



THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

BOX 498, G.P.O., ADELAIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA 5001
Telephone: 223 4333 (Area Code 08) Telegraphic Address: UNIVAD

25 March 1981

Dr. M. E. Spautz
31 Scott St., Flat 16
Newcastle, NSW 2300

Dear Dr. Spautz,

My wife and I have just examined the evidence on plagiarism quite carefully. There is no doubt but that the offence was blatant and repeated. It was a brilliant job of detective work to find the original sources. It is reasonable to ask: how many additional undetected examples exist in that thesis?

Of particular interest is the style of plagiarism. The plagiarist often makes very slight alterations, changing a few words, inverting the sequence of words or phrases, sometimes replacing one or two words with what he considers synonyms. In some cases the alterations are inappropriate, which suggests that the plagiarist did not fully understand what he was stealing! In one case the compulsion to make a slight change resulted in changing the order of names in a reference. In another case he placed the plagiarized passage in quotation marks and attributed it to the wrong source. I infer from this that the plagiarist was well aware of what he was doing and was making an effort to cover his tracks -- though a very poor effort.

I have not studied all of the material yet, for I am in the middle of my heavy teaching schedule. However, I have also read your criticisms of the statistics and 'Are you really suited to run your own management consulting business, Professor?'

The plagiarist seems to have just 'plugged into' the SSPS multiple regression package. It is true that the data do not have to be perfectly Gaussian in distribution, the procedure being fairly robust. However, the underlying distribution is conspicuously bimodal. Were the data mine I would insist on some sensitivity studies, to find out what effect this would have. I agree with you that it would inflate the correlations. It might do other things as bad. Non-parametric, distribution-free techniques exist and should also have been applied. One of the thesis examiners should have been a competent statistician.

The only thing that might have been defamatory in your article is the title, which is, I might add, a very appropriate one -- not least because it is based on the one the plagiarist chose for his article.

We wonder about the political implications. It seems a beautiful case of 'blaming the victim'. What an impressive defence to the established economic order of bigness: failure of 90% of small businesses is due to the personal inadequacies of the small businessmen -- not political, taxation and other economic characteristics which favour large firms over small ones. Rationalizing the ills of society by

blaming the poor for fecklessness, 'bad genes' etc. is a persistent symptom of the Social Darwinist tradition -- which has distorted many aspects of the behavioural and other biological sciences.

Accordingly, when finally written up and carefully analyzed, the case history will be an extremely important one. It most certainly does not reflect well on the administration of the University of Newcastle!

We will consult with a few individuals and see what ideas fall out. Copies of any relevance correspondence will be provided to you. Recently FAUSA had the nerve to write to me to ask to use the research my wife and I have published to "lobby" on behalf of the ARGC -- and I have written an 'open letter', which I fear might be just a little too much for The Australian to publish. However, if it does get in, it should attract some attention -- and the opportunity to expose the plagiarism case and its political ramifications and to effect some long overdue reform.

For some time several of us have thought about preparing a collection of articles on deviant academic behaviour and its harmful consequences to students, to knowledge and to the public generally. One possibility would be something like the 'black papers' on education which attracted considerable attention in the UK a few years ago -- but, alas, were largely politically biassed to the right. I would prefer to see a more tough-minded approach -- for all extreme political ideologies are subject to similar abuses.

Incidentally, my wife and I are perfectly willing to appear in Court to testify that there is excellent evidence for plagiarism and that this is of the utmost gravity. We will be overseas in September 1981 to January or February 1982 on study leave. (We hope to contact some members of the [British] Council for Academic Freedom and Democracy ^{CAFD} on your behalf.)

Best of luck. The case is really horrifying.

Yours sincerely,

Clyde Manwell

Clyde Manwell

(prof. of zoology)

Have you got i) a complete copy of the thesis?
ii) the names of the external examiners?

Have you contacted CAFD? They were very useful in making U. Adelaide slope up.
Good luck! C.M. *John Baker*.