the respondents to elaborate on their previous answers using additional time and space, but only if desired. One of the supporters of anti-plagiarism measures wrote:

> 'I think using text-matching software is necessary because of how easy it is to plagiarize. From an educator's perspective, you want to know that your students are understanding material and using their own words from research they find, instead of copying and pasting information they discover. I also think this helps teach how to cite sources correctly, without the penalty of plagiarism on somebody's work.'

> Because the group of students in the surveyed class represented a broad spectrum of majors, including education, several respondents acknowledged the relevance of the survey questions to their future careers in pedagogy.

Ambiguous responses addressed several aspects of the question, including the complex and seemingly undetectable nature of artificial intelligence-generated material: 'I think both yes and no for this question. Turnitin is a tool to ensure there is no plagiarism of other people's work, but if turn it in is going to say that the use of Grammarly for example is plagiarism then I do not think so. When thinking about it, how could Turnitin say that Grammarly was plagiarized when all of the AI responses are different each time.'

Another aspect of uncertainty among respondents referred to legal and aesthetic nuance involved in the detection of original artistic work:

> 'There are possibilities of accidental plagiarism, which can happen and be easily resolved. There should be an added feature to scan for AI written papers. In the case of wording that is similar (British MP [Lord Neil Kinnock] who threw a hissy fit over something incredibly trivial [in Joe Biden's 1988 presidential campaign]) there is debate as humans will copy speech patterns of one another and the formats that are required of certain types of academic papers require a formality of writing that is bound to be similar but can fall under a gray area in which, depending on what lawyer you are talking to, they will take one side or the other. In the instance of music, you cannot own a certain key signature since that is simply just a way the music is constructed upon, a format of an eight-note bar that is vaguely similar but [the plaintiff] won because of popularity of the musician herself and a good lawyer. There are more [egregious] examples [like] the "amen break" being the most sampled drum line in recorded music history where the creator received no royalties and died homeless in 2005, or the iconic guitar riff of "Come As You Are" by Nirvana being a direct rip-off of the Killing Joke's "Eighties" and the only reason there was no legal action taken was because the latter band did not have the money to sue Nirvana since their record label was not as wealthy. It all comes down to who has the most money and nothing to do with actual originality.'

In coherence with earlier positive comments on the use of technology to enhance schoolwork, some respondents elaborated on the universal availability of digital tools as a pretext for abandoning universities' efforts to detect plagiarism: 'It goes with the last question, I believe that students should be able to use all types of technology to be able to write the best that they can with any technology available to them…' The same respondent also argued that because of the value of learning without supporting tools, the students choosing to do so are already enjoying an advantage over those who elect to apply supporting software. The penalty is the fact that a cheating student would not learn as much as an honest one, the respondent implies.

The survey also inquired about the stage of schooling where each respondent had been introduced to rules of academic dishonesty. Thirty-one percent stated that they learned about plagiarism in elementary school, slightly more than 55% indicated junior high or middle school, 10.3% mentioned high

school, but none referred to university. The percentages of 'not sure' or missing answers were precisely the same at slightly over 1.72% for each parameter.

When asked if they think that universities are right to apply penalties for academic misconduct such as plagiarism, almost 83% of the respondents said 'yes,' with 15.5% replying 'no,' and again, 1.72% declined to answer. When invited to elaborate on their responses to this question, a clear 67% majority of the respondents supported some form of penalty for academic dishonesty. A noted portion of the responses (16%) recognized a dilemma in situations when students violated the ethical standards unintentionally, for example: 'As I said in a previous answer, I think it's unfair because people do accidentally plagiarize sometimes due to using wrong citations and things like that.'

Other responses in this group, coded as *ambiguous,* addressed the complexity of the matter and the need for a nuanced approach to cases of inadvertent academic dishonesty:

> 'I do believe that in certain circumstances like completely copying someone else's work and saying it's your own should be penalized. However, I do think that the circumstances surrounding plagiarism are very strict right now and sometimes I feel like it's hard to use any source without feeling like I might be accidentally plagiarizing.'

Some of the responses call for a situational approach in considering a small amount of plagiarized material less punishable than claiming false authorship for an entire paper:

> 'Morally, I want to say yes to that question, however I think again it depends on the situation, a minor offense should not be punished to the full extent, if an entire 10-page essay is plagiarized then yes I agree but I think it is situational.'

Some respondents separated violations of intellectual property rights from the use of artificial intelligence, claiming that the latter does not disadvantage an original author: 'Plagiarism and using artificial intelligence to help improve assignments are completely different because the material being created is not someone else's original work.'

While 14% of the respondents declined to elaborate on the open-ended question regarding punishment for plagiarism, only 3% of respondents expressed opposition to penalties for academic dishonesty. Some of the responses arguing for stricter rules against plagiarism regarded it as a measure of fairness towards learners who work hard to earn their grades:

> 'It's not fair for those students who spend all day writing a paper or working on their essay just for a student to look up someone else's paper or use a website to write their paper for them in a matter of a second.'
> 'If one person plagiarisms and the rest of the class uses their own writing it is not fair. Artificial intelligence is a good way to help you start an essay and give an idea about what to write. But the whole essay should not just be written by the AI program.'

Several respondents anchored their positions in the moral and ethical standards of society:

> 'I do believe that universities have the right to penalize students for plagiarizing, as it is morally wrong in our culture, and originality is needed to be perceived as trustworthy and authentic. If students choose to go against these rules and take someone's original work without citing it, the university has the right to apply a penalty against that person.'

Only three participants responded to the question about penalties for plagiarism in academia by claiming support for softer rules: 'There should be no penalty for plagiarism.'

> 'I do think that when students use academic dishonesty there should be points taken off or told to redo the assignment in their own words, but I do think that this is sometimes taken too far when students are kicked out of school or put on punishment for this, because in the real world we are able to use other resources and It can be helpful in school work, too.'
> 'As I said before, plagiarizing an essay shouldn't get a kid kicked out of school, kids have stayed in school for less. Essays are not that deep, it's not a book, and it's not a real job; were just submitting the essay for a grade, it doesn't matter.'

Discussion

As relatively limited as the scope of the current study is – being confined to one classroom in one public university – it certainly raises a wealth of issues to contemplate. Prime among these is: where should educators draw the line in determining the acceptability of use of AI-based tools in college education, and on a more profound level, what is the role of intellectuals as guardians of ethics in balancing the influence of technological determinism over acceptable moral societal norms?

With the recent development of more sophisticated AI tools like ChatGPT, we are countering what we may eventually come to designate as a post-AI landscape. It appears too early in the game to settle (if a settlement is even reachable) the criteria and guidelines for (dis)allowing the use of said tools. Educators familiar enough with the nature of content that ChatGPT generates are aware that the produced text, tends to lack (for lack of a better description) a quintessential human element that characterizes material originated by human beings. Put another way, it sounds automated or mechanistic in a manner that is better 'sensed' than 'explained' in a narrative as the current one.

Other issues that present themselves include the expectation for originality of student output and the extent to which the academy – represented in its intellectuals who are also regarded as guardians of ethics – is seeking to uphold and reinforce the values of student creativity, pride in one's work, and the vitality of bearing the fruits of one's genuine labor.

Multiple and varied schools of ethics populate the pedagogical sphere, which means that the right/wrong binary will vary from one setting to the next depending on a host of factors including, but not limited to, institutional culture, societal culture, and educators' own backgrounds, and may even vary across time. For instance, among the arguments figuring into this debate is that AI is only an inevitable eventuality of human mind creativity, which seems to justify (for some people) its usage in academic tasks. On the other hand, a counterargument is that the resort to AI as a mass production outlet of ready-made assignments only furthers student apathy and exacerbates the already prevalent problem of students' under-reading and exclusively technology-driven research.

The current study offers but a glimpse into a world of competing perspectives as far as the factoring of AI in education is concerned. And although it is an undergraduate-based study, the controversies stirred here are certainly mirrored in other levels of education, be it pre-university or even post-graduate studies. Scholars and educators today find themselves confronted with a reality they are obligated to engage in; the direction and handling thereof are far from clear and will require substantial time and experience to allow the various scenarios to evolve.

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Appendix A

1. When given a course assignment that involves research, which sources do you most frequently use? Select ALL that apply.

   a. Your university's online library
   b. Google Scholar
   c. EBSCOHost
   d. JSTOR
   e. Your university's on-campus library (physical facility on campus)
   f. Other(s):

2. For your university courses, have you ever used computer software that helps paraphrase sentences and clauses (e.g., Grammarly)?

   a. Yes
   b. No

3. If you have previously used computer software that helps paraphrase sentences and clauses, which ones were they? Select ALL that apply.

   a. Grammarly
   b. QuillBot
   c. Hypotenuse AI
   d. Paraphraser
   e. Other(s):

4. Do you think that universities should allow students to use computer software that uses artificial intelligence (e.g., ChatGPT) to improve their assignments?

   a. Yes
   b. No

5. Explain your answer to Question 4.

6. Do you think that universities should use Turnitin or other types of text-matching software to find out if students are submitting their original work?
   a. Yes
   b. No

7. Explain your answer to Question 6.

8. Where did you first learn about plagiarism and other types of academic misconduct?
   a. Elementary School
   b. Junior High School
   c. High School
   d. University

9. Do you think that universities are right to apply a penalty for academic misconduct such as plagiarism?
   a. Yes
   b. No

10. Explain your answer to Question 9.