Plagiarism and fabrication:

Dishonesty in the newsroom

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ABSTRACT

This first comprehensive study of New Zealand news media plagiarism proceeds from the observation that plagiarism, if not demonstrably increasing, is more common than many practitioners would care to believe. It affirms that, contrary to conventional opinion, plagiarism cannot be understood or dismissed simply or entirely as the product of dishonest or lazy journalists. The study findings support indications of an underlying culture of copying within news media organisations—a professional ideology encouraging, if not overtly justifying, copying, and discouraging clear authorship attribution.

The findings emanate from responses to a survey distributed to all New Zealand's journalists, followed by in-depth interviews with five journalists identified as having personal experience with aspects of the practice identified in the survey, and a sixth with a journalist against whom a complaint of plagiarism was upheld by watchdog body, the NZ Press Council. The research analysed the just four complaints related to plagiarism brought before the Press Council since its 1972 inception, as well as another five much-publicised examples of the practice written about in the news media, to the present day. Of the nine cases examined, three reflected the most serious type of dishonesty associated with Jayson Blair of the *New York Times*—calculated theft of words as well as outright interview fabrication. The others can be categorised in a perceived less blameworthy variety of plagiarism, bedevilled by confusion of terms and newsroom pressures. But because much run-of-the-mill plagiarism is likely to have gone unrecorded and unnoticed beyond the newsroom involved, the true extent of any sort of plagiarism here could not be judged.

What was possible in this research, was to gauge a sense of prevalence by asking working journalists not of their own sins, but of their experience of being plagiarised by others. Suddenly the numbers of plagiarism cases rocketed, not in a usefully quantifiable way, but clearly demonstrative of an extent sufficient to warrant analysis of nature and origin. These experiences were set against an American model that identified four antecedents of plagiarism behaviour, two individual—journalistic rationalising of dishonesty and problematic techniques—and two situational—definitional ambiguity and reporter aversion to attribution. What became clear in these analyses was that, though all news media organisations view plagiarism very seriously, few if any acknowledge their own role in perpetrating the practice, that journalism is an industry that proceeds from an ideology of matching and copying.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us.

<div align="right">– Ecclesiastes 1:10</div>

Plagiarize! Let no one else's work evade your eyes; remember why the good Lord made your eyes; so don't change your eyes: but plagiarize, plagiarize, plagiarize; Only be sure to always – to call it, please – research.

<div align="right">– Tom Lehrer (*Lobachevski*)</div>

Good artists imitate, great artists steal – (attributed to Pablo Picasso); *Talent imitates, genius steals* – (attributed to TS Eliot); *Talent borrows, genius steals* – (Stephen Morrissey)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study Justification

In November 2007 there was a lively stir in journalistic circles when it became known that John Merrill, one of the United States' most respected journalism educators and columnists, had been found to have committed plagiarism. Professor Merrill, in a *Columbia Missourian* column about the Missouri University (at Columbia) Women's and Gender Studies Program had, without attributing source, taken three interview quotes and about half a sentence from an article written in the campus's student newspaper (*The Maneater*) by reporter Anna Koeppel (Warhover, 2007).

The infringement, though considered by some observers to be minor, attracted international attention for several reasons. Firstly, it seemed to represent a regression following vast industry soul searching since several earlier very public and serious infringements, most notably the much-publicised offences of the *New York Times'* multiple fabricator and plagiarist, Jayson Blair. Secondly, it raised the vexed issue of just what constituted news media plagiarism. Professor Merrill denied intent, responding: "I thought I had mentioned *The Maneater* as source…and was really surprised, when you called me in, to find that I had neglected to do this" (para. 6). Writing an apology for his theft, he added:

> I assure you that it was 'unintentional' plagiarism, and I had no reason to make it look as if I got those quotes from the sources directly. I was using them as a springboard for my opinion. But I did it, and I'm sorry. Careless, I'll admit, but not intentional. All these dozens and dozens of columns and some 30 books and innumerable magazine and newspaper articles and never before have I been accused of plagiarism (para. 7).

The incident also raised issues of confusion about the extent of need for attribution in the common news media practices of backgrounding and copy sharing, whether via a shared news agency or across common news organisation ownership.

> Journalists can make mistakes, sometimes unconsciously using a sentence here or a phrase there. Taking quotes from an *Associated Press* story without credit was common practice 20 years ago. (The AP is a co-operative of newspapers. Thus, it went, it wasn't stealing if you already own it. That standard has been discredited.) (para. 10).

It futher revealed a great diversity of journalistic reaction about the degree of seriousness to be attached to such copying; some were dismissive of the fuss, some overtly supportive.

In a sense, Merrill's infringement can be seen as a tipping point, one more in a growing list of high-profile plagiarism cases to have achieved public attention, including several in New Zealand. It also coincides with an apparent recognition that the burgeoning growth of the new technologies has made plagiarism easier and easier to commit, and therefore, even if beyond accurate measurement, to be on the rise (Richards, 2005). At the very least it can be argued that there is a greater awareness of the problem within the news media than ever before. Newspaper plagiarism has become sufficiently a concern in New Zealand for there to have been in-house inquiries and Press Council reports wrestling with the topic. Countries from Sri Lanka to Czechoslovakia have explicitly banned the practice (Richards, 2005). At the same time, however, almost all of the commentary has amounted to a worrying about individual behaviour or consideration about how to detect the wrongdoing. There would appear to have been little forethought, let alone concensus, over what news media plagiarism is and what are its generators.

1.2 Context and definitional issues

News media plagiarism—at its simplest understanding, the passing off by a reporter of another's work or part work as his or her own—is clearly not a new phenomenon but, if many journalists spoken to informally are to be believed, its incidence is rising. Some say it is rising markedly. Most spoken to describe it as a problem. Anecdotally, in explaining its prevalence, these journalists refer particularly to the pressures of coping with smaller and smaller newsroom numbers, and to the ease of plucking material from the ether of the Internet. They also talk about laziness and the dishonesty of the perpetrators.

Unlike in academe, however, the vagaries of journalism in a relentless, editor and chief reporter-driven quest for news means there are many grey areas in understanding what constitutes the wrong. In New Zealand, journalism ethics' codes either specifically condemn news media plagiarism or demand standards of accuracy and honesty that would in principle preclude its use, though none of them define or

evaluate the problem. Because plagiarism's definitional boundaries appeared blurred, this research examines—from a foundation of a comprehensive survey of New Zealand print, radio and television journalists, staff and freelance—the complexity of the problem and the difficulties inherent in finding workable solutions. In doing so, on the path toward a definitional understanding, as well as its generators, it considers underlying legal and ethical frameworks, historical and cultural origins, and the temptations and grey areas thrown up by the Internet. In response to anecdotal public relations' industry concerns it also examines the rights and wrongs of reproducing press release material.

Obviously journalism ethical prescriptions also preclude fabrication—outright story invention—an unambiguous but often overlapping form of writer dishonesty. Some researchers have argued that plagiarism should not be considered alongside fabrication. While acknowledging the two issues often get lumped together, it is maintained they are discrete behaviours: with plagiarism the issue is not whether a story is true, but whether it is presented honestly as the work of the correct author (Lewis, 2007). No-one could reasonably argue that making up a news story and presenting it as fact could be anything other than dishonest and wrong. In regard to news media plagiarism, ascribing blame is more problematic. This is because the public nature of news and the press's imperative to get the news from wherever it might be, as well as to quickly background and disseminate it, invariably lead to shades of grey. Unless including plagiarising—whether in print or pictures—there is no such ambiguity for fabrication. This research therefore concentrates on plagiarism. At the same time, it includes fabrication because the two sins are often confused, especially when many if not most high-profile transgressors, in New Zealand and overseas, have been guilty of both.

From its survey of New Zealand's journalistic population—print and broadcast, staff and freelance—the research proceeds to an exploration of the commonality of plagiarism practices; industry perceptions of what constitutes plagiarism and how to deal with it; the codes of ethics and laws that preclude its ethical and legal practice; and analyses issues in relation to the electronic milieu that provides lush breeding ground. It develops its insights within a framework of plagiarism theory, in conclusion adapted to fit a New Zealand context.

1.3 Applicability of the research to both print and broadcasting

Schudson (2003) points out that, fundamentally, the differences between broadcast and print news media in relation to plagiarism practices are minimal.

> In some contexts TV and print journalism operate quite differently, but in many contexts both print and television journalists understand their jobs and understand news in very much the same terms. In fact, most TV news, including almost all local TV news, begins with what TV journalists read in their morning newspapers. "Welcome to Plagiarism News!" a TV reporter cheerily said to one researcher. In this sense, citizens who say they get most of their news from television are getting most of their news, indirectly from newspapers (p. 7).

This study is, however, primarily concerned with the stealing of work from print journalists, though the perpetrators emanate from all branches of the media, print and broadcast, old and new. This is because the accessibility of print makes it most susceptible to plagiarism, and the predominant size of the print news media industry means it dominates survey responses. Nevertheless, its findings can be understood to apply to all.

1.4 Research questions

This research puts the following questions:

1. *How widespread or serious is news media plagiarism as perceived by journalism practitioners?*
2. *What do journalists indicate are the causes of news media plagiarism?*
3. *What types of plagiarism do journalists see as occurring?*
4. *What theoretical model would best describe news media plagiarism practice?*

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

2.1 Abroad

The 2007 levelling of plagiarism allegations against Professor Merrill were just the start of a vigorous debate about word theft that quickly spread via the Internet around the world. And it was the professor who was once again at centre stage when charges were subsequently levelled against the authors of a chapter in a new edition of his (co-edited), internationally-used, textbook *Global Journalism*.   Spot the difference, an Internet journalism commentary enjoined in December 2007 (Berger, 2007):

> Two areas of new interest are in the fields of business magazines and technology. *Business Today, Business World*, the *Economic Times*, and *Technocrat*, launched fairly recently, are doing well ... Bhutan, with less than 1 million population, can now boast of publishing its own national newspaper.
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> Two areas of new interest are in the fields of business magazines and technology. *Business Today, Business World*, the *Economic Times*, and *Technocrat*, launched fairly recently are doing well… Bhutan, with less than 1 million population, can now boast of publishing its own national newspaper (paras. 1-2).

Apart from one missed comma, the only difference was in proclaimed authorship. Both excerpts were published in the textbook *Global Journalism*, originally in a 1995 edition, the second in a new edition exposed in December 2007. The first example was in a section authored by Anju Chaudhary and Anne Chen; the repetition in a section authored by Jiafei Yin and Greg Payne. Chaudhary took umbrage with the later chapter authors, but more so with the book's editors, Merrill and South African academic Arrie de Beer for having neglected to spot, or stop, the use of her research without either crediting her or properly updating it (Berger, 2007).

The announcement of the breach caused consternation, not only because it became known immediately after Professor Merrill's column transgression, but because it followed a series of internationally highlighted news media plagiarism cases thought to have made everyone alert to wrongdoing. Most famous of these cases was that of *The New York Times's* Jayson Blair.   The second paragraph of the *Times's* revised code of conduct (The New York Times, 2003) reads:

> For more than a century, men and women of *The Times* have jealously guarded the paper's integrity. Whatever else we contribute, our first duty is to make sure the integrity of *The Times* is not blemished during our stewardship (p. 3).

The revised code also includes:

> Staff members who plagiarize or who knowingly or recklessly provide false information for publication betray our fundamental pact with our readers. We will not tolerate such behaviour (p. 7).

Media watchers quickly recognised the irony of the 2003 timing of the revised code. That was the year the world of young reporter Blair tumbled with the *Times's* 7000-word admission of May 11 that it had inadvertently published his numerous fabricated and plagiarised stories. Under the headline "Correcting the Record", the newspaper's front page lead conceded (Hirst & Patching, 2007):

> A staff reporter for the *New York Times* committed frequent acts of journalistic fraud while covering significant news events in recent months, an investigation by *Times* journalists has found. The widespread fabrication and plagiarism represent a profound betrayal of trust and a low point in the 152-year history of the newspaper (p. 210).

Blair was an up-and-coming, then 27-year-old, African-American reporter who, the paper revealed, had habitually filed stories from places he never visited, quoted people he never talked to, described details he had never seen, and used details from photographs to create the impression he had been somewhere or seen someone, when he had not. He had also plagiarised, a sin that contributed to his downfall: when former *Times* colleague Macerena Hernandez wrote a story for the *San Antonio Express-News* about the last American soldier missing in action in Iraq, Blair had written a close copy and Hernandez had become convinced he had stolen from her (Hirst & Patching, 2007).

The Blair case was far from the first case of modern-day newspaper misrepresentation. The publicity surrounding his deceptions led to recollections of earlier plagiarisms and reminded of earlier exposés (Plotz, 2002; Gillin, 2003; Brown, 2004). Noted United States cases included National Public Radio's Nina Totenberg, who plagiarised a *Washington Post* story about American Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill (when she was a young print reporter); the *New York Times's* Fox Butterfield who stole several paragraphs of a *Boston Globe* story—a story about plagiarism; and the *New Republic's* Ruth Shalit, caught after having cut and pasted others' material for five different stories (Plotz, 2002). Others named included *Chicago Tribune* foreign correspondent Jonathan Broder, whose 1988 story about the West Bank

contained passages taken from the *Jerusalem Post's* Joel Greenberg; *Boston Globe* columnist Patricia Smith, who admitted making up most of her quotes in four different columns; *Boston Globe* columnist Mike Barnacle, alleged to have fabricated detail in a column about two boys with cancer; *BusinessWeek* reporter Marcia Stepanek, who was charged with stealing copy, including a report on pharmaceutical company Pharmatrak, from the *Washington Post;* and the *Arizona Republic's* Julie Amparano, fired for suspicion of fabricating sources (Gillin, 2003). Accusations of plagiarism against widely syndicated columnist Ann Coulter—that she reproduced in a 2005 column, six passages that had appeared 15 years earlier in a *Los Angeles Times article*—are disputed. The article included some attributions, with the rest of the piece "at the level one might expect in a factual account of the same material" (Language Log, 2006, par. 3).

Other high-profile American journalists have gone even further, simply making up their stories and quotes. Notable among these have been the *New Republic's* serial fabricator Stephen Glass (who between 1995 and 1998 backed up numerous fictions with fake websites and fake phone numbers) and the *Washington Post's* Janet Cooke (who won the Pulitzer Prize for her 1980 story about an invented 8-year-old heroin addict). The Pulitzer was required to be returned. *USA Today* foreign correspondent Jack Kelley resigned under pressure in 2004 for fabricating a substantial part of at least eight major articles, including one that made him a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize. His long-standing editor Karen Jurgensen subsequently also resigned—for having failed to intercept his fabrications (Steinberg, 2004).

Australian plagiarism cases of note include *Sydney Morning Herald* computer pages' editor Gareth Powell, who stole extensively from an American publication; and Sydney *Daily Telegraph* columnist Piers Akerman who quoted verbatim without acknowledgement from an Israeli Defence Force news release as well as, in another case, from a United States' National Cemetery website. In a more famous incident, the author of a 2003 story on the fifth anniversary of the Bosnian Serb military massacre at Srebrenica aired on Channel Nine's *60 Minutes'* was accused by Australia's *Media Watch* of having lifted his piece in toto from an earlier BBC documentary. Reporter Richard Carleton sued *Media Watch,* defending his lack of attribution on the grounds the footage had been used under licence, but in court

conceded he had "misled and lied" to viewers for having shown footage from another mass grave to illustrate his story. The court found for both parties: there had been defamation, but *Media Watch* had had a right to make fair comment. No damages were awarded (Hirst & Patching, 2007; Pearson, 2007).

Extending the net to prominent copyists in other modes of writing, brings in author Alex Hayley, who settled out of court with a writer he stole from for his epic *Roots*; novelist Jacob Epstein, who stole 53 passages from a Martin Amis novel; Martin Luther King Jr., who reportedly stole much of his dissertation; United States Vice President, then senator Joe Biden, who was forced out of the 1988 presidential campaign for what has been described as serial plagiarism; and Doris Kearns Goodwin, who admitted taking passages from three different authors for her book *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys* (Plotz, 2002; Gillin, 2003). The jury is still out on United States President Barack Obama's Democratic campaign trail response to criticisms of the level of his rhetoric (Davies, 2008):

> Don't tell me words don't matter! 'I have a dream'. Just words. 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal'. Just words. [Applause.] 'We have nothing to fear but fear itself'. Just speeches (para.7).

Two years earlier, candidate for the Massachusetts governorship, [later Governor] Deval Patrick, when similarly criticised, had responded:

> But her dismissive point…is that all I have to offer is words—just words. 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, [applause and cheers] that all men are created equal'. [Sustained applause and cheers.] Just words—just words! 'We have nothing to fear but fear itself'. Just words! 'Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country'. Just words! 'I have a dream'. Just words (para.6)!

From the other side of the Atlantic, rock journalist Nik Cohn, 21 years after the fact, admitted to having made up most of the *New York* magazine story that inspired the film *Saturday Night Fever* (Bissinger, 1998).

2.2 At home

In New Zealand, the most recent case of news media plagiarism to reach the national news involved allegation of word theft by Radio New Zealand presenter Noelle McCarthy. A *Sunday Star Times* exposé threw up comparisons from her reports, including, as well as a substantial borrowing from Wikipedia (Knight, 2008, A5):

> Serena's on-trend mini-trench was all the more fashionable for being unseasonable …
> had John McEnroe been in the commentary box yesterday when she strolled on court
> to warm up in a trench coat, he would have known just what to drawl: "Serena, you
> cannot be serious." But serious is exactly what she is… (*The Guardian*, June 25)

> There's Serena Williams with her unseasonable white trench coat that had
> commentator John McEnroe drawling, well, what else would he drawl, "You cannot
> be serious", but of course she was serious… (*RNZ*, June 26)

and:

> Twenty-five octopuses will today begin twiddling a Rubik's Cube in the name of
> scientific research… (*The Independent*, July 7)

> Twenty-five octopuses began twiddling Rubik's cube yesterday all in the name of
> scientific research … (*RNZ*, July 8)

McCarthy subsequently apologised (Chalmers, 2008), but *National Business Review* columnist David Cohen (2008) argued that the offence was "nothing more earth-shattering than the fact [she] reads fairly widely when it comes to British papers, and yes, she had probably been a bit naughty in riffing a little too hard on a few of their recent reports" (par. 3). But, he asked: did a pretty inconsequential discovery of the plagiarism justify anything more than a small aside?

McCarthy's was far from the first case of recent news media plagiarism here. The issue flared in a cluster of high-profile cases, beginning in 2004 when young *New Zealand Herald* reporter Renee Kiriona, after an unforthcoming interview with rugby league star Tawera Nikau, looked to the Internet for information about him. Finding a profile written by *Waikato Times* writer Lester Thorley, she added a few pars of her own for the top, then submitted it to her newspaper's weekend magazine *Canvas* as her own. She subsequently re-interviewed Nikau, sending in a second version of her story, though this still contained some *Waikato Times* detail. Unfortunately, she neglected to tell her editor who, with two story versions on her desk, combined the copy.   Kiriona was censured, warned that she would lose her job if it happened again and, soon after, resigned (Brown, 2004).

A year later, a reporter for APN-owned *Herald on Sunday,* John Manukia, was sacked for faking an interview with former Auckland police senior sergeant Anthony Solomona, sparking an inquiry also in opposition chain Fairfax New Zealand. During a 14-year career as a staff and freelance reporter, Manukia had worked for news media including the *Herald on Sunday,* Pacific Islands' radio station *Radio 531,* the *NZ Herald,* the *Sunday News* and *NZ Truth.* The last two papers are published by Fairfax. Announcing the inquiry, then Fairfax editor-in-chief Peter O'Hara said (Scoop Independent News, 2005):

> As a responsible media organisation we owe it to our readers to ensure that everything we publish is of the highest standard. We accept that some mistakes can and will be made by all print and broadcast organisations from time to time and we will correct, retract and apologise when this happens. But the deliberate faking of an interview … raises concerns of a different dimension for everyone in the wider media community (paras. 4-5).

The Fairfax inquiry found that 12 articles written in its papers by Manukia could not be satisfactorily verified in whole or in part. Some could not be substantiated at all, others contained quotes from people whose existence could not be confirmed, some contained quotes from people who confirmed they had said such things, but not to Manukia—plagiarism—and one contained quotes from a man who denied having spoken to a reporter on the topic. The inquiry concluded that the company's willingness to check showed a commitment to preserving the integrity of its journalism and its titles. As a result of the investigation, the company asked all its editors to review complaints resolution procedures, and to develop robust record-keeping procedures and systems (Scoop Independent News, 2006).

> Above all we want to preserve the public's trust in our publications. Our initiative in undertaking this inquiry, when it would have been easy to say the reporter had long since left our employment, shows, we believe, our commitment to the highest levels of journalistic responsibility … we believe this is an aberration and the overwhelming majority of our staff are hard-working and ethical.

The inquiry went on to promise vigilance and accountability in respect of any future cases that might arise. But, although promising an overhaul of detection systems, it gave no indication that it considered blame could also be ascribed in relation to the nature of newsrooms. It continued:

> Much of what editorial staff members do in all their work is based on a relationship of mutual trust—supervisors and staff have to trust each other for their honesty,

reliability, integrity and high ethical, writing and personal standards. As in most organisations, this trust is normally given freely. But just as important, in the rare instances such as this, it is important for readers of all our publications to know that Fairfax NZ will not sweep things under the carpet but will go to considerable lengths to show our commitment to the highest standards (paras. 10-18).

Later in 2005 the head of lobby group the Maxim Institute, Bruce Logan, issued a public apology for having stolen sections of other writers' work and presenting them as his own in opinion articles published in several newspapers, including Christchurch's *The Press,* the *NZ Herald* and the *Otago Daily Times* (Hill Cone, 2005)*.* The deception came to light when *The Press* dropped Logan's daughter Alexis Stuart as a columnist after a reader found strong similarities between one of her columns and an article written by her father. Subsequent analysis by the New Zealand Association of Rationalists and Humanists found pieces of Logan's work closely resembled work published overseas, including in Britain's *Daily Mail* and *The Spectator* magazine. Logan said in his apology that the ideas he promoted—on subjects such as civil unions, morality and crime—had "generic applicability" and deserved to be heard and debated in New Zealand. He also said he had been careless: "I have a habit of writing things down and forgetting where I get them from." *The Press's* then editor Paul Thompson said Logan's actions had severely damaged Maxim's reputation as a credible commentator (Martin, 2005).

> I suspect few editors would now touch them with a barge pole. While this looks like
> an extreme example of what can go wrong, it does show how vulnerable newspapers
> are to this type of bad faith from contributing writers. It is no longer enough for
> newspapers to accept that their material is sound. Our checking systems will need to
> be vastly improved (paras. 19-20).

News media plagiarism in New Zealand, it seems, is also nothing new. Writing about the Kiriona case in the *New Zealand Listener*, media commentator Brown (2004) named several earlier sinners, including some of our most well-known journalism practitioners. Gleeson—the author of a *NZ Herald* backgrounder about the Kiriona affair—supported a conclusion of the practice's longevity, describing how in her own early reporting career on the *Waikato Times* she and other reporters routinely lifted from originals they were asked to match (Gleeson, 2004).

> Understandable indignation from victims aside, this is not a clear-cut issue. In my
> early days as a reporter on the *Waikato Times,* I would arrive at work to find a story
> clipped out of the *Herald* with the instruction "matcher" on it placed on my
> typewriter. With my colleagues, acting under similar instruction, I would try to
> replicate the story, hopefully with a local angle, but drawing freely on *Herald*
> material if necessary. Attribution was not common or encouraged. Colleagues tell of
> similar practices at the [defunct paper, the] *Auckland Star* (para. 38).

Gleeson also referred to a slightly earlier *Herald* case, where a reporter had copied an
Internet column and inserted it into the paper's electronic story queue for use without
attribution. An editor had subsequently added the reporter's byline. The reporter was
"censured".

Numerous other cases of news media plagiarism have occurred in New Zealand.
Some, notably that involving former *Metro* editor Warwick Roger, and another
including a former senior *Southland Times* reporter, are analysed in a section of NZ
Press Council judgments in Chapter 6. Roger has also been charged with plagiarism
by *AdMedia* magazine for, in a *North & South* feature article, using paragraphs as his
own from Sebastian Junger novel *The Perfect Storm* (Brown, 2004); and by an
interview subject in this research (A. Thompson, personal communication, 16 August,
2007). Both reporters cited are interesting for having had stellar and respected
careers, both being multi-Qantas winners. Another local dishonesty case is worth
mentioning for the oddity of a newspaper making up a journalist as "author" of
articles previously published in Australia. Australia's *Media Watch* reported in 2004
that New Zealand's *Sunday News* was using the byline "Ossie Moore" to republish
stories that had appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald,* the *Sun-Herald,* and the
Sunday Telegraph. Then *Sunday News* editor Clive Nelson defended the practice on
the grounds that use of made-up bylines was widespread and longstanding (Hirst &
Patching, 2007). Prominent plagiarism has also occurred on the Internet: more than
200 lines of a Wikipedia biography entry about New Zealand's first bishop George
Augustus Selwyn have been identified as being plagiarised from the Dictionary of
New Zealand Biography site, www.dnzb.govt.nz (Wikipedia Watch, 2006).

The most famous case of outright invention—but including plagiarism—to occur in
New Zealand was a report of the Soviet-Afghanistan conflict in a 1985 issue of the

then *New Zealand Times.* The story, complete with graphic photographs, was attributed to occasional correspondent Greg Hyam, purportedly reporting under fire from Russians fighting to subdue Afghan rebels. On February 10, the paper's editor Bob Fox ran a front-page apology in which he conceded Hyam had been on holiday in the South Island at the time he claimed to be in Afghanistan. Hyam had admitted the hoax after readers pointed out a similarity between his pictures and those published from other wars, such as Vietnam and Lebanon. He subsequently confessed that the article was entirely a fabrication, that he had never been in Afghanistan, and that he had taken all his photographs from other publications (Afghan hoax, 1985). The stealing of photographs makes Hyam not only a fabricator, but also a plagiarist.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE: WIDER CONTEXTS OF PLAGIARISM

3.1 Origins

Writer dishonesty is anything but new: the stealing of others' words to produce pirated versions of literary works, for instance, goes back at least as far as Shakespeare. The first version of *Hamlet* sold by booksellers was a pirated copy, reportedly a shoddily written, unauthorised rip-off (Hannis, 2004). Early authors also committed plagiarism, including Shakespeare. Well documented as a prolific stealer of ideas and plots, the bard also sometimes blatantly plagiarised (Bryson, 2007). An example can be seen from the couplet:

> Hola, ye pampered jades of Asia
>
> What, can ye draw but twenty miles a day?

This can be compared with:

> And hollow pampered jades of Asia
>
> Which cannot go but thirty miles a day (p. 100).

The first and earlier rhyme is from Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine,* the second from Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part II.*

Fedler (2006) relates that as late as the 18th century writers considered it an honour to be copied and that the idea that anyone "owned" their work would have been thought a folly. As well as Shakespeare, Voltaire, Tennyson, Twain and Kipling were all believed to have plagiarised. According to Fedler, plagiarism was a "near-accepted" practice till well into the 20th century. In America under the great news barons of the late 19th century and beyond, the pressure to get the news at all costs was reportedly immense. Plagiarism was viewed as a moral issue, to be exposed in the papers rather than in the courtroom. *Chicago Daily News* publisher Melville Stone, tired of his newspaper being stolen from by rival *Chicago Post and Mail* publishers Jim and Dave McMullen, in about 1876 posted a story on a Servian famine containing the apparently local-language proclamation and translation: "Er us siht la etsll iws nel lum cmeht (the municipality cannot aid)." After it was repeated in the *Post and Mail,* Stone advised that the announcement be read backwards, revealing: "The McMullens will steal this sure" (p. 29). A similar trap was used in 1883 by William Randolph Hearst, reporting in the *New York Journal* that the bombardment of Spanish guns in Cuba had resulted in the death of distinguished artillery officer, Colonel Reflipe W. Thenuz. After the story was matched in Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World,* Hearst

suggested the colonel's name read backwards would reveal the truth of the plagiarism: "We pilfer the news". But if there was humour in 19th century news media plagiarism, Fedler has no doubts about the dishonesty of more recent practice. "Today's plagiarists are secretive and act alone, suggesting that they know their actions are unethical" (p.31). He strongly recommended that better definitions and guidelines be made available for journalists to be clear on what was permissible.

Given the timelessness of such propensity for dishonesty, and given the fact that many early novelists were also journalists—Coleridge, Dickens, Defoe, Swift—it is reasonable to conclude news media plagiarism is as old as the journalism industry itself. Certainly, Dickens made up quotes: the exactness of his recollections in reporting conversations in difficult situations, such as in *A Nightly Scene in London* (Slater, 1999)*,* might have required a tape-recording device. That plagiarism and fabrication have long been common practices can also be seen by reference to commentary in numerous historical reports, notably in analyses of the great journalist novelists of the 20th century. *Scoop* author Evelyn Waugh was in 1927 reportedly sacked from his first newspaper job, at the *Daily Express*, for lifting a piece from another paper (Deedes, 2004); George Orwell was accused of fabrication of quotes in his coverage of the Spanish Civil War, on one occasion reproducing conversations heard miraculously from across a street above the loud crackle of gunfire and, on another, purporting to have heard quotes clearly despite lying injured after a sniper's bullet had passed through his throat (Straddling, 1984).

How much have things changed? Almost exactly 70 years later Timothy Goeglein, a White House aide serving as President George W. Bush's liaison to conservative groups, resigned after revelations that 20 of 38 columns he had written for his home-town Fort Wayne newspaper *News-Sentinel* between 2000 and 2008 contained portions copied without attribution. Such dishonesty or laxity, it seems, has always been with us, and human nature suggests that state of affairs is likely to continue (Gerstenzang, 2008).

3.2 Plagiarism as culturally variable

Johannesen (2002) describes how the ethical offence of plagiarism emerged in the shift from oral expression to print: "The development of print typography fostered the

view of words as commodities and private property" (p. 236). Certainly, plagiarism as a concept is rooted in Euro-American print traditions. Johannesen points out that the contemporary view of plagiarism as unethical is based on two fundamental judgments: that it is condemned as theft of an idea—as property—that belongs to another person; and that it is condemned as fraud or deception. That is, that plagiarism is assumed to violate some universal, culture-free, ethical principle.

According to Johannesen, the Euro-American tradition derives from beliefs in both individual originality and capitalistic commodification of ideas. The concern for the ethicality/legality of plagiarism developed with a growing Western culture emphasis on writing and print, together with ideas of capitalism and individual originality. The commodification of ideas—the view that words and ideas are private property and original commodities to be owned and sold—is a significant feature of capitalism. But in some cultures words and ideas are viewed not as individually created, privately-owned commodities, but as communal property available to all.

> The development of print typography fostered the view of words as commodities and private property … in contrast, other cultures may view words and ideas not as individually created, privately owned commodities, but as communal intellectual resources to be shared and adapted. Such is true for primarily oral cultures (pp. 236-237).

Johannesen also refers to public speakers in ancient Greece and Rome believing that imitation and borrowing should be "openly and proudly admitted rather than concealed or hidden" (p. 237). Ideas and subject matter were considered common property. Similarly, during the Middle Ages, concepts of plagiarism, copyright and authorship did not exist. And today, extant primarily oral cultures still see the creative power of the word as central to their traditions, and therefore able to be shared. Johannesen singles out the African-American culture, with its folk-preaching tradition, as one where "oratorical plagiarism" might be seen as natural, accepted and ethical.

> The ethics of plagiarism now can be reconsidered in a light different than the traditional Euro-American view. Plagiarism as unethical is not a universal, invariable, culture-free principle on the order of a Kantian Categorical Imperative. Instead plagiarism is a communication norm derived from the Euro-European tradition of print orientation, individual originality, and capitalistic commodification.

> In contrast, for example, in the Afro-American oral culture and folk-preaching tradition, oratorical "plagiarism" might be seen as natural, accepted and ethical (p. 237).

Johannesen goes so far as to suggest exploring the possibility of using other, less pejorative terms for copying, such as "borrowing", reserving "plagiarism" for examples where there is "clear, unethical violation of applicable norms". Given its own strong oral traditions, questions might be asked locally about the attitude of Maori towards plagiarism. No research is known to have been done in this area.

3.3 Laying blame

It is beyond the scope of this research to study or reach conclusions on the psychology behind plagiaristic cheating. Though Plotz points out that, no matter what news media plagiarists steal, they invariably fall back on clichéd excuses. Fedler (2006) says three excuses have been constant over the years from journalists: that they did not know they were plagiarising, that they thought the material they were copying was in the public domain, or that copying was common and acceptable. In recent times, however, new excuses were appearing: that similarities were a coincidence, that they had acted unconsciously, or that they had simply forgotten a story's attribution and were "sloppy". While early journalists said their plagiarism had been necessary in times of intense competition and that editors had ordered them to do it, recent plagiarists blamed fierce deadlines and overly heavy workloads imposed on them by their editors. Mallon (1989) adds how, before the computer age, plagiarists blamed their plagiarisms on confusions in their notebooks, claiming they had mixed up their own notes with passages recorded elsewhere. These days, he says, they are more likely to claim they have mistaken electronic files of notes with their own writings.

It can be argued that, unlike fabrication, plagiarism is a singularly victimless crime—affecting readers only to the extent that they are misled over, not story accuracy, but authorship and ownership.   But there is a fundamental issue of trust to be considered here that has considerable implications for both author and publisher. If deceit becomes evident in one area of publication, why should one not expect it to emerge also in another? Indeed, why subsequently take an offending paper or reporter seriously? Referring also to a range of other dishonest news media practices,

Morrison (2002) puts even the smallest indiscretion into a tight context of unacceptable behaviour:

> Such patently unacceptable practices [including] documented cases of lying, plagiarism, cheque-book journalism or corruption that surface to discredit the news media, create public mistrust and raise the issue of how widespread such practices are. It is not just that these are clear breaches of standards that citizens have a right to expect from news media owners and journalists. They also serve to question just how far such practices affect the selection and shaping of the news, and demand that owners and journalists give an honest account of their activity so that readers, listeners and viewers have a realistic sense of what they can expect (p. 58).

Almost universally, commentators on news media plagiarism blame the practice predominantly on the journalist or writer. Referring to an age of cut and paste where the boundaries between *borrowing* another's work and *stealing* it are becoming increasingly blurred, Pearson (2007) describes plagiarism as a clear wrong by the perpetrator:

> Why is it that reporters and columnists seem so ready to steal the words of others and parade them as their own? And why do editors and news directors so often turn a blind eye to plagiarists in their own newsrooms … various reasons are presented as excuses for journalists plagiarising. One is the simple fact that they are so overworked, particularly in smaller newsrooms, and become so desperate when trying to fill column centimetres that they cannot resist the temptation to plagiarise slabs of other writers' work. But how hard is it really to tell readers the source of the material, and to paraphrase or quote it to give due credit to the author (p. 340)?

Pearson also identifies the "excuse" of journalists' free attribution style, as witnessed by the attribution, "sources said". But it is a big leap, he says, from "sources said" to no attribution at all. He cites a terse, all-encompassing Australian Journalists' Association code of ethics injunction aimed at the journalist practitioner: "Do not plagiarise" (p. 339).

Journalism ethicists (Richards, 2005; Hirst & Patching, 2007) similarly confine their analyses to the behaviour of the journalist. Each acknowledges the growing ease of plagiarism with the exponential expansion of the Internet, and each cites ethical codes expressly forbidding the practice. Hirst and Patching conclude bluntly: "It is lazy journalism and it is unethical journalism" (p. 222). Richards says, equally plainly:

Even if it becomes a more extensive problem, the ethical position will remain
constant: plagiarism by journalists always has been, and always will be, unacceptable.
While it is possible that, under pressure from the sheer amount of material easily
accessible via the Internet, the understanding of what constitutes plagiarism might
fray at the edges, it seems that the more immediate problem will be how to detect it
(p. 107).

The issue for these researchers is not about *understanding* the plagiarism but about
recognising it when it occurs and working out ways of effectively dealing with it.
None of this, however, acknowledges any possible part played by the employing
newsrooms themselves. Could the culture of the news media, with growing pressures
on performance and a thirst for news at all costs be even partly to blame? Should the
employers be accepting even a smidgen of responsibility?

3.4 Concerns about growth

It is unclear whether news media plagiarism, as many journalists maintain informally,
is on the rise. According to the Pew Research Center's 2007 State of the News Media
annual report, the vast majority of United States' journalists of all backgrounds and at
all workplaces say that plagiarism is no more prevalent today than it has been in the
past. It's just that there is more of a focus on the problem. More than seven-in-10
national (77 per cent) and local (72 per cent) journalists agreed with the statement,
"We are hearing more about plagiarism but its prevalence has not increased". This
echoed almost exactly the findings of the previous (2006) year's report. But the
difficulty of these statistics lies in the focus of their reporting. About one-in-five at
both the national and local level—21 per cent of national journalists and 23 per cent
local—believed there to be more plagiarism today than in the past, which is arguably
a very substantial figure, perhaps reflecting a high number of practitioners to have
been burned. Nevertheless, the survey finding in respect of the United States is of
stasis (Pew Research Center, 2007).

There is virtually no difference across different groups of journalists in this
perception. Broadcast and print journalists, as well as executives, senior editors, and
reporters all predominantly say that recent incidents of plagiarism do not signify a
wider problem in the field. There is similarly no difference in this view between
young and old, those who are more and less experienced, or those who are more and
less educated (p. 8).

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By contrast, some other commentators have reported a tripling of the rate of plagiarism cases in America since Blair achieved prominence in 2003, though acknowledging this might be the result of greater transparency rather than behavioural increase (Lewis, 2007). The true state of affairs, it seems, is an elusive beast. But at the very least there is a growing recognition of the difficulties of dealing with a plagiarism made easy by the new technologies and—in the context of an industry more marketed than ever before—a concomitant visibility of transgressions.

3.5 Partners in crime: plagiarism and fabrication

Because plagiarism practice appears to be timeless, it is possible to argue for dealing with it by accepting the status quo: that one should do no more than continue to trust the alertness of senior editorial and sub-editing staff, as well as in the effectiveness of print watchdog the New Zealand Press Council, and broadcast watchdog the Broadcasting Standards Authority. That is, it's always been with us; we just need to keep on top of it as best we can. But recommendation for such a laissez faire approach is readily contradicted by, firstly, the prominence of several recent high-profile plagiarism cases that have damaged or threatened to damage broader journalistic reputations; secondly, an increasing recognition that new technologies have made the practice easier to accomplish and more common, even if simply by carelessness; and thirdly, a strong suspicion, if not clear evidence, that judgment of the transgression as merely an individual sin might be simplistic.

At first glance fabrication appears to lie in an entirely different category. Although the two forms of transgression have in common a dishonest intent, and the deceptions have, in a few, well-publicised examples, overlapped, Plotz (2002), using the term "fabulism", draws a sharp distinction:

> There is surprisingly little overlap between plagiarists and fabulists. The *New Republic's* fabulous fabulist [Stephen Glass] didn't plagiarise. Historian Joseph Ellis, who concocted a fake Vietnam War record for himself, seems to do rock-solid scholarship. Some pants-seat speculation why the two groups differ: plagiarism and fantasy stem from opposite psychopathologies. Essentially, fabulists can't find anything in the real world that equals their imagination. That's why they make things up, because what they invent is more interesting than what they see around them. Plagiarists, by contrast, find *too much* in the real world that equals their imagination.

> They steal because there is too much other writing around that tempts them—what
> they see around them is more interesting than what they write themselves (sidebar,
> paras. 1-3).

But this and other journalism-related research (Lewis, 2007) suggests the two forms of dishonesty should not be viewed disparately. Plotz's and others' investigations cast a net well beyond the performance of journalists, covering researchers, politicians and authors. In most of the noted journalism cases studied, fabricators were also guilty of—to some degree—plagiarism. And in common parlance, the term "plagiarism" is frequently used to describe both. Certainly, viewed from the perspective of the culture of a news organisation, fabrication and plagiarism appear to fall very much into a single behavioural category of writer dishonesty.

3.6 New Zealand law

In the regulation and control of plagiarism, two broad avenues are open to employers and the aggrieved: the law and the various ethical codes emanating from within the industry and its overseeing watchdog bodies. Snapper (1999) argues that the burgeoning extent of web-based publications lessens the importance of piracy, but heightens the need for protections against plagiarism. His argument is based on the dramatically reducing costs of publication and of growing visibility in the electronic media. But his observation gives no assistance in understanding the nature of the problem or resolving how to clamp down on the practice.

New Zealand law, common or statutory, has historically not been seen as a useful tool for deterring news media plagiarism. Copying another's work breaches the Copyright Act 1994, but the law requires there to have been, at the least, a significant copying for there to have been an offence. Legal commentary makes it clear that an obvious breach would be made by any newspaper that published verbatim an article lifted without permission from another newspaper. Reproduction in any material form can be deemed to be a copy—even the reproduction of a document on a television monitor. The statute defines "copying" as reproducing a work in a material form, but also says that copying a *substantial part* of a work is as much a breach as copying the whole. That means that it is a breach to lift parts of another person's work, though the Act requires that the parts lifted must be "substantial". Legal judgments have found

that "substantial" does not refer solely to quantity, but also to quality (Burrows & Cheer, 2005).

> The fundamental question is whether the essence of the copyright work has been taken. Thus, the copying of a quantitatively small part of someone else's work can be a breach of copyright (p. 161).

It should be added that the copyright lies not with the news per se, but with its presentation. So, legally, if someone substantially rewrites another's news story, they are unlikely to be breaking the law.

> It must be remembered that the essence of copyright law is copying. Its motto, as one judge has said, is 'thou shalt not steal'. Therefore, if two writers write similar articles quite independently of each other, each without reference to the other, there can be no copyright action by either of them. Coincidence is not breach of copyright (p. 164).

The onus of proof of a copyright action lies with the alleger, who has to demonstrate that the similar work was copied from theirs.

New Zealand law also prohibits the "passing off" of one person's intellectual property as those of another. Burrows & Cheer (2005), however, see such law—in respect of the news media—as only applying to issues like similarity of title, use of a created story character, popular author pseudonyms, and character merchandising. Key elements of common law judgment on these issues require there to have been a misrepresentation in trade likely to have adversely affected another's goodwill or business. The Fair Trading Act 1986 also prohibits misleading or deceptive conduct in trade (Samson, 2005). Neither of these acts is known to have been used to crack down on news media plagiarism.

3.7 Ethical codes

Where plagiarism can be and has been tested is in the arena of ethics, and the judgments of the various ethics-ruling bodies that act as watchdog to everyday journalism practice. From a self-regulatory perspective, plagiarism has been agonised over throughout recent history. In 1938, a French journalism charter included: "A journalist worthy of the name does not commit any plagiarism" (Richards, 2005, p. 107). The French charter, set up in 1918, also says reporters should be held responsible to their peers (Doland, 2003), which may provide an early clue that the

offence has long been considered as simply a compartmentalised problem of dishonest individuals.

In New Zealand, the industry code set up by former newspaper group owner Independent Newspapers Ltd—adapted by its purchaser, Fairfax New Zealand— requires editorial staff to "value originality in journalism and take every reasonable precaution to avoid plagiarism" (Fairfax NZ, 2005, p. 1). The other big New Zealand newspaper owner, Australian Provincial Newspapers (APN) News and Media does not have a code to be adhered to. Its once well-regarded journalism training manual in no detail discusses any issue of ethics (Hardingham, 1967). Neither the New Zealand Press Council's Statement of Principles (NZ Press Council, 1999), nor the journalist union's code of ethics (NZ Amalgamated Engineering, Printing & Manufacturing Union, 1988), explicitly ban plagiarism. But they both require of journalists, scrupulous honesty. Similarly, broadcasting codes of practice for radio and television (Broadcasting Standards Authority, 2004), without mentioning plagiarism, require of news practitioners, as well as accuracy, a constant review of standards of integrity and reliability of news sources.

Somewhat surprisingly, since its 1972 inception as the watchdog body for New Zealand's print news media, the Press Council has ruled on plagiarism or aspects of plagiarism on just four occasions. However, anecdotally, numerous examples have occurred around New Zealand that have never been referred to an ethics' body or ever been written about, though some of them were deemed serious enough to lead to sackings. And, significantly, most senior journalists spoken to, recall at some time in their careers, being plagiarised. The lack of complaint referral to the council may reflect an unwillingness of journalists to complain about other journalists. Unlike the broadcasting authority, which is a statutory body with the power to fine or put a station off air, the Press Council's authority is entirely self-regulatory. Its power lies in the agreement of newspapers and magazines to be so regulated; its effective punishment relies on a transgressor's agreement to substantially and prominently run a council's judgment against it. The council's statement of 13 "principles", rather than a detailed list of specific transgressions, is intended to allow for flexibility in decision-making. But the definitional looseness has attracted criticism for being a complaints-driven, rather than rule-driven focus (Tully & Elsaka, 2002).

> In our view the Council's statement of principles is a very disappointing document that reflects its complaints-driven focus. The preamble certainly emphasises the public interest in maintaining freedom of expression, but the 12 clauses (the 13th clause merely sets the requirement for editors to publish the substance of upheld adjudications) are not set in the context of fundamental ethical principles such as truth-telling, fairness and independence … the 12 points developed by the print industry's watchdog as a guideline to ethical practice include mundane matters, such as the handling of letters to the editor, headlines and captions but nothing on such important issues as conflicts of interest and chequebook journalism (p. 145).

Plagiarism is not specifically identified as a sin, though is able to be—and has been—ruled against under a larger prescript. Nevertheless, the largely common-law nature of the council's judgments has allowed for rulings on plagiarism and for some understanding of the parameters of its definition. An analysis of Press Council rulings, for instance, highlights the importance of attribution in all reporting, whether using direct quotes from another source, or acknowledging words' origin at story's end (Price, 2007). Regardless of any lack of precise written guiding detail, it is hard to imagine how any working journalist could not be aware that plagiarism is considered a sin by individual journalists or the news media industry (Samson, 2005).

Whether the codes and principles have a guiding effect on journalists' behaviour remains open to question. McGregor (1997) says that in 20 years of newsroom experience, she could not recall codes being referred to in the many instances of moral choice that surrounded difficult stories and issues. Instead, what could be called "intuitive morality" prevailed. She cites a comment by journalism lecturer Jim Tully that journalists are mainly guided by "newsroom learning", anecdotal knowledge of past behaviour (p. 137). But if the source of journalistic understanding of wrongdoing does not lie with the codes, the understanding itself can be taken as widespread.

3.8 The Internet factor

The Internet has self-evidently brought an unparalleled freedom of access to information. Richards (2005) refers to it also as providing a vast range of sources to plagiarise:

> The ongoing dilemma posed by the Internet is that plagiarism has become easier, inasmuch as there is a virtually unlimited range of sources to plagiarise, and plagiarism of much Internet material is extremely difficult to detect (p. 107).

Richards also makes the point that ethically, the objections to plagiarism are the same whether the plagiarised material comes from electronic or non-electronic sources:

> Even if it becomes a more extensive problem, the ethical position will remain constant: plagiarism by journalists always has been, and always will be, unacceptable. While it is possible that, under pressure from the sheer amount of material easily accessible via the Internet, the understanding of what constitutes plagiarism might fray at the edges, it seems that the more immediate problem will be how to detect it (p. 107).

It is widely accepted that the Internet is having a significant effect on mainstream journalism, both in relaxed writing styles and, significantly, the easy backgrounding of information for inclusion in stories. Owen (2003) says the new technology has been instrumental in a "shift in popular tastes toward more fast-paced, engaging, less serious media fare, and an ability to meet the dynamic lifestyle and scheduling needs of an increasingly diverse public (p. 2). Young (2001) points to the ethical dilemma when he says:

> The first decade of the mainstream Internet has been accompanied by a utopian rhetoric of freedom. The net's apparent decentralised nature and lack of control hierarchy lead many to suggest that freedom and openness are intrinsic components of the new media domain (p. 11).

Using material from a source as broad and accessible as the Internet clearly brings risks. Cropp (1997) makes the sober point about all stolen copy: "You have no way of being sure that the 'borrowed' facts are correct, no matter how impeccable the source may appear" (p. 202). It can easily be inferred that the risk of inherited error on the Net is exponentially larger than from the print medium. Cropp goes on to relate how two reporters once lifted information from a court story she had written about a defended court hearing they had not attended. Her report had contained a significant error made by a subeditor, which was repeated in their copy.

That the breadth and easy accessibility of the Internet encourages or abets word theft, is difficult to argue. Some go so far as to argue that what is posted is fair game. Educational consultant Dale Spender maintains there is nothing wrong with searching the net for material, cutting and pasting it to come up with something new, and calling it ones own creation. She says cutting and pasting is the modus operandi of the

Internet and it is only "print-primed professionals" who consider this an offence. She goes on to say that by continuing to apply "the old rules", people fail to recognise that the medium has changed from print to digital (Hirst and Patching, 2005).

> So instead of declaring that the sky has fallen in, it might be more helpful for professional educators to do some thinking, for the Internet is here to stay and yesterday's plagiarism is today's way of earning a living (p. 266).

Her view is that it is time to accept the fact that, "until the education profession catches up with the conventions and pedagogy of the digital age, we will continue to spend our time struggling to put the genie back in the bottle—with no beneficial outcomes" (Pearson, 2007, pp. 338-339). Spender's is a view echoed by some libertarians and promoters of Internet freedoms. Hirst and Patching, however, echo mainstream industry belief—and the Press Council—when they say of the practice, "as she rightly pointed out, cutting and pasting is the *modus operandi* of the Internet, but without suitable attribution it is classic plagiarism" (p. 266).

What is clear is that, as plagiarism continues to rear its head in New Zealand journalism, so too do the challenges—in an electronic age—of dealing with it. The Press Council (2005) highlights the ease of transgression by observing that with electronic cutting and pasting, it can even be inadvertent.

> It is easy to understand, if not approve, the modern-day journalist under pressure who might typically start a story by grabbing a couple of paragraphs of background material to slot into their own story without attribution. Journalists know that to present someone's work as their own is ethically wrong but somehow the practice of cutting and pasting electronically in this way seems to escape some people's ethics alarm bells (p. 10).

Ownership of copy on websites too can easily be confused. When a son of National Party deputy leader Bill English posted homophobic copy on his Internet Bebo site, a defence raised was that the offensive material was a compilation of material written by others and taken from other websites, not the views of the son (Press Council, 2008). Few western observers would dispute that the open culture of the Internet is, on balance, beneficial. Concerns remain, however, when ease of Internet access translates into easy plagiarism pickings or, even more seriously, when the lifting becomes so commonplace it is not viewed as ethically wrong.

3.9 Public relations and press releases

The direct reprinting of quotes and background material from press, communications and public relations' releases—substantially in the form and quantum in which they have been presented—is clearly deemed acceptable by many journalists, though they are taught to use such releases as a springboard (Press Council, 2005).

> PR practitioners often say they are bemused to see their work appear verbatim under a reporter's byline – but they are never surprised. Seeing the material published, of course, is to their benefit, so complaints are unlikely (p. 11).

Johnston (2002) argues that the very action of sending a press release to news outlets is tantamount to an implied licence to use and adapt the material:

> Journalists' names appear on news stories that emerge from press releases written by somebody else. Public relations students proudly report that their release was used verbatim in the local paper, a high prize for the student, and a common occurrence on those papers that suffer understaffing. Students learn at an early stage in their academic careers that material generated by public relations practitioners is successful if it is professionally plagiarised. Indeed, this extends to the general business environment where bureaucratic plagiarism is part of the fabric (p. 3).

Quotes supplied via such media are clearly intended for publication, but there would appear to be a line to be drawn between a blanket publication of a supplied "story" and the selected use of supplied material to be used in conjunction with further research.

Richards (2005) takes the argument further saying, while most would acknowledge presenting another's work as your own is unethical, many journalists make an exception when the work has been prepared by public relations consultants.

> Longstanding divisions between journalists and public relations practitioners are regarded by many journalists as spin doctors who present an unwarranted impediment to journalists seeking to discover what 'really' happened in a given situation. Partly because of this – and, it must be said, sometimes out of sheer laziness – many journalists make an ethical distinction with respect to plagiarism when the material in question is sourced from the public relations industry, and include in their work material that has been lifted directly from the avalanche of media releases which pours into newsrooms daily (p. 62).

Richards goes on to acknowledge that, of course, the public relations consultants concerned do not usually object to having their words presented this way to an

"unsuspecting audience". Significantly, he argues that the press release situation should be addressed by ethics' codes. The NZ Press Council conclusion is, however, that, in this instance, the sin of copying could be categorised as one of laziness rather than plagiarism. It is supported in this by Mencher (2003) who further reminds journalists that their role is to dig beyond surface facts provided to them in what he calls "source-originated material"—emanating from press releases, handouts and speeches. "Verification, background checking, direct observation and enterprise reporting amplify and sometimes correct source-originated material" (p. 246). The grey areas of taking copy for press releases clearly disappear when the source document merely provides the trigger for more digging.

CHAPTER 4: NEWS MEDIA PLAGIARISM THEORY

4.1 Introduction

Because of the scarcity of theoretical examination—anywhere—into news media plagiarism, the delving into theoretical underpinnings has been limited. Two related journalistic theories, however, have assisted in researcher understanding: professional ideology theory and paradigm repair. These theories, together with an extension theory of paradigm disguise, have helped explain how journalists and their bosses perceive and react to plagiarism.

4.2 Professional Ideology Theory

Key to journalistic ideology is the nature of the relationship between employer and the journalism profession, the ideology of the profession legitimising the position of the journalists in wider society.   This idea supports indications that plagiarism might be more than an individual transgression, providing substance to the belief that a newsroom culture could play a pivotal role. This in turn leads to recognition of the importance of researching journalism practice in an organisational context. Tuchman describes professionalism as "knowing how to get a story that meets organizational needs and standards" (1978, p. 66). She backs this up by pointing out that, in newsrooms, everyone must be a generalist, capable of doing everyone else's work.

> The ultimate aim…is to get its work done…for all recognizably newsworthy stories to be covered, each specialist must be a generalist, and vice versa. To quote several reporters, each "must be a professional" capable of covering everything and anything, because each may be assigned anything at any time (p. 67).

Schudson identifies professionalisation as one of two "master trends"—the other being commercialisation—that have "deeply affected the American experience of news" (2003, p. 71).   His "professionalization" observes that in the past two centuries, "news has become a professionally created and commercially distributed product in most parts of the world". As the press historically separated itself from political parties and movements, it "grew more driven by commercial considerations and more organized by a set of self-governing professional norms and practices" (pp.69-70). Lewis (2007) further notes that a common set of values exists across news media typologies, ranging from watchdog to ethical but, significantly, also including beliefs in the immediacy of news (deadline pressures) and autonomy (functioning independently from sources and profit-minded business managers). He tellingly adds,

though, that none of the typologies acknowledge that most journalists practise their craft within for-profit companies, and therefore are required to advance a business purpose.

> Professional ideology theory predicts that journalists will behave as if the field is a profession defined by speed and marked by the autonomy granted its practitioners. It predicts that when plagiarism cases arise, journalists will consider time pressure an adequate excuse because deadline stress comes with the job, and will hold ignorance an unacceptable claim because ethical standards are intuitively understood. Further, it predicts that the autonomy norm will preclude any consideration of independent bodies adjudicating ethical infractions and allow individual variation in establishing ethical parameters (pp. 22-23).

The theory therefore sets a clear context of journalistic working pressures as rationale; and of journalists and news companies' belief in their functioning autonomy. The latter can lead to an underlying self-belief that they are above most criticism, or at least hold a special place in society warranting special freedoms.

Supporting these conclusions within a New Zealand context, Elsaka (2004) describes how, from immediate post-World War II years, journalists' training bodies have appealed to the importance of journalistic work to sustain journalists' claims to professionalism. "Professionalism" subsequently provided a model for occupational reform from what had sometimes been seen as a low-status occupation. Significantly, Elsaka concludes that journalism's claims to professionalism must be seen to be fulfilled in the eyes of those whom the occupation claims to serve—the public— which in turn relies on the maintenance of trust:

> …professional authority and autonomy rely on public trust and must be earned by subordinating their own interests to those of others and especially the 'common good' … [journalists] wishing to establish their credentials as professionals must be able to sustain that trust. In this sense, 'professionalism' is ultimately an issue of public trust, which as [sociologist Valérie] Fournier argues, "is never established once and for all but needs to be continuously negotiated". The professions need to establish and continuously work at maintaining their legitimacy (pp. 77-78).

The main mechanism of legitimisation, according to Elsaka, is the articulation of "competence", something embodying the government of truth, as well as ascribing professional conduct "within a network of accountability to clients and to the profession itself". Through the delineation of competence, the professions are "made

accountable to their constituency for the proper use and production of 'truth'" (p. 78).
From this foundation, the industry's various codes of ethics reflect "an effort to
establish for itself a professional identity that is related to its role perceptions, and a
conception of its purpose in society through defining standards which members must
strive toward" (p. 79). The development of ethics' codes and other self-regulatory
structures are seen as part of a process of negotiation over authority and legitimacy in
the journalistic area of expertise. But they can also be seen as part of a process to gain
autonomy in journalistic performance, which leads credence to wider theories (see
Paradigm Repair and Paradigm Disguise below) suggestive of news media inability or
reluctance to concede wrong process.

4.3   Paradigm Repair

A paradigm can be defined as "a set of broadly shared assumptions about how to
gather and interpret information relevant to a particular sphere of activity" (Hindman,
2005, p. 226). When a paradigm of news is challenged—when a journalist or news
organisation breaks standards and routines expected of a professional—there are only
four possible responses available to the news organisation: ignore the fracture,
acknowledge the limitations of the paradigm, change the paradigm, or "repair" the
paradigm by proclaiming the offending individual or organisation violated journalistic
norms. The fourth response is the most typical.

> News media employing paradigm repair focus on two major strategies to accomplish
> their goal. First, they reassert the value of the paradigm itself. This takes place
> through affirming the value of objectivity and its consequent professional norms.
> Second, the news media distance themselves from the threat that the "wayward"
> journalist represents, primarily by marginalizing the errant journalist and/or news
> organization or by distinguishing "good journalists" from "those" journalists who
> have failed to uphold the paradigm. The end result… is that news media can continue
> operating as before because they have isolated and dismissed the anomaly (p. 227).

Paradigm repair therefore proceeds on the basis that journalists follow a professional
ideology and that trouble ensues when the norms of the ideology are not followed.

It follows, overwhelmingly therefore, that it is the individual reporter blamed for
fractures, and that flawed organisational processes are ignored.

4.4 Paradigm Disguise

Lewis (2007) takes the repair model further, creating a version that identifies four antecedents of plagiarism behaviour. Two of his antecedents are individual—rationalising dishonesty, and problematic techniques. The other two are situational—definitional ambiguity and attribution aversion. Coining the phrase "paradigm disguise", he argues that definitions and sanctions within the news media vary widely, in part because they are situationally determined.

> Newspapers allow perceived intent, genre and zero-tolerance policies to define plagiarism, while sanctions are influenced by the paper's prior ethical infractions and a desire to engage in impression management. Newspapers contribute to plagiarism behavior by substituting injunctions for clear definitions and by preferring paraphrasing to attribution. The study advances the theoretical construct of paradigm disguise to explain the relatively harsh sanctions administered for plagiarism, which can be seen as exposing a journalistic pretense of originality (2007, p. ii).

The "paradigm disguise" terminology therefore posits that, if newsroom copying is routine, breaches of norm values such as plagiarism must be treated with grave severity, lest the paradigm of copying be exposed.

> The ideology of the profession requires that journalists insist on autonomy while taking their cues from what the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* put on their front pages, on asserting independence while hewing closely to a consistent story line and on proclaiming originality in reporting…an element of the ideology is what [columnist Walter] Lippmann described as "standardized routines" in which reporters depend on each other to describe news and rely on public relations to assemble story lines for them (p.200).

Without such routines, the argument goes, journalists would find it difficult to perform their work. But admitting to the world the degree to which they depend on copying ideas and information from each other would threaten the news paradigm.

> Hence, the ideology requires that journalists who borrow liberally cloak their filching with minimal attribution and sufficient paraphrasing. This is the paradigm disguise. As long as journalism cannot own up to its lack of originality, it will encourage its practitioners to tut-tut over similarities between sentences without recognizing the greater environment of copying and borrowing (pp. 200-201).

The nub of this analysis is that coming to terms with the plagiarism of individuals masks an underlying problem: a refusal to admit that newspaper journalism is built upon a culture of copying and imitation.

4.5   A plagiarism model

Lewis (2007) identifies (Figure 1) four types of plagiarism: appropriation plagiarism (straight and blatant stealing of others' work), research plagiarism (blending another's words with original reporting or failing to adequately paraphrase to disguise the copying"), self-plagiarism (representing earlier work written for a prior employing newspaper as new in another), and idea plagiarism (including the repetition of short, distinctive phrases coined by another, and the repetition of another's cartoon ideas).

As referred to earlier, of the four conceptualised antecedents, two are individual: rationalising dishonesty (self-justification of a dishonesty, such as an excuse of work pressure or that generated by illness); and problematic techniques (such as copy-and-paste habits exacerbated by forgetfulness). The two other antecedents are situational: definitional ambiguity (resulting from an organisation's failure to adequately define plagiarism beyond injunctions not to do it); and attribution aversion (reporters' reluctance use quotation marks, give credit to other publications, or to add end-of-story footnotes or disclaimers).

Behind these as root causes lie the perceived "mediators" of deadline pressure and professional autonomy, "the two factors at the root of most plagiarism behaviour. These two stress-inducing factors initiate the chain of events that result in plagiarism behaviour" (pp. 143-144). Deadline pressure in the model includes external competition, resource deficiency as perceived by the journalists, and the perishable nature of news. Professional autonomy highlights the importance for journalists of maintaining an independence and distance from their sources and managers in promulgating their free speech within the context of a democracy.

Figure 1: Lewis's plagiarism model
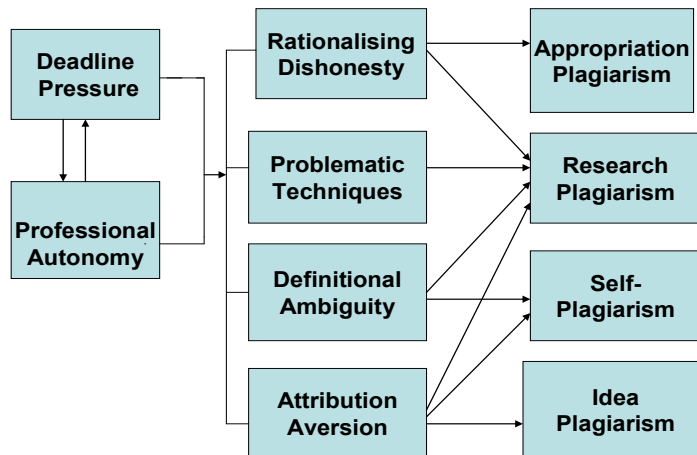
Lewis's model, based on findings from his study of 76 cases of plagiarism in the United States over a 10 year period, plus in-depth interviews managed with eight of the offending journalists, provides a solid base for understanding plagiarism practice in similarly-operating New Zealand newsrooms, particularly the identification of mediators and antecedents as cause. This is examined in more detail in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

5.1   Introduction

This research used three methods to test industry perceptions and management of news media plagiarism in New Zealand. First, an email survey was sent to all mainstream newsrooms, print and broadcast, educing participants' perceptions and experiences of plagiarism of their work. Second, a series of qualitative interviews were carried out with industry figures likely to have experienced plagiarism. An additional interview was conducted with a woman judged by industry watchdog body the New Zealand Press Council to have plagiarised. Finally, a comparative analysis was carried out of all historical Press Council complaint decisions that make reference to plagiarism, spanning the years 1972, the year of the council's formation, to December 2008; and of the most prominent plagiarism cases to have emerged in the public domain over the same period.

This chapter provides an overview of survey, interviews and comparative analyses, examining how each of the three methods were devised and carried out. In respect of the survey, it discusses why it was devised in the form that it was and how it was distributed; in respect of the interviews it discusses the planning of questions, the choice of interview subjects, and the arranging and conduct of the interviews; in respect of the comparative analyses, it discusses the selection of material and the coding applied to the Press Council judgments and the identified news stories.

5.2   Planning

This study began with a determination to not only explore the practice of plagiarism, but also to analyse its generation with the help of industry eyes. In this way, it was resolved to gain a better understanding of news media plagiarism, and to garner ideas for dealing with it or, at least, generate clues towards its mitigation. Judgments of plagiarism within academe reflect simple concepts—they are almost always clearly about recognising cheating. But, as discussed in Chapter 4, Lewis asserts that plagiarism in the news media masks a deeper problem: a refusal by news media organisations to admit that their work is built upon copying and imitation (2007). If correct, there are likely to be grey areas in judging the practice. While a survey on its own might produce valuable data about the perceived, if not actual, extent of plagiarism in New Zealand, it was therefore thought an additional industry input from

practitioners who had had to confront the practice, could provide useful insights when it came to interpreting any themes arising out of the survey data.

5.3   Triangulation: combining quantitative and qualitative methods

Bruhn Jensen (2002) recommends the use of several methodologies—triangulation—to help verify and study findings.   The relationship between these different methods should be one of "complementarity", using different methodologies to examine different aspects of a research question, even where the question might not fit within the same concrete empirical domain. Weber (1985) supports this when he says the best studies use both quantitative and qualitative methods. There is no single "right way" to do research analysis: each researcher has to choose the most appropriate method for their substantive problem.

Defending a strategy of having two research paradigms mixed in a single research project, Teddlie & Tashakkori (2003) argue that quantitative research is most suitable for theory verification, qualitative research most suitable for theory generation. They cautiously support an argument that qualitative research questions are (typically) exploratory, while quantitative research questions are (typically) confirmatory. Their caution acknowledges the weakness of any dichotomy that would restrict the use of qualitative methods to preliminary research phases. They also accept that quantitative research can be used for theory generation (as well as verification), and qualitative research can be used for theory verification (as well as generation).

> … yet we also believe that most QUAN research is confirmatory and involves theory verification, while much QUAL research is exploratory and involves theory generation … a major advantage of mixed methods research is that it enables the researcher to simultaneously answer confirmatory and exploratory questions, and therefore verify and generate theory in the same study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003, p. 15).

Seidman (1998), however, warns against a too-easy reliance on triangulation:

> What are needed are not formulaic approaches to enhancing either validity or trustworthiness but understanding of and respect for the issues that underlie those terms. We must grapple with them, doing our best to increase our ways of knowing and of avoiding ignorance, realizing that our efforts are quite small in the larger scale of things (p. 20).

Keeping in mind inevitable research imperfections, this research uses both quantitative and qualitative data collection to maximise validity. In doing so, it hopes to benefit from the overwhelming positives that a multiple approach brings: notably, greater reliability of findings and a minimisation of any inadequacies peculiar to a singular research design. At the very least, combining methods should enable the researcher to draw on different methods' complementary strengths and to offset respective weaknesses (Atkinson & Coffey, 2002). As Anderson (1989) points out, the result will be fewer threats to validity: "What is needed for valid research is the use of multiple methods of investigation to allow comparisons across the studies" (pp. 261-262).

5.4   Surveys

It was decided to begin this research with a survey of journalists primarily because of the vagueness of industry perceptions of widespread plagiarism hitherto conveyed anecdotally. It was recognised from the start that participants, even if surveyed anonymously, would be reluctant to admit personal wrongdoing. But, by testing their experiences of having been plagiarised, it was hoped a somewhat more accurate sense of the practice's extent could be gleaned. It was also hoped that a clear idea might emerge of the nature of the plagiarism taking place, and of the main areas of perceived culpability.

Surveys bring to research a scientific standardisation that substantially eliminates interview error. At the same time, however, it needs to be recognised that standardisation can itself threaten data validity, such as where the rigidities lead to answers that might be inaccurate (Schaeffer & Maynard, 2002). Surveying the journalist population was done in this research because it represented, if imperfectly, a significant form of quantitative research not involving manipulation of participants or their circumstances in advance (Gunter, 2002). It also fitted research aims of providing description, explanation or exploration (Barker & Barker, 1989). Rubin and Rubin (1995) make the point that surveys are ideal for measuring numbers, but ignore the detail and richness of individual behaviour. "In short, the counting aspects of the research, although useful, tell only a small part of the story, and not always the most interesting or useful part" (p. 34). Machin (2002) offers similar caution when he recommends surveys for discovering numbers of things. He says they provide a

credibility of appearing scientific and have vast appeal and currency in our culture, but often obscure the problems of the definitions of what is being counted.

The survey method chosen was therefore only made in the determination it was to be backed up by interviews. It was used to test not just whether news media plagiarism was widespread, but to help formulate the choice of subjects to be interviewed qualitatively and the nature of the questions to be put to them. And only by further comparison and analysis could trends or generalisable deductions be attempted.

The questions for the surveys were formulated after a literature review, as well as a first examination of the case studies and examples elicited in research, including those complained about to the Press Council and all but the most recent of the further examples written about in the news. The questions were designed to cover respondents' experiences of plagiarism, their perceptions of its extent, and their understanding of nuances of the practice. They were also designed to elicit practitioner understanding of probable causes.

5.4.1   Survey formulation

For a survey to be relevant, it is vital that participants be representative of the total population from which they are drawn, that is, if findings are to be generalised to apply to the population as a whole (Gunter, 2002). This survey was therefore planned to be put to all available New Zealand's journalists, print and broadcasting, including both staff and freelance.   Previous academic-instigated national journalism surveys have had low response rates. The most recent previous such, a digitally-conducted survey, by Waikato University in 2003, garnered just 297 responses. A 2006 industry postal survey undertaken by the Journalism Training Organisation had 1216 responses.   However, it has been criticised for using a different range of categories that have made comparisons with other surveys difficult (Hollings, 2007). Neither of these surveys addressed plagiarism.

To overcome the difficulty of reaching a relevantly large and representative sample of journalist categories, a two-fold strategy was chosen. Firstly, it was decided to piggyback an imminent national survey, a joint project undertaken by Massey University's Department of Communication and Journalism and Waikato University's

Department of Screen and Media Studies; secondly, to maximise cover, it was decided to distribute the survey electronically to a single senior staff member at every identified news media and news media-related organisation, each personally briefed to deliver the survey to his or her staff members (Hollings, Lealand, Samson & Tilley, 2007).

5.4.2   Survey distribution method

Barker and Barker (1989) note that postal surveys have some disadvantages, including typically low response rates and the inability of a researcher to exercise quality control during the answering process. But they also bring advantages of simplicity of process, of removing any apprehensions that might be faced by a respondent in a face-to-face interaction, and of enabling a wide geographic spread. At first glance, surveys distributed electronically would seem, logically, to have the same pros and cons. The slickness of distribution however, depending on question framing and marketing, might encourage a greater or lesser response rate. For this research, there was the serendipitous benefit of having the chance to piggyback a national survey of stature. Joining the Massey/Waikato universities' survey, distributed electronically in the last quarter of 2007, was made possible by offering to take on a role in its overall planning and dissemination. Survey leaders were happy with a quid pro quo arrangement that allowed the insertion of partisan questioning in return for organisation, planning and production assistance. The ability to survey in this manner, lent the survey a breadth and credibility that might otherwise have been difficult to attain. Distributing the survey electronically to a single senior staff member at news media organisations was a viable strategy in striving for a high response rate because it was backed up with personal telephone appeals, gleaning agreements from each to distribute the survey to staff members via company intranet or group email systems. Amid all the conversations, there was a single negative response—a Chief Reporter of the Whangarei-based *Northern Advocate,* who questioned the imposition of what he said were too-frequent survey expectations—but he still distributed the survey on the surveyors' behalf.

5.4.3 Survey questions

With demographic details set by the creators of the larger survey, it fell on this researcher to come up with a space-limited number of questions specifically related to plagiarism. The first requirement being to test the extent of plagiarism—but in the knowledge few would admit to the practice—the question "has your own journalism ever been plagiarised" was coined. The question contained sub-categories requiring respondents to fill in Likert-type choices designed to test perceptions of aspects of the practice. The first sub-category tested perceptions of the extent of the practice: never in any form; a few words/sentences, such as for backgrounding; whole quotes lifted without attribution; or entire story plagiarised. The second tested perceptions of its regularity: once or twice; occasionally/five to 10 times; or often/more than 10 times. A third elicited the medium of the perpetrator: TV, radio, print or the internet. A following question, aimed at further testing industry perceptions, asked whether respondents considered plagiarism a growing problem. Finally, those who considered the practice a growing problem were presented with the open-ended question: what do you think are the reasons for its growth and what should be done about it? Survey questions are contained in Appendix B. The results of the survey questions are analysed in Chapter Six.

5.5   Interviews

Between July 2007 and February 2008 this researcher interviewed six people. The interviews were used to elicit industry perceptions of the extent and growth of plagiarism, reasons for its frequency, and ideas for coping with the practice. The intent was to gain a snapshot of the varied experiences of plagiarism across the news industry spectrum.

The style of qualitative interviewing that ensued, though following academic proscriptions, borrowed from journalism. Though not using the term "journalism", Rubin and Rubin (1995) describe qualitative interviews in words suggestive of journalistic inquiry: just as in ordinary talk, research questions and answers should follow each other in a logical fashion; researchers listen to each answer and work out their next question on the basis of what was said; the interviewer is looking for narratives that explain the issue or what happened. The authors use the term "evaluation interviews" to highlight how interviewing should have as its goal,

learning about an issue. The observation came with a warning, however, that with a controversial issue, the researcher must be cautious when drawing meaning from interviewee responses. "Because evaluation research focuses, in part, on what goes wrong with a program or project, accounts or justifications are common in this type of interviewing" (p. 27). Rubin and Rubin further describe the semi-structured nature of qualitative interviewing. "Much of what we hear are simple and straightforward answers. Sometimes, though, people respond to our questions using narratives, accounts, fronts, stories and myths. These different forms of information require alternate responses on the part of the interviewer" (p. 24). The point is further made by Metzler (1997), who coins the phrase "aggressive listening". "You have to work hard to catch the meaning of what the other person is saying, and you have to encourage that person by the way you react, both verbally and nonverbally" (p. 85).

This researcher's interviews were therefore proposed to be semi-structured, from a base of core questions to ensure a common thread among interviewee responses. Because of the scope they offered to explore industry experiences of a serious ethical issue, it was considered the interviews would be key to coming to grips with the nature of plagiarism and with understanding its foment.

5.5.1 Selecting the interviewees

Choosing whom to interview in qualitative design has to match what is defined as the subject of a research, and requires to be chosen carefully (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Each choice should satisfy three requirements: "They should be knowledgeable about the cultural arena or the situation or experience being studied; they should be willing to talk; and when people in the arena have different perspectives, the interviewees should represent the range of points of view" (p. 66). The interview participants were therefore chosen to cover a broad industry representation of the areas—the themes—specified by the survey respondents as being of particular concern or relevance. Each brought depth of understanding of the topic as it related to their area of experience; each was clearly willing to talk; and, in combination, they represented the range of points of view the research sought to canvas. These interviewees comprised: Bernadette Courtney, an Assistant Editor on a large metropolitan (*Dominion Post*); James Weir, a Business Editor on a large metropolitan (*Dominion Post*); Alastair Thompson, the Owner/Editor of the country's largest independent private internet

news service provider (*Scoop*); Kevin Norquay, a news agency News Editor (*New Zealand Press Association*); and Emma Dawe, a junior reporter on a small town community paper (Alexandra *Mirror*). The junior reporter was selected after approaching another small community reporter, who recommended her as a preferable interview subject because of her experiences of being plagiarised. These five participants were therefore selected to represent, respectively, an overview from a senior editorial figure with a major industry player; a perspective from a newspaper business department (anecdotally, a large source of plagiarism); a perspective from a news provider within the little-regulated area of the Internet; the perspective of a news agency (perceived as a grey area in definition debates); and the experiences of a small-town community reporter (anecdotally prey to plagiarism by neighbouring city papers and under-resourced local radio stations).

The sixth interviewee selected, had been the Chief Reporter of a branch office of a metropolitan paper (*Southland Times,* Queenstown branch) as well as, before that, senior positions at metropolitan newspapers and on television, chosen because she had been ruled by the Press Council in May, 2004, to have been guilty of plagiarism. Although she too signed her permission to be named, it was decided to give her anonymity: she was not named in the Press Council ruling against her.

5.5.2   Setting up the interviews

Because of the researcher's own long career in journalism, all the interview participants bar one—the junior community paper reporter—were known to him. Three of the interviewees were first contacted by telephone; the three others by a personal approach. Shuy (2002) believes face-to-face interaction allows for "more small talk, politeness routines, joking, nonverbal communication, and asides in which people can more fully express their humanity. And naturalness leads to open expression and comfort" (p. 541). Face-to-face interviews were therefore arranged for those able to be reached, either in the interviewees' work places or quiet local coffee bars, the decision on time and place in each case made by the interviewee. Two were not accessible this way. A telephone conversation was therefore arranged with the community newspaper reporter (resident in Alexandra), and the senior reporter judged to have committed plagiarism (at the time of interview, resident in Oban, Stewart Island), because it was deemed uneconomical to fly that far south for a single

interview. It was also recognised, as Shuy (2002) points out, that telephone interviews can bring their own advantages, including better interviewer uniformity in delivery, reduced interviewer effects, and fast results.

The choice of interview time took into account that interviews were likely to be relatively lengthy, necessarily including time to introduce the study adequately. Before each interview began, and following ethics guidelines, informed consent was obtained. The research was discussed with the interviewee, a list of core questions shown to them, and a consent form given to them for signing (see Appendix A). In the case of the community reporter, the signed consent form was faxed; in the case of the judged plagiarist, the consent form was signed personally at a later date, when she visited Wellington.

5.5.3 Interview questions

Unlike surveying, which requires standardised questions (Singleton & Straits, 2002), qualitative interviewing can be understood as a kind of guided conversation in which the researcher listens carefully to hear the meaning of what is conveyed (Warren, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). To satisfy these aspirations in a comparable way, research core or base questions arising out of the survey results were drawn up before the interviews took place (see Table??), with a deliberate flexibility allowing follow-up questions arising out of interviewees' answers.

The interview questions were framed under the following categories: nature and extent of the practice; common forms identified in the survey; reasons for the practice; and solutions. A final question invited final thoughts. The questions are contained in Appendix C.

5.5.4 Recording the interviews

All interviews bar one in this study, including those by telephone, were recorded by tape recorder. The exception was a pre-arranged telephone interview with the judged plagiarist, an occasion bedevilled by a breakdown of equipment. This researcher, a former journalist, recorded the interview in shorthand. Warren (2002) points out that turning on a tape recorder can alter an ensuing conversation, but all the interviewees in this research were working journalists for whom the technology was second nature.

All were made aware of the potential for academic publication and all happy to be named should that be deemed necessary. Although each interviewee was strongly advised that anything could be un-said or expunged at any time, none required anything to be removed or expected anything to be off the record. In line with standard journalism practice, thorough notes were taken to complement the tape recordings, allowing the researcher to identify and separate important detail before the slow transcript process.

5.5.5 Number, length and format of interviews

Six interviews were conducted. Interviewees were advised beforehand that interviews were likely to take about an hour. In fact they ranged from 35 minutes to nearly two hours. The shortest of the interviews were those conducted by telephone, which generated fewer sidetracks. The interview with the internet provider was hurried in the end because of unexpected work demands falling on him; all other interviewees were happy for their interviews to proceed beyond allotted time.

5.5.6 Conduct/analysis of the interviews

According to Kvale, the interview should seek "to understand the meaning of central themes of the subjects' lived world" (2007, p. 11). He condenses the substance of interviews effectively into three steps: participants expressing their world with little interpretation; participants discovering during the interview new meanings; and, also during the interview, the interviewer condensing and interpreting such meanings and "sending them back" for further response. In a fourth step, the interviewer analyses the recorded interview. (Kvale goes on to refer to fifth and sixth steps—re-interviewing and generating action—but these are steps beyond the scope of this research.)

Rubin and Rubin note that coding interview data is the process of grouping interviewees' responses into categories that "bring together the similar ideas, concepts, or themes you have discovered, or steps or stages in a process" (1995, p. 238). You can code for names, evidence, time sequences—or anything else that is helpful for analysis. In this study, the base themes, elicited from the earlier survey, provided a logical frame for the analysis. These themes included the growth of plagiarism, a perceived correlation of growth with the rise of the internet, diverse

definitions of plagiarism, diverse generators of plagiarism, and diverse ideas of how to deal with plagiarism. This researcher adopted the stance of—as far as possible—an objective observer, though acting as a guide and prompt throughout the interview process. This process was guided by journalistic practice, both in terms of controlling interviewer preconceptions and interviewer alertness. Mencher (2003) points out that no reporter can or should be free of opinions or insights, that when reporters talk about objectivity, what they mean is that the story is free of their opinion or feelings, that it comprises facts and that the account is impartial and independent. Metzler (1997) says the trick is for the interviewer to listen intensely, and respond to what he or she hears: it is necessary to listen for important utterances, to recognise them when they occur, and to react to them in a way to encourage more. Awareness of the pitfalls therefore enabled a good understanding of industry perceptions of a wide variety of aspects of news media plagiarism, and enabled the interviewer to draw out the subjects in relation to anecdotal and theoretical assertions. The results of the interviews are analysed in Chapter Six.

5.6   Comparative analysis: New Zealand Press Council Rulings, and other prominent cases in the news

To cement researcher understanding, it was decided to add to the study's triangulation by examining every NZ Press Council ruling touching on plagiarism, as well as other cases that had become news prominently over the same period. Analysing the Press Council judgments required an examination of all the print watchdog body's annual reports from its inception in 1972 to the end of 2008, some of its early minutes in cases where reports had been lost, and its online site (http://www.presscouncil.org.nz) for judgments too recent to have been included in any annual report. Analysing plagiarism cases prominent in the news required research, informal discussion with industry members, and drawing on researcher knowledge. Plagiarism cases that were otherwise well known to the industry, but that did not reach the news, were discounted.

The comparative analysis, as outlined below, turned out to be of a relatively small number of reported plagiarism cases. Nevertheless, the analysis carried out was able to adhere substantially to researcher principles of systematic content analysis. Berger (2005) says the basic assumption implicit in content analysis is that an investigation of

communication will allow some insight into some aspect—such as beliefs or values—of the people receiving the communication. Content analysis usually allows for easy access to material, yields data that can be quantified, can be used to examine current and past events, and is unobtrusive. Content analyses are most useful, when they include historic or comparative dimensions to enable the identification of trends. Weber (1985) highlights three types of reliability as crucial: stability (the extent to which results of content classification are invariant over time); reproducibility (the extent to which content classification produces the same results when coded more than once by more than one coder); and accuracy (the extent to which the classification of text corresponds to a standard or norm). Kaid and Wadsworth (1989) outline necessary steps in applying content analytic procedures including: selecting the sample to be analysed; defining the categories to be applied; outlining the coding process; implementing the coding process; determining reliability and validity; and analysing results.

This analysis of Press Council judgments and cases in the news fits all of the reliability tests, though suffers in terms of generalisability because of the small number of cases. Nevertheless, each can be taken as adding to an historical narrative. To enhance overall validity, coding categories were devised to substantially match those used by Lewis (2007), the only other study to attempt a substantial analysis of news media plagiarism cases, in his case, for the United States. This research's categories differ in respect of circulation size options (because of New Zealand's much smaller population); position (to eliminate jobs not implicated in New Zealand); experience (a smaller sample size required fewer years of experience options); and severity (a "serial plagiariser" option was not applicable). Some other categories were deemed not relevant to this research.

The Press Council search uncovered just four cases involving or referring to plagiarism, though five were listed in council annual reports and minutes. This is because, in the early days of the council, part-complaints were listed individually and two of the recorded complaints refer to one incidence. For consistency, this research therefore records the two earliest complaints as a single case. The complaints analysed in this study were Case Number 89 and 90 (1977, Turner v. *The Dominion*); Case Number 283 (1986, Rabel v. *The Christchurch Press*); Case Number 977 (2004,

Mountain Scene v. *The Southland Times*); and Case Number 1047 (2005, *3 News* against *Bay of Plenty Times*). Five cases covered prominently in the national news were identified for similar analysis. They were: Greg Hyam's report of the Soviet-Afghani conflict (*NZ Times*, 1985); Renee Kiriona's feature article about rugby league star Tawera Nikau (*NZ Herald*, 2004); Bruce Logan's columns (*Christchurch Press* et al, 2005); John Manukia's faked police interview and various plagiarisms (*NZ Herald,* 2005); and Noelle McCarthy's radio plagiarism of British newspaper reports (*RNZ,* 2008). Although other cases of plagiarism are talked about anecdotally within the industry, and some others have been reported incidentally (in discussion of other cases), these five received such wide coverage as to be self-selective.

5.7   Ethical considerations

Kvale (2007) highlights a wide range of ethical questions to be considered before the start of a study. These range from consideration of the study's beneficial consequences, to consideration of who will have access to the interviews. It is necessary to consider any potential harm to participants and the groups they represent, and to consider how the researcher's role might affect a study. In terms of effect on participants, this study appeared clearly to be of low-risk. All of the internet survey responses were anonymous. For the face-to-face interviews, written consent forms were signed by each interviewee after a discussion of the nature and purpose of the study, including an overview of the core questions to be put to them. The consent forms agreed to the participants being named beyond the Masterate submission, in academic publications and conferences. In respect of the telephone interviews, the same discussion and explanation process was undertaken though, as stated previously, the adjudged plagiarist has not been indentified. By agreement, the consent form was faxed to the community reporter after the interview, with the understanding nothing would be included in the study before the return of her signed document. It was faxed back the next day. The adjudged plagiarist's written consent was signed later upon a visit to Wellington because she had no easy access to a facsimile machine. In respect of the content analysis of Press Council judgments, permission was sought from the owning body, the NZ Press Council, even though the information was a matter of public record. Free access was given to all archived material at the Council's Boulcott St, Wellington, offices. Each of the identified news story examples of plagiarism,

gathered variously from newspaper reports, the National Library, and internet repositories, was clearly within the public domain.

The ethics consent forms provided signed agreement for interview-generated information—including interviewee identity—to be used in Masterate thesis as well as in academic public publications and conferences. The forms were signed by, respectively, Bernadette Courtney, Assistant Editor, the *Dominion Post;* Kevin Norquay, News Editor, *NZPA;* James Weir, Business Editor, the *Dominion Post;* Alastair Thompson, Co-editor, website news service *Scoop;* Emma Dawe, reporter, community paper the *Mirror,* Alexandra, and formerly, the *Oamaru Mail;* and the [unnamed] then Bureau Chief of the Queenstown office of the *Southland Times.* The consent form used is contained in Appendix A.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the three methods used in this study: survey, interviews, and content analysis. Its first part examined surveying, explaining how and why a particular survey type was chosen, how questions were devised, and how the survey was distributed among New Zealand's journalists. Its second part explained how interviews of a cross-section of industry figures were conducted and their place in this study's triangulation described. Its third part introduced the content analysis of relevant NZ Press Council judgments, as well as of prominent cases of media plagiarism in the news. Chapter Six gives the results of all three: survey, interviews and content analysis.

CHAPTER 6: RESULTS

6.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the results of each of the methods employed in the study's research triangulation: survey, interviews, and comparative analysis of Press Council judgments and prominent cases involving plagiarism. The methods were chosen to complement each other. The survey was to provide a base of understanding of industry perceptions of news media plagiarism from which to develop interview questions to put to a select group of industry representatives affected by plagiarism. The comparative analysis of plagiarism cases, as well as to provide base knowledge for the interviewing, was to add to overall understanding of the nature of news media plagiarism in New Zealand. Each method was also guided by—and augmented—a literature review that was constantly updated.

6.2   Survey

The survey generated 514 responses. There is no single register enabling an accurate count of New Zealand journalists. But the figure would represent approximately 22 per cent of the pool of 2277 people describing themselves as "employed journalists"—reporters, editors and subeditors—in the 2006 Census. The actual number of journalists working in the industry, though, may be somewhat higher. This is because imprecise definitional census boundaries have meant significant numbers of non-journalists have been included in other journalistic categories, such as photographers and camera operators (Hollings, 2007).

Even if precision is impossible, it can be said with confidence that the 514 represents, pro rata, a percentage of the industry's population large enough to extrapolate from. According to the report of the larger survey piggybacked, respondent numbers are high enough to be considered in respect of any future research. Similar journalism surveys in other countries have regularly used small samples to extrapolate to much larger populations (Hollings, Lealand, Samson & Tilley, 2007).

> …our intention has been to gather and record the experiences and opinions of a wide *range* of New Zealand journalists and we feel reasonably confident that we have not distorted nor misrepresented the profession" (p. 178).

The survey questions are contained in Appendix B.

6.2.1 Type of news media employer

Employment listed by respondents (n=596) was substantially weighted to the print industry—75 per cent of respondents said they worked for newspapers, magazines or a filing print news agency. (N.B. Responses in this category exceeded the numbers of overall survey contributors because some respondents fitted into more than one category.) Other categories of respondent included TV channels (n=47), radio (n=48), online publications (n=16), and self-employed (n=31).

Figure 2: Type of organisation worked for
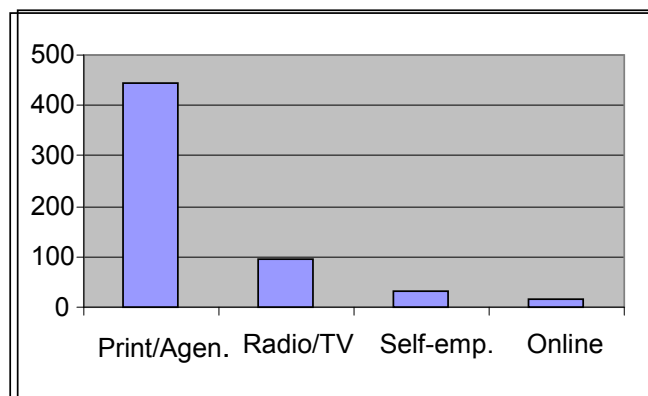
6.2.2 Respondents' work positions

A breakdown of survey respondents indicates, proportionally, an overwhelming response from reporters as against other news media positions. Including newsroom middle managers (chief reporters, their assistants, and other senior reporting and editing roles), reporters comprised 78.6 per cent of the respondents. If subeditors (those who correct, rewrite and restructure stories to fit the page) are included, the figure rises to 87.7 per cent of respondents. Further include middle newsroom manager who actively work in the newsrooms—chief reporters and chief subeditors— and the total increases to just under 90 per cent.

Figure 3: Journalistic position of respondents
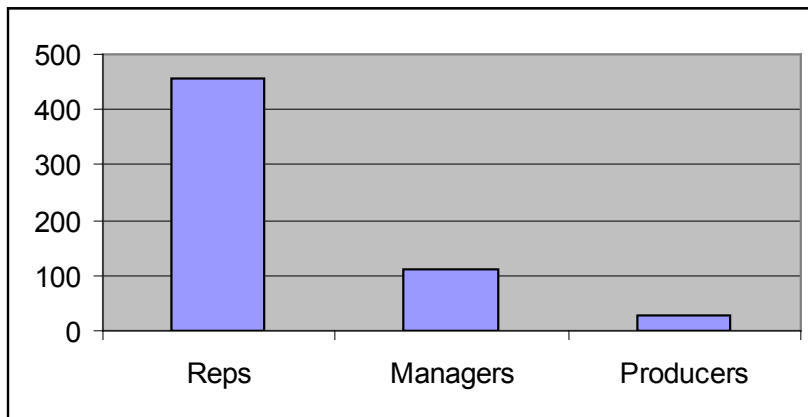
6.2.3   Sources of plagiarism experiences

In an attempt to gauge the prevalence of plagiarism—and recognising the futility of asking for admissions of the practice—the survey first asked respondents about the extent of their experiences in being plagiarised by others in the print media, Internet practitioners, television, radio, and radio.

This question, responded to by 366 (just over 70 per cent of total respondents), shows that the largest category of plagiarism source lies within the print industry—48 per cent of 157 answering this question said they had been plagiarised by others in the print media. But the responses also reveal a multiplicity of plagiarism, including by other news media types: 40 per cent of 125 said they had been plagiarised by internet practitioners; 28 per cent of 159 said they had been plagiarised by television; and 36 per cent of 147 said they had been plagiarised by radio.

Figure 4: Type of organisations respondents plagiarised by
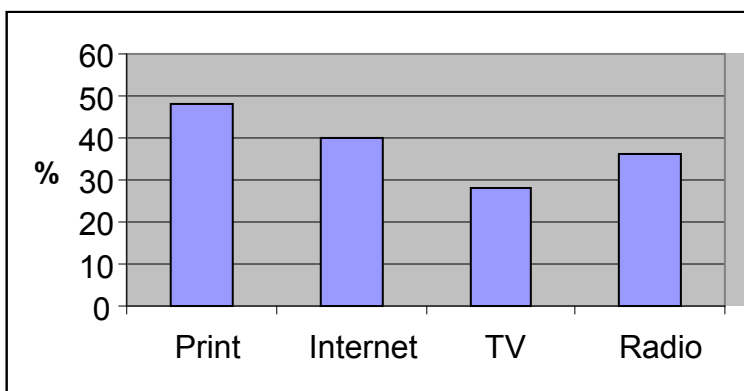
6.2.4   Extent of plagiarism

Survey respondents were next asked about the extent of the plagiarism of their work that occurred—whether a few words or sentences (as for backgrounding); whole quotes lifted without attribution; quotes and text lifted without attribution; or entire stories being plagiarised—and the frequency of this having occurred to them. The frequencies are contracted here into categories of "occasionally" (up to 10 times) and "often" (more than 10 times).

Although the largest category of identified plagiarism acts was of a few words— whether the plagiariser worked for another print organisation, radio, television or the Internet—the comparative extent of larger amounts of word theft reported was surprisingly high. A large number of respondents reported their entire stories being lifted. The largest percentage of claims of entire stories being plagiarised, was of allegations of plagiarism by Internet sites, with 51 per cent (of 116 respondents) alleging an entire story had been stolen. Among those claiming to have been plagiarised by the print media, 44 per cent (of 150) alleged this.   On an overwhelming number of occasions, the word theft was claimed to be of a substantial portion of a story, well in excess of the "few words" category.

Figure 5: Extent of plagiarism of respondents' work
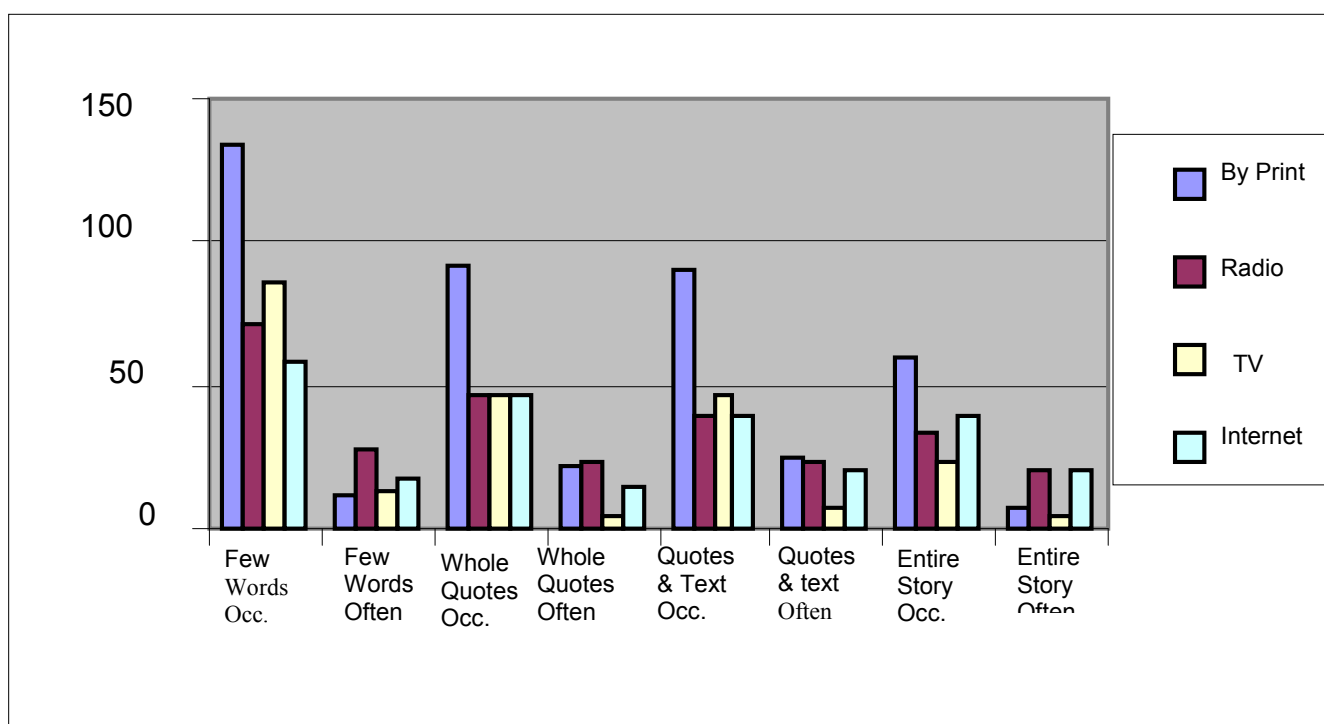
6.2.5 Perceptions of growth

Survey respondents were next asked whether they considered plagiarism a growing problem. The question was framed to test preparatory discussion points from academic and industry colleagues, suggesting a possible trend upwards consistent with increasing ease of access to others' work through the new technologies. Of 426 responding to this question, 34.7 per cent (n=148) believed it to be growing; 65.3 per cent (n=278) believed this not to be the case. Although the non-believers dominate, it is worth recording that a figure of nearly 35 per cent believing plagiarism is increasing, represents a significant proportion worth taking seriously. Notably, if not surprisingly when they dominated those who had been most plagiarised, it was workers in the print industry most represented in the category believing plagiarism was on the rise: 75 percent (n=111) of affirmative responses to this question worked either in newspapers or magazines; adding agency responses lifted the percentage to nearly 80 per cent.

Figure 6: Jobs of those considering plagiarism a growing problem
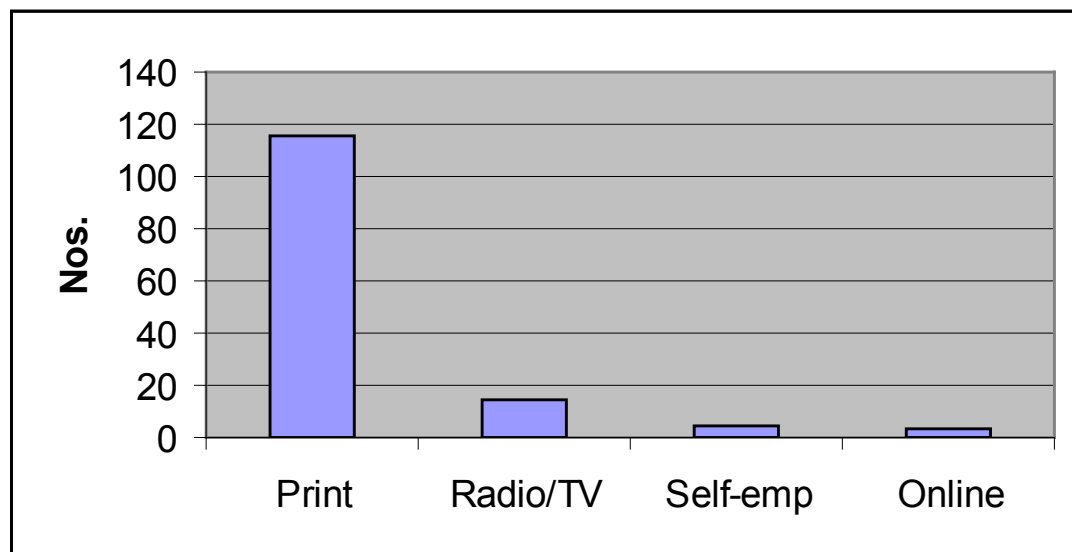
6.2.6   Reasons for perceived increase

A final open-ended question in the survey asked for comment on the reasons behind any perceived increase in plagiarism, and for suggestions on how it should be dealt with. This question elicited 235 discrete comments or suggestions from 148 respondents, all commenting on what they thought were the causes of plagiarism. Only nine specifically indicated that their thoughts represented an explanation for why plagiarism cases were on the rise. Although almost all the answers gave strong reasons for extant plagiarism, it therefore is not possible to offer the majority answers as reasons for growth. One of the nine attributed perceptions of rising numbers to increased *reporting* of plagiarism, both in New Zealand and overseas. Another said: "Reasons for growth? Easy … too few troops on the ground. Cutbacks and budget cuts lead to this." This response was echoed by another. Two others believed, while plagiarism was increasing in the news media, the increase was at a slow rate, or, "not as fast as some believe". None of the responses gave clear indication of reasons for an increase. One response, reflecting a belief of some in the news industry that in news, anything is fair game, included: "Story ideas are frequently recycled by others, but that seems healthy." As with many responses, the comment left some uncertainty, in this case, whether the respondent was similarly acceptant of the recycling of words.

Many of the respondents' answers, in explaining their stance, also gave examples of plagiarism they had experienced, or that they had observed, in so doing highlighting some unexpected effects of the practice. These examples are set down in 6.2.7 below. The more substantial identified reasons for plagiarism are contained in 6.2.8.

6.2.7   Respondents' reflections on plagiarism
Examples of plagiarism experiences included in responses illustrated some illustrative issues for consideration. Data revealed the following:

The copying of ideas: usually, newspaper stories being followed up by television or radio, using the same angle and interview subjects as the print medium. Wrote one: "I have had several instances where stories I have written for newspapers or magazines have been followed up by television – often interviewing the same people … I wouldn't mind if they found a new angle, but using the same angle is a bit of a cheek." Though clearly irking some reporters, this does not appear to fit plagiarism models applicable to journalism plagiarism which does not extend to the theft of ideas.

Errors carried forward: reporters repeating material published elsewhere without checking that it is correct and, inadvertently, perpetuating errors. A response: "The worrying trend is reporters repeating what is published in, say, a newspaper, *without* checking that it is correct. That happens because of laziness, time constraints … and because it's often difficult to confirm information early in the mornings, late at night and weekends." The degree of potential for error is highlighted in other responses that refer to situations where sections of material are taken from a mainstream news source, appear unattributed on the internet, then are re-lifted by another mainstream news source ("this can lead to further plagiarism, as some reporters will take unattributed material that may have been lifted from another news source and placed on a website, and use it in their stories".

Insufficient and/or unclear attribution: news agencies only attaching attributions to a paragraph of a pulled story, when the whole story or a large part of the story, has been pulled, leaving confusion about who is responsible for writing which parts. A response: "NZPA often takes stories of mine – and other print journalists – and

attributes the end of the third paragraph – yet the entire story is pulled from our work." This response dovetails with another's observation of confusions when a single NZPA byline At the bottom of a story masks input from several newspapers sometimes carried to NZPA via several agencies.

Shyness/lack of confidence: plagiarism arising because reporters have felt awkward about asking questions of someone already interviewed and reported by others. This reaction could also be linked to laziness but, interestingly, seems to imply a diffidence among some journalists about, perhaps, looking silly. One response: "Reporters who don't want to ask a person the same questions they have already [answered elsewhere]." Another observed that journalists sometimes take copy but don't do the necessary re-interviewing to make the story their own because they lack confidence in their own abilities.

Reluctance/refusal to attribute: websites, including by Internet bloggers, plucking mainstream content without attribution; and mainstream plucking material and ideas from websites. A response: "There is a need for even the print media to provide immediate news, and this means picking up facts and details wherever possible. At times this leads to whole quotes being lifted, rather than just details." The implication here seems to be that a publication's face or mana is diminished by even legitimate use of others' copy. This grouping can be extended to include cynical, deliberate withholding of attribution, refusing to acknowledge other media's contributions. There was also perceived to be a widespread print news media unwillingness to acknowledge multiple story sources, where responsibility for the work was often increasingly blurred. Such difficulties were said to notably emerge where subeditors cobbled together stories from international websites.

Group economising: notably radio and television, desperate for local news, find it more financially viable to lift from local and community newspapers than employ more staff in the regions. Community and student radio stations are also identified as frequent thieves. "Radio and TV have always used community papers as a major source of stories. Often they will follow up the idea themselves. Increasingly they phone my newsroom and expect to be given contact details on request. Newspapers

tend not to plagiarise, perhaps because print is a more tangible record and they're more likely to get caught."

Homogenisation of the news media: a perception that, along with shrinking ownership, all news media organisations are losing local identity, chasing the same stories, using the same angles, and producing the same work. This perception was supported by the identification of a practice within some large groups of sharing of stories, without author or paper attribution, among their member organisations.

Business interests taking precedence: a perception that a growing business intent—over ideology—of news media organisations is subsuming journalism standards, raising ethical questions about whether editorial standards were slipping.

The above responses covered the issue of freedom of ideas, the identification of some unwanted effects of plagiarism, expression of some confusion about right and wrong practices, and some broad-brush issues of slipping or changing standards over which the news media is often taken to task. More clearly described and developed reasons given for plagiarism are contained in 6.2.8 below.

6.2.8   Respondents' reasons for plagiarism

The "reasons for plagiarism" responses largely fitted four main category themes: journalists' laziness or character inadequacies (n=32); the ease of transgression engendered by the growth of the new technologies (n=64); the pressures foisted on journalists as news media organisations cut back on staff and other resourcing (n=38); and belief that there were insufficient controls or regulations to deter transgression (n=4). One answer ascribed plagiarism to a shift of the mainstream news media to an entertainment-based fare; eight others referred to news media structural changes of recent years or gave examples of plagiarism types, such as failing to attribute. During the process of literature review and interviews a further category—the news media's underlying culture of copying (n=34)—was identified and included by way of further analysis of the survey responses.

Figure 7: Reasons given for plagiarism
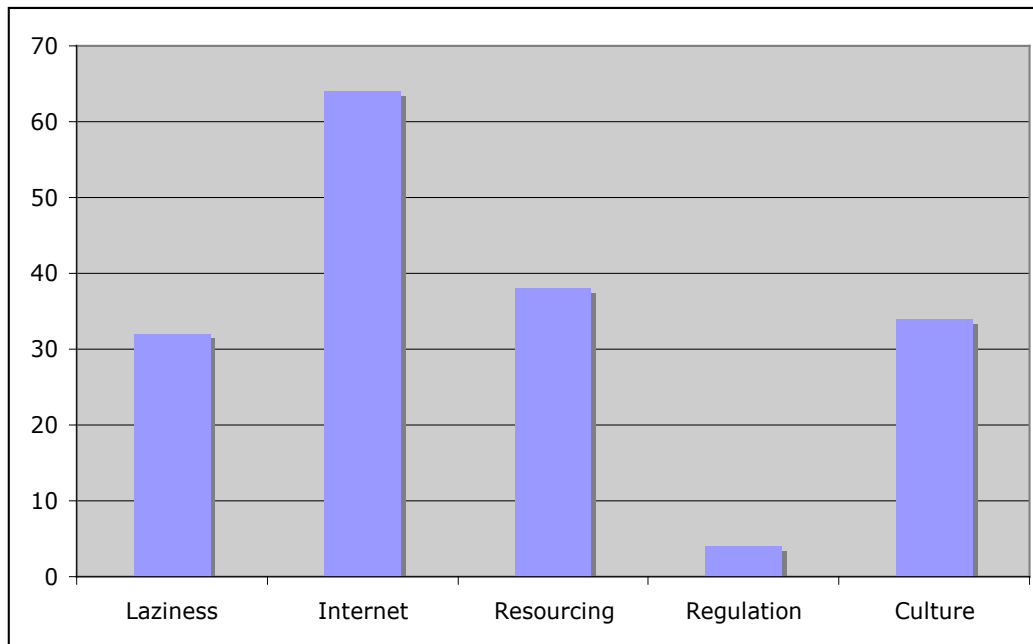
Reading too much into the relative numbers of the responses might be cautioned against, however. Many of the issues and suggestions overlapped and many responses were not clearly explained. Far more important was the simple identification of the issues for deeper discussion with subsequent interviewees. These are set out below, starting with assertions that the practice owes to laziness of journalists. The category is dealt with first because it appeared in the data as a common first reaction, providing a useful platform for the other, more complex reasons to follow. The breakdown of the responses was followed by another breakdown, drawing from suggestions offered on how to prevent or lessen plagiarism cases. These are set out in 6.2.9. The response categories were:

6.2.8.1 Laziness/character inadequacies of the journalist

Throughout this research's discussions and interviews, laziness, ascribed to offending journalists, cropped up with regularity as an explanation of cause. It was a common first response, but one that, in face-to-face discussion, often gave way to observed deeper causes, and therefore should be accepted cautiously. Nevertheless, 24 survey answers directly identified laziness as the main or a significant reason for plagiarism. Often the identification of laziness

as the reason for plagiarism was conveyed in one-word or single phrase answers. One of the longest responses in this category read: "Armchair journalists couldn't be bothered to get off their backsides and discover for themselves what the story is about". Another says dismissively: "Lazy journalists who can't be bothered checking things themselves, so they rely on others to do their work for them."

Other aspects conveyed in this category include reference to "sloppy journalism", assert that organisations too could be getting lazy (which also fits suggestions of a culture of copying), and suggest that the problem could be exacerbated because "editors are not the kind of strong managers who are so actively involved in copy that they can spot the problem".

6.2.8.2 The impact of the new technologies

Reference to the new technologies (n=64) can be accepted as meaning, in almost all cases, the Internet, though any electronic device capable of disseminating others' information quickly, is included in the larger definition. The comments are double-edged: comments referred to Internet sites and blogs being "terrible" at stealing copy without attribution from the mainstream news media, but also addressed issues around the growing ease for the mainstream of themselves stealing copy from or via the Internet. Ten comments specifically alleging the former are largely unspecific about the sort of site doing the stealing—news, blog or other—but generally seem to fit a pattern of belief that many website operators are working outside normal ethical rules of attribution. Whether the lack of attribution is because of ignorance of journalism rules or some larger ethos of Internet freedom, is unclear from the survey responses. Comments include, however, things like: "Dodgy websites just steal the *NZ Herald's* content" and "Internet seems to be built around little or no scruples/ethics when it comes to pulling articles/images from other sources". One response refers to, "the proliferation of Internet sites run by people who are basically ignorant of their responsibility towards the writers they plagiarise".

Plagiarism from the net by the mainstream is identified by many (n=48), mostly from plucking background material. Comments include: "it is very easy to lift information from websites"; "easier access"; and "it's much easier to select something, copy and paste it into another document…rather than copy something out word for word by hand". Another observes: "The need for faster news gathering and writing required, in hand with the proliferation of information available on the Internet—it's there so you use it … also, a computer's copy-and-paste facility means, when you are working at full speed, it's too easy to forget you've copied something, thus forgetting to Attribute it." Less sympathetic is: "It's so easy to copy other people's work, change the intro and a few other words, then file it as your own work. I think the Internet makes access to other people's work instant—it's just a matter of cut and paste and you have an instant feature. Disgusting."

While no journalist appears to believe that stealing from the Internet is ethical, several of the responses refer to—even accept—an ethos of freedom extant among website operators. Said one: "The proliferation of the media leads to non-journalists practising without any of the limits and controls of the craft. Many 'new' journalists would consider attributions to others' work as quaint and a waste of time."

One respondent also pointed out that the majority of news networks now have their own websites, leaving stories and information "out there" for people to read and use as they wished. The point was also made that a proliferation of Internet sites were often run by people "ignorant" of their responsibilities towards their audiences, let alone the writers they took material from. Comments on this aspect included reference to "dodgy websites" and, "Internet seems to be built around little or no scruples/ethics when it comes to pulling articles/images from other sources". Yet another comment referred to the ease for Internet sites of obtaining copy once the mainstream media had published online, and the difficulty of tracking down Internet offenders. Two responses alluded to the lack of training of most of those operating online, outside the mainstream. Their reference is apparently to the fact mainstream

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journalists are trained in media law and ethics; there is no such training requisite for independent Internet providers.

On plagiarism committed by mainstream reporters, many of the responses directly identified ease of access to material, making comments like, "computers allow people to easily cut and paste", and "Internet makes it easy to plagiarise". Two broad sins are evident from the responses here: cutting and pasting for backgrounding without attribution (n=11), and the deliberate taking of Internet material to present as one's own (n=10). The responses suggest cutting and pasting without proper attribution could be either carelessness or deliberate theft, though most are suggestive of the former. One respondent, however, writes: "It is so easy to copy other's work, change the intro and a few other words, then file it as your own work. I think the Internet makes access to other people's work instant—it's just a matter of cut and paste and you have an instant feature. Disgusting." Another writes: "Why ask a councillor the same question when you can swipe it straight off the Internet?" Another cautions: "I think easy access to archived stories is part of the reason—and, of course, that access is a very good thing, but it's incredibly easy to do." Many other responses succinctly allude to the easiness of gathering material from the net, but without deeper analysis.

6.2.8.3 Resourcing pressures on journalists

Many respondents (n=38) specifically identified inadequate or diminishing news media organisation resources as a direct reason for plagiarism. Those that did referred largely to pressures of time and workload impinging on journalists. A few of these responses appeared to be ambivalent. "I suspect smaller newsroom staff, although the plagiarism I have experienced definitely was not because of that," one wrote. Most (n=31), however, were blunt in their blame apportionment: "Under-resourced newsrooms, lack of staff numbers leading to shortcuts being taken", "Reasons for growth? Easy … too few troops on the ground … cutbacks and budget cuts lead to this", and "Lack of resources … smaller news teams still expected to cover all the stories."

Other interesting comments included: " Resources depleting as news organisations consolidate and more pressure is put on reporters to gather stories"; "the reduced number of reporters trying to cover the ground, and the growing number of media sources. Radio is particularly bad"; and, "There aren't the resources to fully check pre-published articles, so there is a tendency to lift for published work to background etc". One of the few to address the reasoning behind the pressure says simply: "Pressure on resources leads to desperate measures at deadline time".

The resource responses were also interesting for frequently identifying the believed worst offenders in the poor-resource category: mainly small radio stations stealing from the print news media in small local communities, but also newspapers trying to adequately cover regional areas where their own writers are sparse. A typical response was: "Radio worst. Whole stories often lifted from the local newspaper. Believe this is because their reporters are very thin on the ground. TV also uses newspapers because they are hit-and-run merchants." Another wrote: "In the case of a local radio station in a town where I used to work, they didn't have the resources to get their own stories, so simply read mine out, verbatim, from the newspaper where I worked at the time, with no attribution."

6.2.8.4 Insufficient regulatory controls

Only four people addressed regulatory controls in their responses, with none of these suggesting lack of teeth was encouraging plagiarism. They did, however, point to an apparent paradox that, while New Zealand law might have the authority in its copyright and other acts to crack down on plagiarism, such acts were rarely if ever applied. "A belief that if it's in the public domain, i.e. Internet, TV, radio, it's free [for] anyone to use. Someone once told me, 'there are no copyright laws in NZ'," responded one. Another comment, "There doesn't seem to be any monitoring. Our local radio station often uses stories straight from our paper and nothing is ever done about it", hints at a concern that a lack of monitoring could be encouraging the practice, but this is clearly not a widespread belief.

Legal redress might be particularly an issue for freelance journalists who, despite copyright protections, see themselves—though not necessarily more subject to plagiarism—often at the mercy of the news organisation using their work. One response bemoaned about, upon submission, losing all control of his or her stories. Publishers commissioned the writing of a story for their print edition then, without consultation, and without contract licensing them do so, posted the story on their website.

> They also put them in databases (e-libraries) from which other publications have lifted my stories leading to actual cases of plagiarism. I have also had publishers (without benefit of licence or contract of any kind) on-sell my stories to databases.

6.2.8.5 Culture of copying

The identification of a culture of copying being inherent in news organisations did not emerge till late in the survey analysis. The phrase came from the findings of an American research, the first—and only—substantive study to this point into news media plagiarism (Lewis, 2007). The "culture" can be defined as a widespread existing newsroom climate demanding coverage of all significant news, from wherever the source. The American study prompted a subsequent re-reading and reanalysis of the content of existing categories, in turn supporting a new category's development. This reanalysis uncovered relatively numerous responses (n=34) in support of the proposition, if usually contained within responses belonging equally in other categories. They covered areas of newsroom pressures from management and endless story demands; invasive deadlines imposed; the effect of heightened competition on newsroom requirements; a broadening of news into entertainment and other spheres; as well as newsroom management unwillingness to provide attribution recognising other organisations' work. These themes are expanded upon below.

Management pressures:

"Demands of the news cycle—'news now'," one response says of the demands of middle management, suggesting a reality or ethos of pressure in a newsroom. This comment, alongside others, supports the idea of a busy

newsroom where "the story" is paramount, with no excuses for failure to deliver. But the day-to-day working pressures of a newsroom is not the only inducement to plagiarise identified.

Resource cut-backs:

Numerous responses point to the effect of staffing and financial cuts, adding to workroom pressures and encouraging shortcuts. "Large newspaper groups are looking for ways to cut back on overheads, and one of these ways is a steady reduction in staffing levels, which equates to less time to write stories and the inevitable downward spiral from there," one response says.

Deadlines imposed:

One respondent describes the newsroom demands in terms of a "bottomless pit"—created by newsrooms' need for constant news to fill ever-expanding Internet page requirements and other new space-filling requirements emerging in newspapers. The effect of tight news media deadlines and the need for constant updates for newspapers also fuelling web pages, is seen as exacerbating things: "Deadline and competitive pressures imposed by [newsroom] bosses," one says. Many of the answers set out the consequences of extreme deadlines: "Deadlines make checking facts on the internet nigh impossible. Also, a computer's copy-and-paste facility means, when you are working at full speed, it's too easy to forget you've copied something, thus forgetting to attribute it".

Unwillingness to attribute:

Responses indicate a variety of reasons for failing to attribute, including the lack of column space in newspapers. "Often the main area that plagiarism takes place is in the print media, when background information is lifted for a story but then not attributed. This is done for a variety of reasons, sometimes, simply because there is not enough column space to mention the book and author." The motivation behind withholding attribution is, of course, impossible to gauge without examination of particular cases, but there is clear acknowledgement here that it can be deliberate. One response refers to "inadequate or deliberately withheld attribution".

Heightened competition:

The effect of heightening news media competition is referred to. Responses include: "Growing competition between newspaper groups"; "Internet websites mean there is a need for even the print media to provide immediate news, and this means picking up facts and details wherever possible. At times this leads to whole quotes being lifted, rather than just details." One answer reads: "Increased competition. E.g. *Herald on Sunday* stealing material from the pre-press sections of the *Sunday Star Times*." Another side to this is the identification that Internet sites attached to mainstream news organisations has created expectation of 24/7 news. Responses include: "Internet has boosted 24-hour coverage, so news coverage is a constant merry-go-round with one media's angle sparking off another"; "The need for faster news gathering and writing required, in hand with the proliferation of information available on the internet—it's there, so you use it."

Broadening scope of news:

An acknowledgement of news organisations' shift—or broadening of their cover—to new areas such as entertainment and magazine sections: "Mainstream news media are crossing over into more entertainment-based areas where they have no expertise." This identification is not expanded upon, though seems to imply laxity in handling non-traditional news such as that provided in entertainment sections.

Homogenisation of news/business taking precedence:

The suggestion is made that homogeneity of the news industry translates into homogeneity of the stories produced, either spurring plagiarism or providing look-alike stories. "There are only so many news stories around and only so many ways to report them. Inevitably the best report will be either copied or arrived at via subbing." Another response simply reads: "The homogenisation of media". One response also ascribes the extent of plagiarism to the fact that the news media is more concerned about business than ideals of news: "Newspapers in particular have lost the plot, are more interested in priming the business for the next takeover, so resources are sparse and standards have sunk. Truth no longer seems to be paramount. Bottom-line is God."

Culture of copying:

None of the responses address newsroom culture as a singular, specific issue, though one commentator neatly expresses a mindset that might be seen to legitimise the practice: "[Plagiarism's] only a problem if facts aren't confirmed. I have less of an issue with a story being used by another outlet provided it's known to be correct. Copyright issues aside, it's about getting the news out there."   Many of the responses can be linked to concerns about diminishing resources creating work pressures leading to infringements. And a few of the responses cover more than one culture issue. The table below covers 39 issues raised. But if a culture of copying is to be recognised, its elements will exist in many more situations identified by other respondents.

Figure 8: Responses linked to a culture of copying
Respondents considering important:

Pressures/ demands	Withheld attribution	Invasive deadlines	Heightened competition	Broadening news	Homogeneity/ Business
14 (35.9 %)	8 (20.5%)	6 (15.4 %)	4 (10.3%)	4 (10.3 %)	3 (7.6%)

n= 39*

6.2.9   Suggestions for what should be done to stem plagiarism
Suggestions for dealing with plagiarism (n=77), apart 12 "unsures", were generally firmly directed towards a tougher monitoring regime: 39 called for stronger penalties and/or oversight or regulatory changes. Of the rest 11 wanted more attention given to ethics in training, seven wanted more resources afforded working journalists, and three sought web-based technical tools implemented for detection. Five other responses suggested the status quo—that nothing could be done, that it was difficult to control, or that the issue should be left the concern of individual journalists.

Calls for penalties ranged from the mild to the draconian: "vigilance is the only answer" at one end of the scale was matched by "poke out the eyes of every guilty person" and "need to be given a swift kick" at the other. More serious suggestions included the giving of more clout to watchdog bodies such as the Press Council, the

implementation of a "naming and shaming" regime, the establishment of clearer rules and definitions, and for copyright breaches to be pursued in law. One response captured the angst of the plagiarised: "It should not be allowed. A journalist works hard to get a story and when someone steals your work and puts their name on it, it is disheartening. It happens more so in Australia, [where] I was a print journalist … and nothing is done!" Another detailed response lent credence to the idea the news media organisations must bear part of the blame: "Credible media organisations must declare a zero tolerance policy to such practices. Offending organisations ought to be publicly exposed."

Among the "better training" category responses, six thought there should more emphasis on ethical aspects during training, at journalism schools and inhouse. "The answer is better training and oversight for junior staff within news organisation," one response said. But responses also recommended re-training for senior staff: "All I can suggest is there needs to be an education programme for publishers/editors." All of the "more resources" responses wanted more reporters. Replies included, "hire more reporters" and "should be addressed by greatly increasing media staff numbers to reduce pressure and temptation to plagiarise". They also pointed to the effects of an apparent industry trend to employ younger and fewer staff: "Don't get rid of experienced journalists" and "higher pay could keep people in the profession, but it comes down to job satisfaction and that seems to be disappearing". Only one response addressed resources directed towards fighting plagiarism: "Allocate some resources to fact checking." Responses suggesting web-tool solutions were sparse (n=3). Each of them recommended wider use of detection tools, whether existing methods or specially created.

Five responses advocated no action or recommended leaving action in the hands of journalists. Responses included, "Only your scruples stop you from being a lazy journalist"; "By and large, I think there remains an understanding when the line has been crossed, and an apology suffices;" and, "It is just a part of the journalism scene and difficult to control." Among the "unsures" (n=12) were a plaintive "I wish I knew" and, "What should be done? The horse has bolted. (Technology)." Even more acceptive of the current situation were, "It is difficult to police. I think it is something

we may have to live with" and, "You'd have to be pretty fuckin stupid to plagiarise another's work in a country this small, wouldn't you?"

Figure 9: Suggested solutions for dealing with plagiarism
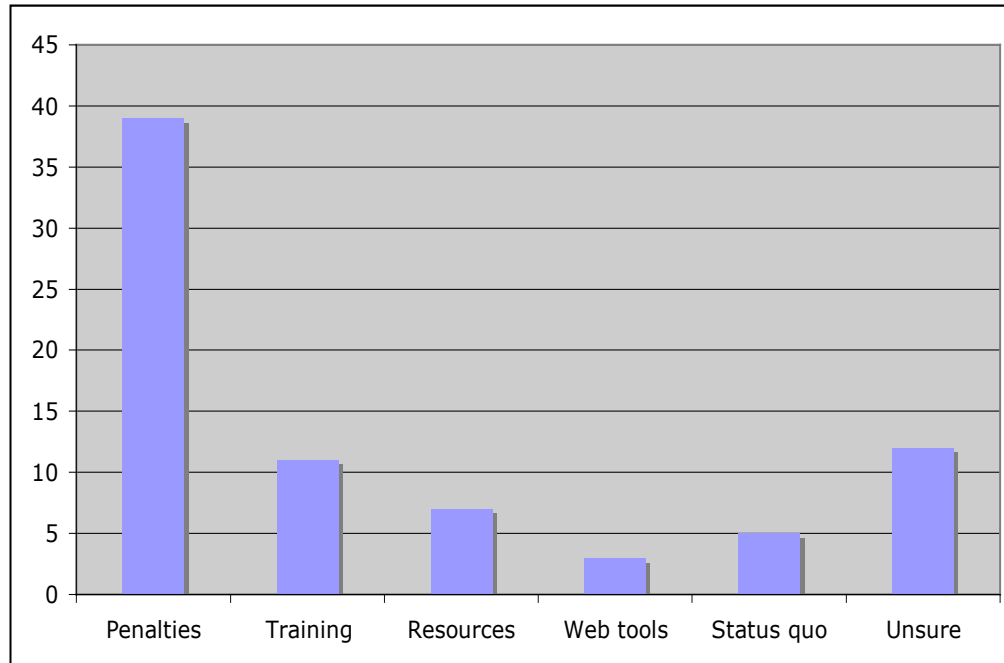
6.3 Interviews: Introduction

As explained in Chapter Five, interview subjects were chosen according to their work position and news organisation, the intent being to cover, as much as possible, the main areas of concern emerging from the survey results and collegial discussions. The choices were: Bernadette Courtney, at time of interview, Assistant Editor of metropolitan newspaper the *Dominion Post*; James Weir, Business Editor of the *Dominion Post*; Kevin Norquay, News Editor of news agency the *New Zealand Press Association*; Alastair Thompson, Co-Editor of website news service *Scoop*; and, Emma Dawe, reporter for the community paper *Mirror,* Alexandra, formerly of the *Oamaru Mail*. The choices were made, respectively, to cover the perspectives of a busy metropolitan newsroom, a business department (allegations had been made anecdotally that plagiarism was particularly rife in business reporting), a news agency (where copy ownership passing to and from can often be blurred), a news website (offering understanding of Internet experiences and attitudes), and a reporter working on a small community paper (reportedly typically free fodder for radio and larger newspaper infringements). A final interview was subsequently conducted to capture

something of the experience of the plagiarist, a woman ruled by an ethics' body to have plagiarised: at time of interview, Senior Reporter and bureau head for the *Southland Times'* Queenstown office and previously, respectively, a reporter for the *Sunday News,* the *Dominion,* and producer for then TV3's investigative *20/20* programme.

Each of the interviews was guided by survey responses contained in 6.2, the questions asking for opinions on perceived seriousness of any plagiarism problem, ideas on what the practice constituted, personal experiences of plagiarism, and comments on survey-identified types, causes of and solutions for plagiarism. Subsequent analysis of responses was enabled by the overall commonality questions put to the interviewees: common opinions—and differences—were analysed in respect of each issue raised.

6.3.1 Opinions on the seriousness of plagiarism problems

The questions, put in interviews ranging in length from just under half an hour (Dawe) to nearly two hours (Courtney), led to wide-ranging discussion. At times the discussion was hindered because interviewees were either unaware of a point raised or had not clearly through an issue, leading to short replies. In such circumstances, without guiding them to a viewpoint, this researcher tried to encourage them to develop their thoughts with open-ended questions. At other times, interviewees clearly felt strongly on issues, and spoke freely. When this happened, as much as possible, they were given free rein.

6.3.1.1 Do you consider plagiarism a problem in this country?

Asked immediately, before discussion or the sharing of survey results, this question brought a mixture of answers. As a first reaction, only business editor Weir saw plagiarism as a serious problem needing to be addressed.

Courtney: *No.*

Weir: *Yes. It's insidious.*

Norquay: *Not a big problem.*

Thompson: *I don't think it's a very serious problem.*

Dawe: *I'm not sure.*

But, for most of them, attitudes hardened as the discussion continued. When it came to discussing the effect of the Internet, Courtney said: "Yeah, that's a

concern." She also later said, "I think plagiarism is serious." Norquay later qualified his answer, adding, "I mean, I know, I'm aware of some bad instances of it, and I'm aware that different pieces of each other's stories wind up in other people's papers, but wholesale ripping off of copy I don't think is a problem." He then opined that plagiarism was on the rise: "Yeah, I do think it's heading more in that direction, where copy is being lifted and used by people that, you know, maybe it wasn't their original copy … I think that is happening a bit more, yeah." Dawe was the most definite in describing the practice as a problem: "From personal experience, I reckon it is [a problem]. I've had it done to me a few times here, particularly with radio and the opposition paper. It happens from time to time, it's relatively common." Only Thompson remained dismissive of it as an issue needing address: "If people steal other people's words then it's a bit sad for them and there is, perhaps, very limited damage done … there's a certain amount of damage done to the, sort of, whole ethos of being a writer, but I regard it as sad." At the same time, he spoke with clear irritation, when he recalled being personally plagiarised in earlier days, when working as a staff feature writer for *North and South* magazine.

6.3.1.2 On a scale of 1-5, how serious a problem would you rate plagiarism?

Responses to a request to rate the seriousness of plagiarism on a Likert scale of one to five, brought mixed responses, but ones that could be seen as fitting different workplace views and broadly reflected responses discussed in the previous section. The Internet provider viewed the issue as "not particularly serious", but added an observation that he believed plagiarism was widespread: "I think probably plagiarism and [the] Internet is probably rife but, in terms of the formal news media, there is an incredibly small amount of space for people to write in anyway." At the other end of the scale the business editor, who related numerous cases of his and his staff's copy being plagiarised, rated it as most serious.

Figure 10: Considered seriousness of plagiarism

How serious a problem is plagiarism in this country?						
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	
Not serious at all	Thompson	Courtney Norquay	Dawe		Weir	Very serious

A related question, why—if at all—plagiarism was increasing, drew mainly uncertain responses and was therefore of limited use. Weir, who thought the problem was widespread, responded that it was a static problem—"I think the same people that have always done it keep doing it". Only Norquay, who had earlier said it was not a big problem, believed the practice was increasing or, at least, "heading more in that direction". Thompson was dismissive of it being a problem; and Dawe said she had "no point of reference" to know whether it was increasing. Courtney did not believe it was getting worse.

6.3.1.3 How would you define plagiarism?

This question drew a wide range of responses, not all of them directly or helpfully answering the question. The responses were not offered as concessions of guilt of the organisations, but appeared to be recognition of infringements that occurred, in some cases minimally. Each answer reflected the concerns of the work or type of organisation represented by the interviewee, such as agency News Editor Norquay's identification of dropped agency taglines. The definitional categories identified were as follows.

Stealing all or a substantial amount of someone else's work: Courtney, Norquay and Thompson immediately identified a definition of "stealing verbatim", something they saw as the most obvious and most serious plagiarism, and a practice clearly identifiable to them as wrong. Weir joined the three in extending the definition to include using or reproducing substantial "chunks" of another's copy.

Forgetting or withholding attribution: Weir, Thompson, Norquay and Dawe made the point that taking someone else's copy was only wrong if the original source was not acknowledged. Attribution applied both to mentioning an author source within a story and to acknowledging another news organisation or agency source via a tagline at the end of a story. Though not discussed in detail at this stage of the interviews, agency News Editor Norquay added that getting a grip of this point was fraught in the context of the news media: among other grey areas, tagline attribution was easily lost when multiple sources passed through an agency to a newspaper. Courtney, Weir and Thompson were more unequivocal in identifying not attributing or withholding attribution as clear examples of plagiarism.

Cutting and pasting: the common journalism descriptor of taking words from another source, generally for necessary backgrounding, could be applied to not only theft but inadvertent lifting without attribution. All journalists are taught that every story has to make sense as a stand-alone work, therefore, even in the middle of a series, requiring a paragraph of background material to put a new reader in the picture. To varying degrees, Thompson, Courtney, Norquay and Weir expressed understanding that that this practice could produce grey areas in what plagiarism comprised. Agency News Editor Norquay, here and on other occasions, described how he instructed his reporting staff to take material from the agency library for backgrounding without attributing authorship to other NZPA staff.

Re-using freelancer work without permission: Weir and Courtney's identification of re-using freelancers' work not only indicated a type of plagiarism but raised the spectre of serious copyright infringements. This sin could occur in two ways: a freelancer might submit an article which, though unused, might be "borrowed" from, whether a single quote, or more substantially; it could also include the acceptance and publication of an article, then forwarded to and used by other publications in a group without the submitter's permission. In either case, copyright would be infringed because, uncommissioned, the copyright remains with the freelancer.

Taking interview quotes of difficult-to-match interview subjects: the taking of difficult-to-match quotes was identified by Weir, Norquay, Courtney and Thompson. Each said that, though undesirable, the practice was understandable, given the news media injunction of getting the news wherever it might lie. Business Editor Weir further added that attribution would remove the plagiarism, though it was not necessary to name an author or publication: it could be sufficient to include in copy, "it was earlier reported".

6.3.1.4 What are your experiences of plagiarism?

As a Chief Reporter and Assistant Editor, Courtney had been aware of plagiarism from time to time. "We see it. We see it with other media. As I say, you look at a story and you think, 'That looks rather familiar'." Courtney referred to the demotion of a former senior staff member (at the now-defunct *Evening Post*) for ripping off music reviews. But she also said:

> *We'll have a story and [it's on] TV and radio next day…it's out there in their medium. Do I see that as plagiarism? I suppose it is but, especially when radio is repeating it and jazzing it up as their report, but I think that's probably fair game …my concern about plagiarism is, yeah, someone like [John] Manukia, making up stories, and sources and ripping off chunks of people's work…I'm not saying we don't get aggrieved about it, but it's part of the game.*

Weir identified "a few occasions" where whole segments of interviews were lifted from his staff's stories without acknowledgement; and personal experience when working on a radio station of being given stories cut from the *Dominion* to write up for broadcast. He also named competitors' reporters he said were "serial offenders". Norquay said he was aware of agency copy having been used unattributed by newspapers who were members of the agency, including the work of an *NZPA* sports reporter which had appeared in "great hunks" in a column in the *Southland Times*. *NZPA* pinned offending work on a notice board. Thompson, observing that plagiarism was "probably rife", recounted being plagiarised by his own former *North and South* editor— a story from interviews with then Treaty Settlements Minister Doug Graham and others had gone unpublished but "large chunks" later appeared in a subsequent story—written, he said, by editor Warwick Roger—after Graham

was named New Zealander of the year. "I would have thought that it would have been more honest to attribute the source, perhaps by saying something along the lines of, 'this publication was told', or, 'a reporter for this publication', but instead he left the impression that he'd extracted these quotes … himself."

Dawe said she had often seen her papers' stories stolen by local radio stations.

> *For example, they do our court stories when it's blatantly obvious they were not at the court, and the council meetings. I remember a particular quote that a councillor said, because it was quirky, and next day I heard it on the radio. And they hadn't anyone there.*

Dawe also reported being plagiarised by the larger metropolitan, the *Otago Daily Times*.

> *I know because, in the information I was given, the guy told me an incorrect date. They had a story with the incorrect date. I phoned the man to double check and he said he had never spoken to any [other] reporters.*

6.3.1.5 How serious is the following survey-identified form of plagiarism: Taking quotes of difficult-to-match people?

This practice was acknowledged by each interviewee, though two of the participants chose to describe best reporting practice rather than degree of problem.

Courtney: *It happens. I know it happens. We …source it back to, you know, "Told TV1 last month"…we do try and source back.*

Weir: *I'd agree [it's a problem], yeah.*

Norquay: *The rule is that we always say "who told the* Dominion Post", *told* Radio New Zealand, *etc, if they're going to list quotes. I don't have any issue with getting information that will soon become public domain or fact for a story, for example a rugby score or a report that's going to be delivered at noon, or that sort of thing, but I do have an issue with quotes.*

Both Thompson and Dawe acknowledged the issue existed but did not elaborate.

Dawe said: "Not relevant to me."

6.3.1.6 … dropping attribution, bylines and catchlines?

This issue, acknowledged by all except the community paper reporter, attracted responses ranging from resignation to clear statements that the practice crossed the line.

Courtney: *If [our reporters] use a paragraph of* PA *(Press Association), this paper is meant to attribute. There is meant to be a* PA *line on it…if reporters are pulling stuff off the wires, I'd like to think that those on the desk have seen the wires and normally know where they're pulling a bit of* PA *copy, but again, yes, [plagiarism] probably does happen. You're exposing something I need to take note of in our newsroom.* Asked if she was aware of others not attributing her newspaper's work, Courteny said: *I suppose we've just come to accept some of these practices…we get annoyed about people ripping off our stories for news bulletins. Do we do anything about it? No. Unless it's a big story. If it's a big story that we've broken, then we will ring up* RNZ *and say, "Now hang on, that's our story", or, "That's our reporter". Most of the time we just let it go.*

Weir: *If it's not plagiarism, it's bloody close to it. I mean, it's passing this stuff off as your own work, that isn't rightly yours. Now I consider that's …a lesser offence if you're part of the same company. If it's from a rival organisation or a radio station or TV, then that definitely crosses the line.*

Thompson: *I wouldn't have thought [it's a problem].*

Norquay said he was told when he started at *NZPA* that, as soon as the story moved beyond the agency, it becames the newspaper user's copy. *I once had a story that I wrote which, I think the* Christchurch Press *added something like: "Christchurch Airport was not expected to be affected however". I think it was the lead story, but it was by their*

reporter and NZPA, *and their reporter's contribution was the last paragraph.*

6.3.1.7 … background cutting and pasting?

All the interviewees apart from the community paper reporter, who was uncertain, accepted that cutting and pasting without attribution was plagiarism. Norquay added a reservation in relation to facts that were common knowledge.

Courtney: *That happens. I mean, we do that all the time, especially within our own organisation. I suppose we just take…if* Manawatu Standard *have got a piece of information [and] we're following up a story six months down the track, we'd probably just lift a bit of background and dress it up as our own.* Asked if there was a difference between dressing the information up as her paper's own and using it verbatim, she replied: *Yeah, absolutely.*

Weir: *I think…it's extremely tempting. Obviously if it's from your own resources or from your own company then that's fair enough, fair game. But it's a grey area, especially with international copy.*

Norquay: *I think everybody uses background from somewhere else, generally. I mean, if the story starts and somebody breaks it and has everything…then some of the elements and the factual information in it, I think everybody would use when they have to go and move the story on…that basic fact, that [MP Trevor]Mallard bopped [PM] Helen Clark on the nose, even if you didn't see it, if it's not a disputed fact…you can treat it as factual…*

Thompson: *Well that I think is plagiarism…people shouldn't, I mean, if you copy and paste you should attribute. If you rewrite, then by all means. You do need to try and put it into formal words of your own.*

6.3.1.8 … ignoring copyright rules?

The interviewees, apart from Dawe who was uncertain, were united in acknowledging that legal boundaries were sometimes crossed, though Thompson saw the issue as being a commercial one.

Courtney described a recent case, where a freelancer complained after submitting a story outline which was rejected but was then referred to a staff writer. The paper's defence was that it had taken the nut of an idea, then itself developed it into something different. She also described using a story, then syndicating it throughout the company's group which, she said, was okay when the writers were aware.

Weir: *It does happen, but rarely within our organisation, and it's usually by an inadvertent re-publication. For example, we have [legitimately agreed] access to a lot of the Australian papers …most of their writers are staff [but] some of them are freelancers and if you're getting stuff online, it's hard to tell the difference.*

Norquay gave an example of his agency being close to securing a contract with a big government department. They had withdrawn, saying they could get everything they needed on the internet—which they were now doing by plagiarising *Radio New Zealand.* So *NZPA* was even less able to do anything about it than if they were stealing their stories.

Thompson: *That's a commercial issue rather than a plagiarism issue.*

Thompson then gave an "egregious" example, of website news service *Newsroom* taking an information feed of breaking stories from *RNZ,* and attributing them to itself. He said it was likely also some of its material was originating from *NZPA. I think it's wrong and it shouldn't be allowed. And I don't quite know why* RNZ *is tolerating it.*

6.3.1.9 … small/poorly resourced offices, including the Internet, lifting news items?

Apart from Thompson, who said he was unaware of the practice of poorly resourced offices taking shortcuts by stealing from other news organisations and had no objection to it, all of the respondents had come across it and condemned it.

Courtney: *It happens, [it's] inevitable.*

Courtney also said that regurgitating her paper's stories in this way could be seen as flattery.

Weir: *Yes I'd definitely agree with that one, and I've seen it happen.*

Weir referred here to *RNZ* practices from the 1980s, but also within the last two or three years: *I've heard stories on radio that I know they didn't have the day before, it was an exclusive in the* Dom, *word-for-word pretty much on radio.*

Norquay: *It does happen ...a story from the other day which was the lead the next day on* Newstalk ZB *with exactly the same angle … but since we put the story out 12 hours earlier, I didn't really have any problem with it.*

Dawe: *Radio. Yes.*

Dawe referred again to her and her colleagues having been plagiarised frequently by local radio stations.

Thompson: *I'm not familiar with it and, I mean, more power to them really.*

6.3.2   Comments on the survey-identified reasons/causes for plagiarism

Interviewees were asked for their comments on reasons for plagiarism identified by survey respondents: laziness of offending reporters, the ease of Internet access, dwindling resources, inadequate penalties or regulation, the rise of media competition and the end of copy sharing, and the culture of copying.

6.3.2.1 Laziness as reason for plagiarism

All but one of the interviewees acknowledged laziness as an underlying cause of plagiarism, though there were differences over degree of seriousness attached to this. Interestingly, the agency man ascribed plagiarism to something far removed from laziness: desparation to get the job done.

Courtney: *That would be probably the first thing I would actually say. Plagiarism is laziness. It is. It's, someone's done the work, I'll just use that, thank you very much…I'd like to think that, if they are going to take someone's work and blend it into theirs, that there is attribution…if we rewrite extensively someone else's story, their byline normally stays on it. Or we'll add in 'the* Dominion Post' *for additional reporting. That's not plagiarism.*

Norquay: *No I don't think so, actually. I think it's probably usually the*

opposite…a journalist who's desperate to get a story. Because we operate on tight deadlines…and deadlines that never go away and we're always trying to get a story as quickly as possible, I think that that's not laziness, it's more, "I've got to match that story, and how the hell can I do it and, you know, I'll do it this way and…I'll put some background from the NZPA *library…*

Thompson: *I'm not sure that it's quite so much laziness as a pressure to actually get things done. I think there's an element of laziness. I mean, you can say…that a reporter is lazy because they don't ring people up…it's better if everybody [rings] people up all the time and everybody checks everything, but in the pressures of the current environment, that's very difficult to achieve.*

Dawe: *Yeah. I think that's the radio stations. I think they call themselves reporters, but I don't think they are trained. Maybe they're not aware.*

6.3.2.2 The ease of Internet access as reason for plagiarism

All but one of the interviewees acknowledged the ease of Internet access as an underlying cause behind some plagiarism. But the website operator argued that the practice was better fitted into a category of "poor journalism" and the community paper reporter did not see it as a "significant cause".

Courtney: *It's an issue, and that's one we've got to watch…my concerns are the younger reporters coming in who, sort of, go on to the net, read stuff and just take it all as fact…the Internet can be a dangerous thing. There's a lot of misinformation up…the Internet is a worry…it just grows, and it's a beast, with no-one taming it. You can put up anything and there will be people that just think that's fact. We encourage people to research and look on the web, but we do always say, you know, "Be careful about what you're pulling off the web."*

Weir: *I agree. It does make it easier.*

Norquay: *Oh definitely. I mean…the first thing that we do, we've a shift that's dedicated to checking what stories are on the Internet in the morning. Somebody starts at 5.45 in the morning and goes to see what each paper's do. And, you know, in a lot of cases, At a lot of places at 6am*

in the morning, there's no prospect of actually doing an update on the
story, so they will take the story. They'll say, "The Rotorua Post
reported today" or, "the Taranaki Daily News *reported today… we've*
got rules about much and attribution and all those sort of things.
Asked whether internet sites were stealing from *NZPA,* he said: *When*
we find them, we do complain. It does happen, yeah. He referred to a
complexity in dealing with this, however, especially when commercial
clients on-sold information provided to them. *Really it is, it's really*
hard to keep grips on where your information goes.

Thompson: *There comes a point, especially with breaking news stories when*
you're trying to acquire information, where it would…look foolish if
you were trying to Attribute the source to every single statement,
especially if sources were difficult to pin down. And it would also be a
mistake to exclude the information, if it was important information, just
because you hadn't managed to extract that particular piece in your
notes with your conversation with the Senior Sergeant. And if that's
what people are concerned about broadly in plagiarism then I think
they may be falsely concerned …there is probably a great deal more
pressure to take material, and certainly take material verbatim from
press releases, but that doesn't constitute plagiarism. Thompson also
said: *You could certainly write a news article which has almost got no*
content of your own in it whatsoever. It's not actually plagiarism. It
might be poor journalism, but it's not [plagiarism].

6.3.2.3 Dwindling resources as a reason for plagiarism

Dwindling resources as a cause of plagiarism, a big issue for many survey
respondents, received a mixed reaction from the interviewees. Without
dismissing it as a cause entirely, the metropolitan assistant editor played the
issue down; the others, especially those still working as journalists, saw it as
more significant.

Courtney: *I can see it's an argument but…we've got pretty high standards*
here and accuracy, getting things right, I mean, that comes first. That
comes before the crafting [of] the words. I would like to think as a

news organisation that, even if we do have dwindling resources, that reporters are always given the time to check things out properly. We're not just going to go off half cocked. She also said: *You know, it just hasn't arisen in this newsroom. It may be happening and it's just below the radar.*

Weir: *I think that's a fair call. If pressure is on to produce an interesting story, somebody has already done the leg work and got the interview with somebody that's hard to reach, they're out of time zone or whatever, then, of course there's going to be extreme temptation to lift it.*

Thompson: *Well, as I've already said, I think that that is definitively, probably a cause of a lot of what people are concerned about.*

Norquay: *The guy that did the [sports] column at the* Southland Times*, I think he was probably under a bit of stress at the time and made a bad decision…*

Dawe: *I think some of those radio stations would fit in that category. They have reporters who are also announcers, without much time to get stories.*

6.3.2.4 Inadequate regulation/penalties/monitoring as a reason for plagiarism

This suggestion drew a muted response, with some interviewees suggesting that monitoring lay with individuals, others loosely suggesting responsibility had to be taken by management.

Courtney: *In the newsroom you cannot be watching what everyone is doing all The time. You have to trust reporters to have integrity…you can put balances and checks in terms of going through copy…we do have quite stringent checks.*

Weir: *Bloody hard to monitor, that's the problem. You know, looking at the material that comes from reporters within our group, would I recognise something that's lifted straight from the* Herald? *Probably not. And I guess that's why people get away with it…if you reproduced a story from the* Dominion Post *in its entirety in a trade publication of*

> *something, then they'll pick that up. But the lesser forms almost never are. I've never heard of anybody getting pinged for it.*

Without explaining what he thought "lesser forms" meant, Weir went on to say he believed that there was an "issue from the top", in that the unacceptability of the practice was not conveyed strongly enough to reporters, "you know, the young reporters made clear what isn't acceptable."

Norquay: *Here it's always senior staff that see the copy last and there are alarm bells that come on…I'd say the attribution thing is something that you ask about if you're surprised at the speed the copy has arrived. How and where the quotes actually came from, and you think that the [interview subject] is someone that might have been reasonably difficult to get a hold of, so how did they?*

Thompson: *Well, plagiarism can only be enforced by individuals, and it's their internal ethics really which are required. And you need to drum that into your reporters as much as possible if you're an editorial manager.*

Thompson's answer went beyond the others in giving thoughts on why reactions from management to cases of plagiarism among their staff were often severe.

> *Realistically, reporters cannot expect their chief reporters or editors to monitor these things for them, and so that's probably, justifiably why, when reporters and chief reporters or editors and chief reporters discover egregious examples of plagiarism, they tend to come down like a tonne of bricks and sack people…it's like a betrayal of trust…*

Dawe: *I would agree. it was me who had to phone [plagiarisers to complain] and they still didn't take notice.*

6.3.2.5 End of copy sharing/rise of media competition as a reason for plagiarism

This suggestion, drawn around the changed structure and work patterns of NZPA after New Zealand's two big, rival newspaper groups (Fairfax and APN) recently withdrew from a longstanding copysharing agreement, drew strong disagreement. While most of the interviewees—newspaper workers and website—were dismissive of any problem, the agency man saw clear

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pressures leading to plagiarism in respect of dropped catchlines. The community paper worker had no views on the subject.

Courtney: *I don't know if I'd agree with that, really.*

Weir: *I don't really buy that because it's something that's been going on, as I say, in a minority, for years, and for some organisations it's a practice rather than an exception, for example,* Radio New Zealand *versus some of the private radio stations.*

Norquay: *It has, yeah…we used to get major news stories from the newspapers of the regions, as you know. So if we had a big story for Auckland and a big story for Christchurch, we could expect coverage from the* Dominion, *the* Christchurch Press, *the* Herald… *what we've got now is far fewer subs and far more news gatherers [in the main centres]…but we still can't expect to get every story.*

Norquay said that ever day there was now an increased pressure to move copy quickly. The result was a need to pour resources into the big news story of the day. This had to be written to an early deadline in a format that would suit as many of the agency's clients as possible. NZPA had devised a rule not to use more than half of a source newspaper story's content. Another rule was not to use more than about half a dozen quotes from a television or radio station. This meant that content and phraseology of the source story needed to be rewritten as much as possible—and background from another source needed to be added wherever possible. Problems arose, he said, when the agency took a story from say, the *Herald,* attributing it with "the *New Zealand Herald* reported today", but the receiving paper was loath to mention a rival group, and deleted it.

> *So now they've made an issue of …whether it is now plagiarism, because the name of the original newspaper is gone and, if so, is it* NZPA's *fault because they did the original list, even though they attributed it? Or is it the fault of the receiving newspaper because they saw where it came from and made a deliberate decision to delete it?*

Thompson said pressures shouldn't unduly weigh on reporters. Taking important material from other publications, they were free of blame if they

simply named the relevant publication in their copy and left any subsequent decisions about inclusion to their chief reporters/subeditors.

> *If your chief reporter then takes the attribution out, then that's not your problem any more.*

6.3.2.6 Culture of copying

In line with the earlier theoretical identifications of antecedents of plagiarism behaviour encouraged by mediators of deadline pressure and freedom ethos, many of the above answers are significant in identifying a role of news organisation culture. That is, they often give indications of a newsroom climate that either justifies, encourages, or ignores workroom pressures and demands that give rise to the reasons for plagiarism identified in other categories. This applies to all the causal categories. When the news agency news editor (Norquay) says his staff's first job of a morning is to check what stories are on the Internet, he perceives this as a clear pressure from within a culture of copying.

> *And you know, in a lot of cases, at a lot of places at 6am in the morning, there's no prospect of actually doing an update on the story, so they will take the story.*

A similar conclusion can be drawn from the reaction of Internet provider Thompson:

> *There comes a point, especially with breaking news stories…where it would…look foolish if you were trying to attribute the source to every single statement…and it would also be a mistake to exclude the information, if it was important information, just because you hadn't managed to extract that particular piece in your notes with your conversation…*

Some of the responses to suggestions of laziness give clues to "culture" reasons behind transgression. Thompson goes on to say: "I'm not sure that it's quite so much laziness as a pressure to actually get things done." Perhaps even more telling, is the news agency man, Norquay's, argument that laziness is rarely the issue.

> *No, I don't think so actually. I think it's probably usually the opposite…a journalist who's desperate to get a story. Because we*

operate on tight deadlines…and deadlines that never go away and
we're always trying to get a story as quickly as possible, I think that's
not laziness, it's more, "I've got to match that story, and how the hell
can I do it and, you know, I'll do it this way…I'll put some background
from the NZPA library…

Norquay also said that he put no expectation on his reporters to attribute copy taken from the agency's own library if it comprised the work of other agency staff.

Indications of a culture of copying are also abundant in responses contained in the category attributing plagiarism causes to dwindling resources, from Thompson's observation that this represents a big part of people's concerns, to Norquay's recognition of the effect of increasing stress in the industry. Of all the interviewees Courtney, perhaps unsurprisingly from a manager representing the face of her company, was the one to distance herself most from blaming the news room organisation. But the Business Editor (Weir) offered:

If pressure is on to produce an interesting story, somebody has already
done the legwork and got the interview with somebody that's hard to
reach…then of course there's going to be extreme temptation to lift it.

The role of competitive pressures can be seen particularly in examining the impact of the end of copy sharing by the co-operative members that make up the NZPA organisation, and the rise of media competition (Hannis, 2008). Norquay says:

What we've got now is far fewer subs and far more news
gatherers… but we still can't expect to get every story…basically
there's a pressure on to move copy quickly…

6.3.3 What is your comment on the survey-identified solutions for resisting plagiarism?

The interviewees were next asked to comment on suggested solutions for plagiarism given by respondents in the final open-ended survey question.

6.3.3.1 Do regulatory bodies need more clout?

Interviewees were largely lukewarm on the suggestion of putting more power in the hands of regulatory bodies, suggesting they had enough power already and that the issue really lay in the policing. The website operator (Thompson) went so far as to argue against any regulation whatsoever. The one divergent opinion was offered by the community paper reporter.

Courtney: *I would like to think that newspapers would put their hands up and be responsible if there was a major plagiarism…you know, put your hand up, tell your readers, and I think we do. Fairfax was pretty upfront about John Manukia.*

Weir: New Zealand Press Association *or the* Newspaper Publishers' Association…*yeah, I think they probably have enough clout, but it's just not policed. Maybe the only people who can really police it are the individual journalists who are being ripped off. It would be an impossible task for any of the central agencies to monitor copy on any sort of formal basis.*

Norquay: *No I don't think so.*

Thompson: *There are no regulatory bodies and they don't need more clout. It would be a very good idea not to have any. I'm thoroughly against regulation of any kind of media. Freedom of the press is a precious phenomenon which is not diluted in any way. What we have is the Press Council, and the Press Council does a pretty good job.*

Dawe: *Yeah, I would agree.*

6.3.3.2 Do editors need to copy check/insist on attribution?

The suggestion of copy checking and insistence on attribution drew broad approval, though two of the interviewees pointed to difficulties in doing so: the speed of the journalism process and resourcing. The community paper reporter (Dawe) was particularly strong in arguing for bylines which, she said, would solve all plagiarism problems.

Courtney: *If we use* [NZ]PA, *we're meant to…even if we use a paragraph, and that's always been the case.*

Weir: *I'd certainly agree with that…but…the process is so quick, as you know,*

there isn't time to go back and get a chief reporter [to] check that somebody was actually spoken to and…that the quote was accurate. It's a layer of trust and bureaucracy that could be unworkable.

Norquay: *We do that.*

Thompson: *Well they should insist on attribution, but they can't always [have the ability to check].*

Dawe: *Yes. I would have thought it was pretty obvious.*

6.3.3.3 Do plagiarism guidelines/some sort of directives need to be set up?

Responses to this question indicated broad acceptance that guidelines in relation to plagiarism were necessary, though Courtney felt her company's code of ethics, which requires staff to take "every reasonable precaution" to avoid plagiarism, was sufficient (Fairfax, 2006). Thompson urged a first step lay in establishing what plagiarism meant within journalism.

Courtney: *We have a code of ethics…that covers plagiarism.*

Weir: *I definitely agree…it should be drummed into people from day one that, if there's any lifting of material, there should be attribution.*

Norquay: *Yeah.*

Thompson: *It would definitely help if there were very clear instructions at a Journalism School level…codes of conduct about such things…but also, what Does plagiarism actually mean? I think that what your survey indicates is that there is a certain lack of understanding.*

6.3.3.4 Should financial sanctions be taken against Internet infringers?

The suggestion of financial sanctions brought out diverse viewpoints, from a perceived impossibility of policing (Courtney) to a suggestion the industry worries too much about plagiarism (Thompson).

Courtney: *How on earth would you police that? You know, people buy Photographs from us and then put them up on the Internet…it's a beast that is hard to monitor, control.*

Weir: Citing a sharebroking company that cut and pasted from newspapers for its daily news summary, Weir emphatically agreed with the proposition.

Norquay: *That would be good.* It would be difficult to police, however. He gave an example of an All Black who had made a contentious statement to a small British radio station, which was picked up by the *Guardian,* then by *NZPA,* but proper attribution of the originating radio station was lost in the process. He said there were similar difficulties in dealing with Internet theft of newspaper copy.

> *How the hell are we going to say, "That's our story, you've nicked it". They say, "No, we didn't get it from you. We didn't even see the* NZPA *wire. We got it from* Rotorua Post*"…it's busy enough trying to…gather news without getting into that stuff.*

Thompson: *No it shouldn't. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and people should appreciate it.*

6.3.3.5 Should monitoring mechanisms be set up on each publication?

All but one of the interviewees agreed with the principle of fact checking, though Courtney and Thompson pointed to big funding and resourcing difficulties, which Thompson saw as insurmountable. Weir alone argued that the responsibility should remain in the hands of the individual reporters.

Courtney applauded the idea of fact checking, but made the point that it would require a significant resourcing commitment. There had been discussion among Fairfax management, she said, of doing it randomly after the Manukia infringements came to light.

Weir: *I think the monitoring mechanism should be the reporter.*

Norquay: *We've got them.*

Thompson: *It's not possible from a financial perspective. We're suffering enough from a lack of resources already without attempting to try and establish a useless position such as that.*

Dawe: *Yes. Especially on the radio.*

6.3.3.6 Do copyright breaches need to be pursued and prosecuted?

The pursuit of copyright infringers through the courts was not welcomed or discussed in detail by any of the participants. Courtney did not offer comment; Thompson argued that current copyright law provided insufficient redress for

copyright infringements; only Weir recommended the courts, and only for what he termed serious cases.

Weir: *I think an example should be made for egregious examples. There was [Renee Kiriona] who interviewed [rugby league player] Tawera Nikau…she was sacked but, you know, there's probably a case to be made for the paper to be fined or publicly humiliated in some way.*

Norquay: *We don't do that…we've got a commercial department that would look at that but I don't think they've ever done that. Sometimes, yeah.*

Thompson: *Copyright law provides extremely thin enforcement rights for breaches. It's almost invariably not worth pursuing a copyright breach from a financial perspective…and it ultimately…a lot of what we currently regard as copyrighted is being undermined by the Internet…the wholesale use, for example, of news stories in things like news groups and forums…has undermined copyright to the extent that it—on the net in particular— enforcement of copyright is probably a very difficult thing to achieve.*
Thompson also made the point that, under law, financial remedies were very low.

6.3.3.7 Should offenders be named and shamed?

The suggestion of naming and shaming offenders drew cautious responses, with some of the interviewees thinking the practice would be harsh and unduly hurtful, others that it would be valid for the most serious of cases. None thought it should be common practice.

Courtney: *We don't do it…I think the view's always been, don't have a dig at Your opposition…it's an unwritten rule, isn't it?*

Weir: *I can see the value in that. I think it might be better to raise it quietly first time around or second time around. But repeat offenders should be named and shamed. I mean, for example, if there was a junior reporter six months into the job, you know, it could ruin their career because they lifted three pars from somebody else's story. I think that would be harsh.*

Norquay: *It might bring pleasure to people in the industry but that would be about the limit of it. It wouldn't actually have any public effect, I wouldn't*

think…I think a fining system would probably be quite good. Well some sort of sanctions…it would be so hard to do it.

Thompson: *That's probably…the most effective method of dealing with it. But I think you'd still have to be careful that you don't have witch hunts and McCarthyism, and that some people get accused of things which everybody else is already doing. Somehow I think you need fairly tight definitions of plagiarism and should only do that [in] rather egregious instances.*

Dawe: *That's a bit harsh. For serious cases, the very serious ones… [like that involving a former* Southland Times] S*ports Editor…How do you stop radio? All they have to do is attribute it. Some do that at the end of news. "For more information on these stories look at today's edition of the* Southland Times", *or the* ODT. *They did it for a while, and then stopped.*

6.3.3.8 Should random checks of journalists' work be introduced?

Most of the interviewees agreed with the introduction of random checks of journalists' work. Thompson alone was dismissive of the idea, saying it would mean a lot of work and achieve little. Courtney did not offer a comment.

Weir: *Not a bad idea…it would keep people on their toes.*

Norquay: *We do that really. It's not even really random. I mean, there's no story that can get out of* NZPA *without a senior staff member seeing it…it would certainly [also] be the case at the* Dom (Dominion Post), *I guess. I'm not so sure it would be the case in regional newspapers so much.*

Thompson: *That's not particularly helpful. I mean you could possibly do that automatically by computer, but you're just setting yourself up to answer a whole lot of questions…*

Dawe agreed random checks would be a good idea.

6.3.3.9 Should a zero tolerance policy be implemented?

The idea of a zero tolerance policy in dealing with plagiarism drew mixed responses. Some interviewees recommended it, but with provisos—including that the parameters of plagiarism should be thought through and made explicit. Norquay thought a blanket ban would make it hard for the agency to distribute copy; Thompson thought zero tolerance not sensible because it ignored context.

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Courtney: *I would like to think we have that but perhaps, after this conversation, we do need to sort of think about whether those are implicit, you know, when we take people on, the do's and don'ts, what you can and can't do. That's probably something we should look at.*

Weir: *I think, if people…are aware of the policies, then, yes, there should be zero tolerance. But, you know, the difficulty is people doing it when they don't know. If they've worked on one paper where it is practice to lift something from a larger paper and use it as your own, should that be a sacking offence then? It would certainly make people attentive.*

Norquay: *You can't do that at all…if you implemented a "don't ever lift anything From anywhere" policy, then we would find it hard put to get stories out…in a timely fashion…I don't think the public…cares so much whether the* Herald *broke the story or not, I don't think. But newspapers do.*

Thompson: *I don't think zero tolerance is a particularly sensible approach to anything because zero tolerance implies that context has no…or mitigating factors have no relevance. And if someone plagiarised something because they're on the verge of a nervous breakdown and have been [working] for 60 hours and haven't had any sleep, then clearly zero tolerance is idiotic. There's always contextual information which is useful.*

6.3.3.10 Should ethics and attribution rules be taught more strongly at universities and polytechnics?

Each of the interviewees clearly believed training in the ethical parameters related to plagiarism was important, with most of them acknowledging that these subjects were already taught strongly. Norquay went so far as to suggest that journalism school rules were too strict, at least in terms of in-house stories being compiled.

Courtney: *I would think it is. I think it's the core of journalism. It's a standard. I would be very surprised if a journalism school didn't teach that.*

Weir: *I'm sure you do it already.*

Norquay: *The whole ethics thing should be, yeah. Yeah, it's a tricky one to teach. Yeah, it's taught. It's implied…I haven't had any trouble, say, with your students [but] they come here and they always find it a bit baffling that they*

can actually just dip into our library and use any of our words that are
already there. Because I tell them, "Just grab all that stuff there out of that
story and whack a few quotes on top". They always look slightly concerned.
Basically, I say, "While you're working here, our words are yours. You can
have them".

Thompson: *I think it's taught very strongly.*

Dawe: *Yeah definitely [it should be taught more strongly]. [Including at] radio*
schools.

6.3.3.11   Would it help for news organisations to employ more staff?

The suggestion that employment of more staff would alleviate pressures to plagiarise did not get strong backing. Responses ranged from resignation that staff increases were not going to happen and therefore pointless to discuss, to uncertainty that such increases would help. Only the agency man (Norquay) acknowledged that boosting numbers could ameliorate the problem.

Courtney: *I'd love to. Find me some.*

Weir: *No, I don't buy that…it comes down to ethics, you do what you can every*
day. If you need to use something that's written in another publication, then
you just attribute it. And if you can't get it anywhere else, I guess that's pretty
hard….but then that's the challenge of…imaginative reporting to come up
with a fresh angle that you can source.

Norquay: *All right, resources are a problem…look, I could match any story by 8*
o'clock in the morning if I had a newsroom of 50 journalists. If I had a
newsroom of 50 journalists, I could turn out every story I wanted to turn out
by 7.30 in the morning without ever lifting a word from anyone. Okay? But I
don't. I have two or three.

Thompson: *Yeah, but [news companies are] really after the money.*

Dawe: *I'm not sure that [more resources] would necessarily solve the problem.*

6.3.3.12   Would introducing fact checking processes ameliorate plagiarism?

The idea of having a fact checking department was generally favoured, but again with provisos related to the availability of resources. The website editor

(Thompson) stood alone in rejecting the proposition, among other things, suggesting a new layer of bureaucracy could engender censorship.

Courtney referred me to earlier comments she had made praising the idea of implementing fact checking, but with the addendum this would require a big resource commitment from news companies.

Weir: *We probably have five or six layers of people looking at stories. I mean, that's mainly for errors rather than plagiarism. But, I think, even [with] more resources…it would be very difficult to pick up.*

Norquay referred me back to his earlier comments that NZPA copy was checked.

Thompson: *I think it probably leads to slightly poor journalism actually…when you trap extra layers of bureaucracy around stories, it leads to a lack of timeliness for starters…I think organisations like* Time *magazine employ a lot. It actually allows and facilitates censorship because it provides for extra layers of scrutiny and extra justifications for excisions…and sometimes you might have a fact which is demonstrably true but, if somebody says it isn't, and that's where judgment comes in. and it's better executed by editors than, I don't know, some faceless person in the fact-checking department.*

6.3.3.13 Would paying staff more and giving more attention to encouraging job satisfaction help?

The question of higher pay and more encouragement received little backing: Thompson and Dawe were the only ones in support of the proposition. Weir replied emphatically in the negative and Courtney suggested the suggestion clouded real issues individual transgressions.

Courtney: *I think plagiarism, at the end of the day, is not about whether you're unpaid or overworked…it goes back to integrity and ethics…you're going to take pride in your work…I don't think pay and overwork is an issue. It can be used as an excuse, I think. It's laziness.*

Norquay: *I don't know if that works actually…I don't think I've ever heard anyone say, "Yeah, I've lifted this because I don't get paid enough". In fact, one of the people I've got to watch the most is probably one of the most highly paid. So the people you have to watch the least are probably the most lowly paid.*

Thompson: *Of course they should.*

Dawe: *Of course they should pay staff more (laughing). Possibly, maybe [encourage] those reporters that don't take pride in their work or have that satisfaction.*

6.3.3.14   Should a web tool be developed to detect newsroom plagiarism?

All the interviewees felt that an efficient web tool able to detect newsroom plagiarism would be useful. But several of them thought that the special characteristics of news gathering and backgrounding would make it hard to devise an effective tool. Website operator Thompson said such a tool was feasible technologically, but only to highlight the most blatant examples.

Courtney: *That would be fantastic if we could. If there was something in place, we'd probably put it on the system.*

Weir: *Why not? As long as…I think any journalist that's doing this would probably alter things sufficiently that it would be hard to pick up. The blatant, as I say, is relatively rare…if you could say, these six paragraphs came from publication "x"..*

Norquay: *I think it would be useful, but I still think it's a pretty big web to untangle.* Norquay related knowledge of extant academic tools that were used to identify plagiarism at universities.

Thompson: *I can imagine a situation where computers will be capable of doing it on phrases of, say, 10 or more words. And you could actually, possibly automatically scan and check. That might be…feasible from a technological point. What you would then get [could] highlight examples of the egregious sort of plagiarism. But it's better if people just don't do it.*

Dawe: *Sounds good. Might have some merit.*

6.3.3.15   Would giving everyone bylines help reduce plagiarism?

Only community paper reporter Dawe recommended universal bylines. She suggested they ensured a clear accountability. Each of the others adhered to the journalism convention that bylines only be attached to stories demonstrating merit or effort.

Courtney: *Bylines are there for people who have earned them on stories, or should be…we'll always know who writes a story, apart from if we take them from an agency, but we can go back and check who wrote the story…I mean, we're taking stories from agencies on the understanding it's been through their processes, their checks and balances, and there's a certain amount of trust there. You're paying for a service, you expect to get stories that have been checked. Sometimes…something doesn't ring true. The story is pulled off until [the agency] can stand it up.*

Weir: *I don't really think so.*

Norquay: *No. You don't really give bylines [unless] you've made a significant attempt to uncover [a story]…if you've made a phone call, a couple of phone calls and made a few contacts. Because a lot of stories are written off press releases…*

Thompson: *Oh, I don't think so. I mean, sometimes you don't want a byline. Sometimes what you've written has been mangled by someone else by so much that you definitely don't want a byline.*

Dawe: *I'm a big byline fan, for that reason, for accountability. If you don't want to put your name on your story, perhaps there's an ulterior motive.*

6.3.3.16 Have you any final comment to make on how to stem or stop plagiarism?

None of the interviewees introduced any strong new suggestions for combating plagiarism. Their additional comments included interest in the results of this research's survey-indicated extent of plagiarism, reiterations of some aspects of what they perceived to be problems, and an emphasis that this was an issue of "many shades of grey". Thompson, under pressure of work, did not have time to answer this question.

Courtney: *You just think… of the big Manukias but, probably under the radar, I'm quite intrigued to find out how many people do think their stories, as you say, have been plagiarised by other publications.*

Weir: *I think it's a relatively small minority that do it, that are blatant about it, but I think it's a temptation for everybody, even myself, to look at material, especially on the Internet, and think, "Gosh, that's a good idea", or, "That*

material is interesting. Let's grab a bit of that". So I think the temptation, the ease of doing this and the temptation has got to be so much greater than they were five or 10 years ago. So maybe there does need to be more monitoring or reminders that we wouldn't want to be caught plagiarising another publication. You might have a news item screaming in your ear for this particular angle, but the response to that is, "Well, do you want to see us done for plagiarism like that Waikato paper?"

Norquay: *There are swings and roundabouts…I know that people benefit from NZPA by lifting our stories, and we benefit from others by seeing what they've got and using it. But as well as that, we also sell stories, so then you get in the situation where…there's so many shades of grey, it's not really a black and white thing at all. But I'm certainly opposed to just taking great hunks of copy and spreading it…it's just annoying.*

Dawe: *I do think radio stations are a big problem, and they always have been. I told my editor [when plagiarised] and he said it's always happened. It probably does come down to resources and not having the training.*

6.3.3.17   Does a culture of copying as a cause for plagiarism or as an area to be studied to understand it emerge in the interviewees' answers?

Because this aspect of the plagiarism debate had not been formulated at the time of the interviewees, no explicit references were made on the subject or direct evidence be gleaned. Nevertheless, quite a few of the points made by the interviewees were relevant to the issue of an identified culture of copying. Notable were comments from the business editor (Weir) that senior staff had no time to check stories, with an expectation a story would be delivered on time; from the agency man (Norquay) that it would be impractical to implement a blanket policy prohibiting plagiarism; and reiterations by the website operator (Thompson) accepting "grey areas" in the judgment of what plagiarism comprised.

Weir: *The process is so quick, as you know, there isn't time to go back and get a Chief Reporter [to] check that somebody was spoken to and…that the quote was accurate. It's a layer of trust and bureaucracy that could be unworkable.*

Thompson: *[Monitoring for plagiarism] isn't possible from a financial*

perspective. We're suffering enough from a lack of resources already…

Norquay: *If you implemented a "don't ever lift anything from anywhere" policy, then we would find it hard put to get stories out…in a timely fashion…I don't think the public…cares so much whether the* Herald *broke the story or not …there are swings and roundabouts…I know that people benefit from NZPA by lifting our stories, and we benefit from others by seeing what they've got and using it. But as well as that, we also sell stories, so then you get in the situation where…there's so many shades of grey, it's not really a black and white thing at all.*

Thompson: *I think that what your survey indicates is that there is a certain lack of understanding.*

6.3.4   Adjudged plagiarist

A further interview was carried out with a woman ruled to have committed plagiarism by the New Zealand Press Council. The circumstances of her plagiarism are discussed in 6.4 below. After gauging the emotional effect on her, the interview sought detail of how her error had occurred, then her perceptions of the main causes of plagiarism and the subject's grey areas she thought made a reporter's work difficult.

The adjudged plagiarist expressed both bewilderment and concern at her predicament. After identifying a confusing boundary in respect of her case—she had sought and received assurances from the interviewee that she was free to use his quotes, published in another newspaper—she added: "I feel I have a journalistic black mark on me. Jeez, I felt an idiot." She explained her case in the following terms:

> *I was trying to get the story at the last minute. He said everything [printed in the other newspaper] was as he had said and he would not say any more. He said I was very, very welcome to use that, 'otherwise I'll be repeating myself.*

The woman's observations about plagiarism often differed from the earlier interviewees for directly referring to problems as emanating from the behaviour of the news media organisations—clear indications from the perspective of a

plagiarist of a culture of copying. Her interview was carried out later than the others, and the issue of culture was directly addressed. Her ideas are summarised below.

6.3.4.1 Plagiarism is fuelled by news organisations "aversion" to attribution

The charge of attribution aversion, the adjudged plagiarist said, owed to news media organisations not liking to mention other news media organisations. The reason for this was that they wanted to claim credit for stories. She also identified a justification she said papers used—that information belonged to everyone.

> *Newspapers have an aversion attribution, not liking mentioning other papers.*
> *They want the glory for themselves. They make it look as if it was all*
> *generated from their staff...papers try to avoid attribution by arguing*
> *information is 'public knowledge.*

6.3.4.2 Plagiarism is often a question of failing to paraphrase

The interviewee gave her opinion that the issue of plagiarism on occasion was not failure to include attributions, but failure to summarise other work in reported speech.

> *Sometimes it's a case of failing to paraphrase other work, rather than failing*
> *to attribute .It's okay to paraphrase. In retrospect, I should have said, 'that's*
> *all he was going to say'. I would have got away with it.*

6.3.4.3 Problems with plagiarism could be alleviated if the parameters of
news media plagiarism were made explicit

The interviewee said her experience had shown her that none of her staff were clear of the news media plagiarism boundaries. Her example was different from plagiarism she had seen committed by others. She also said that, in her opinion, the problem of plagiarism would be largely solved if the industry clearly defined it.

> *It wasn't really clear [what plagiarism was]. I don't know what it is. It was*
> *unlike [an earlier Southland Times plagiarist]. He got fired after taking copy*
> *for his column. That was total stress, totally under pressure. This instance*
> *was different from the common taking of others' copy for backgrounding. I*

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always attribute [my copy] … 'he said earlier…'. If you don't, you're in

trouble. But it's easy to forget.

6.3.4.4 Newsroom pressures were often contributors to plagiarism

The interviewee was clear in her view that newsroom pressures could be seen as contributors to plagiarism. She indicated that in her own case deadline pressures had contributed to her lack of forethought.

A lot of it was pushed through. It was quarter past 6 at night and I was

rushing it through at deadline. The subs were calling for it. I could have rung

and said it's not coming, but it was the deadline.

6.3.4.5 News media requirements to clearly background stories added to the

likelihood of plagiarism

The need for every story to be able to stand-alone, meaning a requirement to clearly background all stories, created a problem opening the door to plagiarism. She also conceded that she had previously written an award-winning piece which was almost entirely drawn from background material.

You're told to go on the Internet, pull out of the box, use it. But what I'd like

to know is, when does backgrounding unattributed become acceptable? When

can you do it? When it's 20 years old? When it's 50 years old? When I did

[an earlier Qantas-winning scoop story] almost everything was from

background.

6.3.4.6 Unlike academic plagiarism, there were degrees of transgression to

be applied to news media plagiarism

Actions like carelessly omitting attributions or, as in her case, getting permission from an interview subject but not from the original publisher, were less serious sins than deliberate deceits.

I know I didn't feel good about using a hidden camera [when earlier working

as a television producer] …I completely expected [the interviewee] to say, 'I

told her to. It's my fault'. You get four different understandings of what's

right from four different people. You're confused.

6.3.4.7 A culture of copying existed within news organisations that provided the climate for plagiarism

The existence of an underlying culture of plagiarism was put to the adjudged plagiarist and emphatically agreed with. She not only supported the proposition but added to it, saying that news organisations should take responsibility for refusing to acknowledge the unoriginality of their profession and the effect this had on reporting staff.

> *News organisations refuse to acknowledge that journalism is less an original activity, more one built upon parroting news sources. It won't own up to its essentially derivative nature… a culture of journalism? Hell yes.* She said the problem was added to by definitional confusion. *In fact, too easily. Some have got away with it forever.*

6.4 Comparative analysis of Press Council judgments and prominent plagiarism cases

The final element of the research triangulation comprised a comparative examination of New Zealand Press Council judgments, as well as prominent cases in the news, involving or about plagiarism. The numbers of these cases were not large. Since the setting up of the Press Council in 1972, to the end of 2008, only four cases related to plagiarism have come before it. Five other cases subsequently examined were examples of plagiarism prominently in the news over the same time period. These cases are discussed below. For Press Council judgments, the material is sourced to Press Council annual reports as indicated; for cases prominently in the news, the sources are news reports, as cited.

6.4.1 Synopses of plagiarism complaints made to the New Zealand Press Council, 1972—2008

Four cases ruled upon by the Press Council provided diverse illustrations of news media plagiarism: two rulings upheld complaints that aspects of plagiarism had occurred; another upheld the complaint, but expressed doubt about whether "plagiarism" was the best descriptor of the offence; and the fourth upheld a complaint that a news organisation had been wrongly accused of plagiarism. At the time of the first ruling (1986), multiple complaints from a single complainant were numbered separately by the Council. A second complaint in this case, that

material was "sensational and titillating" was dismissed. For consistency, this research records the decisions as a single complaint. The cases of plagiarism ruled upon were:

6.4.1.1 Press Council: Complaints 89 and 90, Turner against *The Dominion*

In a 1977 Press Council case former *Metro* magazine editor Warwick Roger, then a reporter for *The Dominion,* was censured for taking quotes recorded by film-maker Richard Turner for a documentary on the Black Power gang, using them without permission in two major crime stories. In those days, unlike today, the Press Council relied entirely for guidance on its judgments on a system of case law (Elsaka, 2002). The Council said Roger had agreed, "he and/or *The Dominion* failed to make adequate acknowledgement that a very large part of those two articles (including all the direct quotations) consisted of the work of Richard Turner" (Press Council, 1977). It upheld complaints that *The Dominion* had appropriated the material (Complaint 89) and that the material had been used incorrectly (Complaint 90), but dismissed a further complaint that the material had been sensational and titillating (Complaint 91). The judgment included: "He had not thought it necessary to approach the publishers of [a magazine that had earlier carried the material] to make sure they did not have an interest in the material" (p. 12). Roger was earlier upbraided by *AdMedia* magazine for, in a *North & South* story, using paragraphs as his own from Sebastian Junger novel *The Perfect Storm* (Brown, 2004).

6.4.1.2 Press Council: Case Number 283, Rabel against *the Christchurch Press*

In 1986 the Press Council ruled on a complaint from a third party that a *Christchurch Press* editorial was plagiarised from another newspaper, namely, *The Dominion* (Press Council, 1986)*.* The complaint was upheld, though the ruling was unclear whether "plagiarism" was a fair descriptor of the offence. The editorial was, however, found to have fallen below acceptable standards.

> The Press Council found that the number of identical phrases in both editorials left little doubt that the *Press* editorial writer had used material

directly and unchanged from *The Dominion.* The Council said there was no justification for the borrowing of phrases verbatim and without acknowledging from other published sources …while the Press Council thought that "plagiarism" was too strong a word in this particular case, it felt that the publication of the editorial was not consistent with acceptable journalistic standards (p. 7).

6.4.1.3 Press Council: Case Number 977: *Mountain Scene* against the *Southland Times*

Plagiarism was ruled upon in 2004 in a case in which the Press Council upheld a complaint about a *Southland Times* reporter's lifting of quotes from Queenstown paper *Mountain Scene*—but only because there was no clear attribution. The reporter had used the quotes verbatim after being declined an interview with Queenstown Airport Corporation chairman John Davies. Davies had apparently referred her to the article in question, saying it was word perfect (Press Council, 2005). The council ruled against the *Southland Times* on two counts: that by not attributing the source of quotes it left readers with a false impression that the material had been directly collated by its own staff; and for the story's claim that there had been an interview with Davies. However it cleared the paper of plagiarism by way of the main contents originating with *Mountain Scene.* The judgment at first glance appeared to rule out, blanket fashion, the practice of a reporter's confirming of, and receiving permission, before reproducing direct quotes that have appeared in another publication. But the council in a separate commentary (Press Council, 2005), clarifies the boundaries for such cases:

> If the *Southland Times* story had been correctly attributed there would have been no basis for the complaint. Because the piece failed to credit the source or make any attempt at proper attribution, the Press Council had no recourse but to rule that the "paper had breached acceptable journalism standards" (p. 9).

6.4.1.4 Press Council: Case Number 1047: *3 News* against *Bay of Plenty Times*

In 2005 the Press Council upheld a complaint from *3 News* that it had falsely been accused of plagiarism by the *Bay of Plenty Times* (Press Council, 2006). The newspaper had written in its regular column "From the Editor's Desk" that the television channel had published comments from a source who had only spoken to the newspaper. The column went on to make general complaints about inadequacies of television coverage. In its ruling the council said:

> The editor seems to have overlooked the fact that if the *Bay of Plenty Times* was able to track sources and uncover details to background the story of the day, other news organisations could do exactly the same. Editors are entitled to have strong opinions and to express them vigorously, even if some readers are offended and provoked by what they see as ignorant, wrong-headed or blatantly prejudiced remarks…At the same time the Press Council has firmly stated there is no place for blatant inaccuracy in these opinion pieces (p. 21).

It also said, however:

> It's common sense that media organisations watch each other's stories, matching and developing them if necessary, scooping them where possible, picking up leads and ideas, trying to gain advantage, trumping their rivals with their own self-generated revelations. None of this should be news to an experienced editor. The line is crossed into plagiarism where there are concerns about direct copying of a created form of words or images without permission or acknowledgement. This has to be proven precisely (p. 22).

6.4.2   Synopses of plagiarism complaints aired prominently in the news, 1972—2008

Five cases of plagiarism to be prominently aired publicly appeared to be more clear cut examples than those ruled upon by the Press Council: each were admitted by the perpetrator and involved a public naming. But, again, each illustrated diverse aspects of plagiarism practice: the first was substantially fabrication but included plagiarism of photographs; the second involved a young reporter feeling under pressure to perform; the third case was by a syndicated columnist; the fourth, a case of fabrication and plagiarism by a senior reporter;

and the fifth, by a prominent radio presenter taking material for her broadcasts from overseas.

6.4.2.1   Greg Hyam's report of the Soviet-Afghani conflict, *New Zealand Times*

In a 1985 issue of the then *New Zealand Times,* a report of the Soviet Afghani conflict, with accompanying photographs, was published under the byline of occasional correspondent Greg Hyam. On February 10, Editor Bob Fox ran a front-page apology, conceding that Hyam had been on holiday in the South Island at the time he claimed to be in Afghanistan. Hyam had admitted the hoax only after readers pointed out a similarity between his pictures and others published from other wars, including Vietnam and Lebanon. He confessed the article was entirely a fabrication, that he had never been in Afghanistan, and that all of the photographs were plagiarised (Afghan hoax, 1985).

6.4.2.2   Renee Kiriona's feature on rugby league star Tawera Nikau, *NZ Herald*

In 2004 young *New Zealand Herald* reporter Renee Kiriona, unsatisfied with her interview with rugby league star Tawera Nikau, went to the Internet for more information about him. She found a profile by a *Waikato Times* reporter, added a few pars of her own for the top, and submitted it has hers. She later re-interviewed Nikau, and sent in a second version, still containing some *Waikato Times* detail. Faced with two stories on her desk, the features' editor combined the copy (Gleeson, 2004; Brown, 2004).

6.4.2.3   Bruce Logan's columns, *Christchurch Press* et al

In 2005, Bruce Logan, head of Christian lobby group the Maxim Institute, issued a public apology for his plagiarism in columns printed in the *Press* and other publications. The plagiarism was discovered when *the Press* dropped his daughter as a columnist after a reader spotted similarities with her father's work. The New Zealand Association of Rationalists and Humanists subsequently examined Logan's work in detail, and found substantial similarities with opinion pieces published overseas, including Britain's *Daily Mail* and *The Spectator* magazine. Logan said the ideas he promoted had

"generic applicability" and deserved to be heard and debated in New Zealand (Martin, 2005). He also said he had "a habit of writing things down and forgetting where I get them from" (Hill Cone, 2005, par. 12).

6.4.2.4 John Manukia's fabricated police interview and plagiarisms (various), *NZ Herald* et al

In 2005 reporter John Manukia was sacked by the *Herald on Sunday* for fabricating a story about a South Auckland police officer. A subsequent investigation by competing group Fairfax—Manukia had earlier worked for the group's *New Zealand Truth* and *Sunday News*—found evidence of made-up quotes, made-up people, and plagiarism in a range of stories (Scoop Independent News, 2005; Scoop Independent News, 2006).

6.4.2.5 Noelle McCarthy's radio plagiarisms, *RNZ*

In 2008, Radio New Zealand presenter Noelle McCarthy was temporarily taken off air for having used plagiarised material in her broadcasts, having been found to have taken material for three broadcast essays from Britain's *Independent, Guardian* and *Observer* newspapers. She subsequently apologised, agreeing in a statement from her employer that she had breached editorial policies. After an inquiry, *RNZ* said it had identified a small number of other instances in which she had inadequately attributed information she had used during the 46 occasions she had presented the *Afternoons'* show in 2008 (Chalmers, November 27, 2008; Chalmers, November 28, 2008; Knight, 2008).

6.5 Coding of case study categories

As discussed in the Methodology, Chapter 5, coding categories were chosen to approximate those used by Lewis (2007). The categories originally included gender but although male offenders outnumbered females two to one—six male, three female—the small sample size rendered conclusions on gender culpability meaningless. The research uncovered no evidence that gender played a part in the practice. Other categories identify the department the offenders worked in; their position; their reporting or writing experience; and the paper size (circulation over 20,000 representing a larger metropolitan). Also included was the severity of the

plagiarism—substantial or limited—and the language the plagiarism was couched in by the offending publication (direct or euphemistic synonym/avoidance). Judging severity was subjective; the research proceeded on the basis that a plagiarism was substantial if it involved clear premeditation and was lacking any debate over definitional grey areas. The use of euphemistic language—avoiding the word "plagiarism"—was highlighted as an illustration of a distancing reaction by some news organisations. Though sample numbers are statistically insignificant, the responses do add to a narrative suggestive of avoidance or, at the least, discomfort by offending organisations in using the word, "plagiarism". Four of the nine cases took the euphemism route, and three of the remainder had no choice after the term "plagiarism" was used in Press Council judgments they were required to substantively publish. It is unclear whether the use of euphemism represents a reluctance to admit plagiarism but in his American study of 76 newspapers, Lewis (2007) found notable correlations between the use of a synonym and a greater severity of plagiarism and, subsequently, with outcome. "Plagiarism", he found, was commonly used where the perpetrator was to be sacked. Euphemisms, by comparison, were used to excuse or sanitise.

Figure 11: Comparative analysis of plagiarism cases

Case	Dept.	Position	Experience	Severity	Outcome	Term	CirculAtion
Turner v *Dom*	Features	Reporter	over 10yrs	Substl	Kept job	Syn	over 20000
Rabel v *Press*	Editorial	Ldr writer	over 10yrs	Limited	Kept job	Plagsm	over 20000
Mountain Scene v STL	News	Reporter	over 10yrs	Limited	Kept job	Plagsm	over 20000
3 News v *BOP Times*	News (Bcast)	Reporter	under 10yrs	Limited	Kept job	Plagsm	na
Hyam	Features	Freelance (Features)	unknown	Substl	Lost job	Syn	over 20000
Kiriona	Features	Reporter	under 10yrs	Substl	Kept job	Plagsm	over 20000
Logan	Column	Columnist	unknown	Substl	Lost job	Plagsm	over 20000
Manukia	News	Reporter	over 10yrs	Substl	Lost job	Syn	over 20000
McCarthy	Column (Bcast)	Presenter	under 10yrs	Substl	Kept job	Syn	na

The above analysis shows that exposed perpetrators overwhelmingly emanated from within the print industry, with just two broadcast examples. But apart from that distinction, all but one of the category samples defied generalisation. Cases were equally distributed among news departments: three of the cases involved news reporting, three column or editorial, and three, feature-writing. Six reporters were held up for scrutiny in regards to their work (one of them, freelance), two opinion writers (a columnist and a leader writer), and one radio presenter. But the results gave no indication that inexperience was a causal factor in plagiarism practice: four of the cases involved a practitioner of less than 10 years' experience, three of over 10 years' experience, and two could not be determined. In terms of the severity of the plagiarism, six could be judged "substantial" and three "limited", but this imbalance was to be expected in an analysis necessarily confined to cases complained about or in the news. Only three of the perpetrators were sacked for their infringement, but this has to be judged in the context of seriousness, and two of the cases could be considered problematic in ascribing plagiarism. In four of the cases, reports emanating from the transgressing news organisation, synonyms were used in place of the more damning term, "plagiarism". The cases examined entirely related to larger news organisations, newspapers with circulations over 20,000, or television or radio stations of national reach. But this too was unsurprising: it seems axiomatic that larger organisations are subject to the greater national scrutiny than smaller ones.

While providing a useful snapshot of the main plagiarism cases to come to public attention over the last three or more decades, this analysis must be understood in the context of its small size—n=9.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction

The difficulty with judging news media plagiarism—as distinct from academic or student plagiarism—is simply that news organisations are driven to provide the "news", wherever it might lie. Although as ethically bound as anyone else to honestly attribute authorship, news organisations are confronted with a perhaps unique set of requirements to "match" or supplant what is being talked or written about by their competition. Add to this requirements to tell a whole story at each publication, and to produce these stories at maximum possible speed, and the stage is set for, at best, a careless, and at worst, a deliberate theft of lines, at a disturbing frequency. This research ensued upon the observation that certain peculiarities of news media demands—including determination to have the story, a compulsion not to miss important quotes, the need to access backgrounding material, sometimes multiplicity of authorship, the need for speed—produced many grey areas in the judging of infractions.

The research further ensued from observation, from research and from insights during more than 20 years working in the industry, that management reactions to plagiarism were often inconsistent. On the one hand, a blind eye might be turned to what was subjectively considered minor borrowings; on the other, especially when plagiarism was exposed by a reader or other organisation, it could be dealt with severely. In the case of the latter, the infraction was invariably highlighted as the work of a lazy or dishonest individual, and often ending in sacking. Rarely, if ever, was context discussed, or reference made to the pressures imposed on the individual by an insatiable employer.

The following discussion will address the main issues and insights raised in the survey, interviews and the comparative analyses of cases in relation to the research questions: how do New Zealand newsrooms define journalism; how widespread or serious is news media plagiarism as perceived by journalism practitioners; what do journalists indicate are the causes of news media plagiarism; and, what theoretical model would best describe news media plagiarism practice. In regards to the last question, the discussion will examine the appropriateness of existing theory, as discussed in Chapter 4, and make suggestions for changes, where necessary, in light

of this research's results. Finally it will discuss what can be done to stop or resist the practice of news media plagiarism, and make recommendations for action.

7.2 Lessons from the results

7.2.1   How widespread and/or serious is news media plagiarism as perceived by journalism practitioners?

It is impossible to gauge from the survey or following interviews whether plagiarism within New Zealand's news media is increasing, not the least because only publicly exposed cases can be collated. But according to the results of the survey asking respondents their experiences of themselves being plagiarised, clearly a substantial amount of journalists working in the news industry believe it is. The 35 per cent of survey respondents thinking plagiarism is on the rise supports and is supported by the Pew Research Center findings cited in the literature review, that as many as one in five US journalists hold similar conviction (2007). Even if the two sets of figures cannot be held definitely as representative, they are at the least evidence of a widespread belief that plagiarism is widespread. This is backed up by the regularity of survey responses reporting examples of having been plagiarised. The Pew survey has been repeated, each time with similar findings, over several years. Whether or not news media plagiarism is on the rise, this research makes it abundantly clear that—particularly courtesy of the Internet—the exponential growth of possible sources makes news media plagiarism much simpler to perpetrate than before. News media plagiarism, by almost all accounts, is common.

Whether or nor the plagiarism taking place can be defined as serious, at first glance, could be considered even more problematic. The survey responses, however, indicate not only a substantial amount of what might be described as the minor theft of a few words, but often large-scale taking of whole quotes and entire stories. It would be hard to define the sheer size and scope of the responses in any other terms than serious.   The other side to gauging seriousness, of course, pertains to whether plagiarism per se is serious, that is, an issue to be concerned about. It would be easy to resile from overly negative judgment of a practice considered timeless, especially given the initial unconcern of all but one of the interview subjects. But it was very clear, both from the surveys and interviews,

that few had been prodded to think about the subject deeply. None acknowledged the existence of a supporting newsroom culture. But at interview's end, Dominion Post Assistant Editor Bernadette Courtney, who had started by saying unequivocally there was no problem, expressed surprise at the extent and nature of the survey results relayed to her. She also said she might have to "rethink" some of her stances. This research, identifying a culture of copying in line with an American finding (Lewis, 2007), strongly indicates a serious issue for all New Zealand newsrooms to consider and come to terms with.

7.2.2   What do journalists indicate are the causes of news media plagiarism?

The reason for a perceived large degree of plagiarism was variously attributed to reporter laziness, overwork and resourcing difficulties, deliberate or careless dropping of attributions (especially when backgrounding stories), fierce competition, and news organisations' reluctance to acknowledge other news media's contributions.   Much was made of the ease of accessing the Internet, especially for backgrounding stories, suggestive both of inadvertent taking—and of giving into temptation when material is readily available. There was also discussion about the lack of monitoring and inadequate regulatory penalties, suggestive of reporters taking advantage of lax oversight—because they could. The journalistic beliefs closely mirrored assertions posited in the literature referring to perceptions ranging from "sloppiness" to intense newsroom pressures (Mallon, 1989; Fedler, 2006). They also confirmed a widespread acknowledgement of grey areas, particularly in relation to the necessary amount of attribution, both for in-story quotes and agency taglines indicating multi-newspaper authorship.

Each of the perceived causes would appear to have validity. Clearly fundamental dishonesty, especially coinciding with the ease of theft enabled by the Internet, is a substantial cause of news media plagiarism. Equally clearly, as pointed out by respondents, the lack of fact checkers and the scarcity of monitoring controls, adds to the temptation and the onset of carelessness. But especially clear in the interviews, was the fact that not much prior thought had been given to the subject of the plagiarism. It was as if the issue was regarded as a simple one of right and wrong: when a journalist infringes, the blame is clear, and it is the journalist

deserving of penalty. Without analysis, this fitted the wisdom of most prominent journalism ethicists canvassed (Hirst & Patching, 2007; Pearson, 2007; Fedler, 2006). But, though without direct reference, the answers strongly supported a deeper progenitor, the idea that the nature or "climate" of news rooms strongly encouraged plagiarism. The idea, emerging gradually during the research, supported the solitary literary reference to a "culture of copying" (Lewis, 2007). Comments highlighting that a climate encouraging transgression is effectively set by the nature of the employing news organisations themselves are littered through the survey and interview responses. This finding in no way detracts from negative judgment of a dishonest practice, but it does open up a new area requiring examination by both the news organisations and the regulatory bodies that watch over them.

7.2.3   What types of plagiarism do journalists see as occurring?

This question was intended as a guide to understanding the nature of news media plagiarism, with the hope of leading the research towards a useful definition of the practice. Interview subjects came up with a diverse range of plagiarism types, each in part reflecting their own position and experiences, and each accentuating the difficulties of making clear definitional judgments. The most common identification was of dropped attributions during background cutting and pasting, but it was significant that the news agency news editor (Norquay) thought this was fine when drawing from other stories emanating from his own organisation, and almost all of the interviewees acknowledged "grey areas" arising out of merged copy. Similar vagueness was identified in the case of dropped part-attributions and taglines where there were multiple author sources. More clear-cut was the identified practice of taking difficult-to-match interview quotes, with almost all of the interviews declaring this was "understandable"—given the injunction of getting the news, wherever it might lie. Also identified, was the practice of re-using freelancer work without permission for the second publication, an issue worthy of further debate within the context of freelancer calls for fair pay.

While literature responses suggested the theft could be of something as small as a sentence, responses from the industry suggested an understanding of word theft that is substantial, though that term could be applied qualitatively as well as

quantitatively. Defining "substantial" from the responses is problematic. But the answers indicate that the term covers recognisable "chunks" of another's work. They also indicate the plagiarism may be perpetrated by both overt inputting of the other's work, or by the dropping of attributions or taglines. This counters the argument of a few identified researchers arguing that the offence requires a clear intent.

Also clear from the responses is that plagiarism is generally considered a moral or ethical offence, rather than a legal one. Burrows and Cheer (2005) point out that copyright and other legislation has rarely been used to crack down on the offence. And survey and interview responses would appear to overwhelmingly support this. Only a few of those surveyed favoured copyright law as a means of discouraging plagiarism.

Translating these responses into definition, requires further work. Literature examination of nearly 70 textbooks revealed no standard definition of news media plagiarism (Lewis, 2007), leading to an initial understanding that the concept must be a subjective one. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines plagiarism in terms of taking and using of the thoughts, writings, and inventions etc, of another person as one's own, the word deriving from the Latin "plagiarius", meaning, "kidnapper" (Thompson, 1995, p. 1043). The breadth of the responses, however, clearly shows this to be an inadequate definition in respect of news media plagiarism. First, both legal and ethical bodies, in line with the ethos that news exists everywhere, accept if not sanction the taking of ideas; second, the definition fails to touch on news organisation requirements to have access to all the significant news, to be able to background it and, in some instances, to have to share it through agencies or syndication with other news organisations. To be useful, any definition should include reference to the "grey areas", many of the types of plagiarism identified in this research. These issues too, as raised in the interviewee responses, need further debate.

7.2.4 What theoretical model would best describe news media plagiarism practice?

This research began in a theoretical void, with no clear direction for understanding news media plagiarism beyond the loose observation from almost all the literature that it was a wrong behaviour of individuals. Sometimes the observation came with a sympathetic addendum recognising the generating pressures of newsrooms (Pearson, 2007), but without the analytical jump acknowledging any degree of responsibility rested with the manner in which newsrooms functioned. A linear research model acknowledging, on the one hand, work pressures and a newsroom ethos to "get all the news" and, on the other, character flaws of infringing journalists, would have been an easy schematic to draw. Such understanding of the issue did not, however, sit easily with survey or interviewee responses. As discussed in Chapter 4, a more thorough theoretical analysis became possible with the identification of a model recognising, as well as individual behaviour, antecedents that refer back to organisational processes (Lewis, 2007). Lewis had proceeded from a broad investigation that found academic literature to be "quite limited", an investigation ending with an analysis entirely of American examples, though touching on an early-stage study by this researcher, the only related research he found outside the United States (p. 36):

> "*Pacific Journalism Review* carried a piece…but the article was about plagiarism in New Zealand, whose press laws and practices differ from those in the United States. No dissertations have been written on newspaper plagiarism, according to a search of the Digital Dissertations database.

The dismissal of New Zealand's findings was unfortunate: both countries share a Western press tradition encompassing strong ethical prescriptions regarding honesty, whether in regards to telling the truth or acknowledging authorship. Press codes of ethics in the two countries have striking similarities. After an analysis of Lewis's model, as follows, this research proposes a variation to fit the insights it generated.

Lewis's model starts by identifying four plagiarism types: appropriation plagiarism (blatant taking without permission), research plagiarism (blending parts of another's work into one's own without proper paraphrasing or attribution), self-plagiarism (recycling under a different name stories published previously by the

same newspaper), and idea plagiarism (using the ideas of others). The first two of these clearly comfortably fit the majority of responses highlighted in this research. But self-plagiarism is rare even in Lewis's account. Finding just two cases, he observed that the editors disagreed over whether this was in fact plagiarism and that, at best, it was an imprecise concept:

> Newspapers do not seem to mind when reporters recycle previous stories by the same newspaper; it is only when the reporter has changed employers that the newspaper objects to the reuse (p. 183).

Nevertheless, it was deemed to be worth keeping as a category because it fitted a questionable assertion of right practice by the news agency news editor (Norquay), who commonly advised his staff to take whatever they liked from the agency library without attribution. Lewis's fourth type of plagiarism—idea plagiarism—would appear to have no purpose in competitive journalism. Lewis himself acknowledges the category's inadequacy, but justifies its retention in terms of cartoons, where another's idea has generated the same or similar presentation. This seems a tenuous example: if a cartoon is reproduced in such manner, it would appear to be a clear copyright infringement rather than something commonly understood as plagiarism. Lewis's account of this category concludes: "If newspapers truly wish to engage in greater transparency, they can do worse than admit to the sources of ideas" (p. 185). But all journalists spoken to in the New Zealand research assert strongly that ideas cannot be plagiarised because it is the essence of journalism to "get the news", wherever it might lie. This stance is supported by the law: copyright rules apply to the presentation, not the idea. If nothing else, any requirement to acknowledge ideas behind stories would introduce a compliance complexity likely to inhibit newsrooms' ability to function effectively.

Causally sitting behind these types of plagiarism, Lewis posits four antecedents, two relating to individuals' flaws and, tellingly, two situational. As described in Chapter 4, the first two comprise rationalising dishonesty (justifying behaviour employed by transgressors), problematic techniques (reporting habits that are prone to error). The latter of these covers a wide range of errors carried in the survey's responses, notably careless dropping of attributions when backgrounding, or when creating stories generated from a multiplicity of authors or stories. The

next two categories, well-supported by responses in this research, are crucial for understanding the concept of an underlying culture of copying encouraging news media plagiarism. Lewis's "definitional ambiguity" refers to news organisations' avoidance of definitional clarity, failing to include the subject in ethics' codes or even meaningfully to address the issue when confronted with the practice. His "attribution aversion" potently applies to news organisations' self-expressed need to appear as the origin of the news—a chest-beating illustrated regularly on television with proclamations of exclusivity. The responses in this research can be seen to strongly support the inclusion of situational antecedents to plagiarism. At every re-reading, it became clear that in-built pressures and expectations of newsrooms played a part in many of the infringements that took place.

This part of Lewis's model fits the New Zealand research well. Most significantly, it provided the concept of an underlying "culture of copying", which in turn gave clues to a deeper understanding of the replies given. His model is particularly useful for recognising that news organisations' purpose is to get the news wherever it might lie, in turn engendering what he calls causal "mediators"—the competitive pressures behind the antecedents. Lewis draws two mediators, "deadline pressure" and "professional autonomy". His first mediator, including pressures of deadline, dwindling staff and other resources, and the required speed of news production given news' perishable nature, again, sits comfortably with the New Zealand example highlighted in survey and interviewee responses. His second mediator is particularly pertinent for capturing the perceived importance in a democracy of an organisation holding on to and asserting its independence. But, as put by Lewis, this mediator does not go far enough. While the nomenclature does cover organisational excesses in choosing to avoid giving attributions for others' copy, it misses a key issue raised in the New Zealand responses: that of certain individuals' beliefs in the freedom and right to republish without permission, such as is increasingly common on the Internet. This attitude also helps explain the disdain to criticism of some organisations, especially in respect of the antecedent of a company's attribution aversion. The New Zealand model therefore recommends the second mediator be called, "freedom ethos", an expression of the regard in which news organisations hold themselves.

Lewis's model also suffers for being, in parts, too rigid: cause can not always be clearly compartmentalised. Based on the New Zealand research, the amended model (Figure 12) is therefore proposed, starting with a broadening of the professional autonomy definition, using the revised term of "freedom ethos"—coined to include professional autonomy, but also the concept of a widely-perceived freedom to republish at will, as asserted by libertarians and others, including many Internet writers. A self-plagiarism category is kept, though acknowledging its rarity and problematic nature. The category type of "idea plagiarism", in light of common journalistic understanding, is dropped.

Figure 12: A plagiarism model suitable for NZ
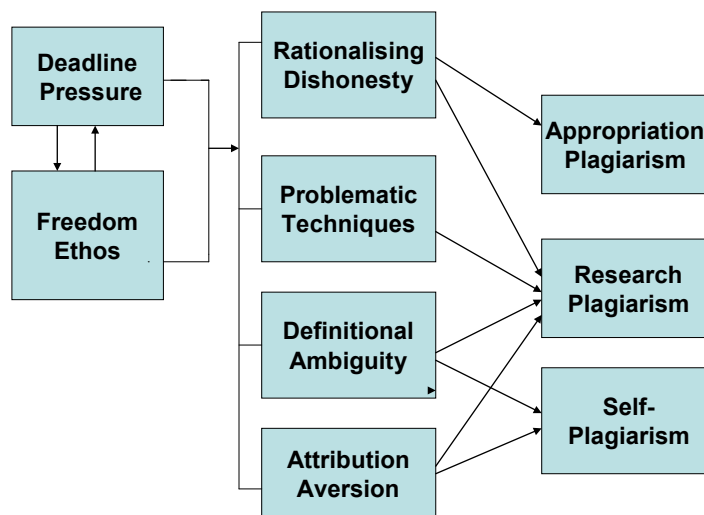
7.3   Conclusions

Individualised plagiarism (per the above model) is not just about cynical dishonesty. The diverse perceptions promoted in the surveys and interviews highlighted that there are many causes, from honest mistake to faulty techniques used in grabbing background material. The responses show that plagiarism can be, in some instances, simply about carelessness born of haste—or an inability to grasp complex subjects. A lack of intent behind such plagiarism, it could be argued, does not remove the offence, though it is tempting to regard certain of these examples as less blameworthy than others. At the least, lack of intent and, sometimes, even

carelessness, might be regarded as mitigating factors. Individualised plagiarism, regarded in this way, seems relatively easy to make conclusions about: it is clearly wrong and, whether involving dishonesty or problematic techniques, needs to be addressed by the news media themselves.

But this research has thrown up a greater complexity for the news industry to come to terms with—that news media plagiarism is also about the behaviour and practices of the news media organisations themselves. Without acknowledging these situational plagiarisms, this underlying "culture of copying", it is hard to imagine that a clearly widespread plagiarism extant in New Zealand can be seriously countered. This newsroom climate, whether overtly or without thought, is evidenced most clearly in the way newsrooms discourage attribution. This research strongly supports Lewis's finding: "Newspapers can cause plagiarism behavior by teaching employees to minimize or avoid attribution and by failing to define through policies and practice what is acceptable borrowing and what is unacceptable plagiarism" (2007, p. 202).

As identified above, newsroom behaviours are themselves generated by, as well as deadline pressures, a sense of autonomy or control this research would term "freedom ethos". Behind the newsroom climate, news organisations contribute to attribution avoidance or confusion by engaging in a pretence that journalism is an original enterprise instead of derivative repackaging of information (Lewis, 2007). This research would maintain that some also contribute to avoidance by asserting a self-proclaimed right or freedom to republish anything in the public domain—an ethos of freedom.

One corollary of this is the appreciation that there are inevitably grey areas peculiar to journalism. These notably include the use of one agency tagline for a story of multiple news organisation origin. Few would expect to read in their morning newspaper a story tagged, "By NZPA, Reuters, AP (Associated Press), AAP (Australian Associated Press) and AFP (Agence France Press)". But in simplifying authorship to the latest feed, true credit for authorship has been removed. Another grey area is the stated (NZPA) agency practice of allowing backgrounding without attribution, if the backgrounding draws from earlier agency stories, a practice

stemming from ownership claims by the agency. Yet another is the repeating of hard-to-get, but necessary quotes, in some cases with the permission of the interview subject. One could also refer here to the unique haste of daily journalism, often engendering carelessness in gathering background material and in paraphrasing. If news media plagiarism definitions were too strictly applied, there might be few journalists able to claim guilt-free careers.

Liberal use of attribution, of course, would make much of the problem disappear. However, any resolution to the problem has to begin with an acceptance that there is a problem (Press Council, 2005):

> The only possible way to confront the dilemma is to start by recognising that the intrinsic dishonesty of plagiarism is the same whether from electronic or non-electronic sources, PR press releases or a book…it is possible that under pressure from the sheer amount of material accessible via the Internet, the understanding of what constitutes plagiarism can "fray at the edges". That does not mean we should accept dishonesty, rather that there is a need for increased debate and consideration (p. 11).

Clearly, setting aside blatantly dishonest practices, the most significant source of wrongdoing is the newsrooms themselves. The Council's report could have included a recommendation that such recognition should also be turned upon the way newsrooms function. One result of such recognition might be to question the degree of penalty or oversight that should be handed down, at least for minor transgressions. Is sacking or public humiliation necessarily the best response for a young reporter under pressure to produce a story, or understanding? More importantly, should news organisations re-assess their newsroom processes or, at the very least, the manner in which they impose their expectations on to their journalism staff? Watchdog bodies the New Zealand Press Council and the Broadcasting Standards Authority might also give consideration in their rulings as to whether the full wrath of judgments should be directed only at the perpetrators.

7.4   Recommendations

The call for debate within the news media would appear to be a necessary first step in confronting news media plagiarism. This should start with a broad-based news media discussion of the ethics of the matter, as with all ethical dilemmas facing

journalists, beyond the level of "intuitive morality". At the very least, news media organisations need to recognise and acknowledge the role of their newsroom structures and processes in generating the practice.

Secondly, clear definitions of news media plagiarism need to be developed. Common definitions referring to theft of words provide a broad parameter of concern. But news industry peculiarities and grey areas highlighted in this research make it clear that a lack of a precise definition in the industry's several ethical codes leaves room for misunderstanding.   It would be helpful to all industry workers, if clear definitional parameters could be drawn. And given the identifying of a culture of copying, this debate should be guided by a higher direction than individual editors. New Zealand's two dominant newspaper chains, Fairfax New Zealand and APN News and Media, as well as the Newspapers Publishers' Association of New Zealand (which could bring in the viewpoints of the independents), and the New Zealand Press Council, not to mention an academic input, could all play a useful role.

Thirdly, as electronic wizardry makes plagiarism easier, it seems sensible for the industry to heighten its sensitivity to it. The issue of how to deal practically with plagiarism in the news media is clearly a difficult one. In the academic world, it is being confronted head-on by website advice like www.plagiarism.org and programs like Turnitin and iThenticate, the latter being programs that scan and compare hundreds of millions of pages of essays and exam papers posted on the Internet. Cheaters are also caught by a simple Googling of words or paragraphs of submitted works. Where there is a hint of suspicion the latter technique in particular could easily be introduced into the newsroom, though busy subeditors faced with deadlines might quickly grow impatient of a policing role. And as a check, such systems are far from pervasive and foolproof. Consideration might be given to the industry developing its own electronic detection programs. But whether such measures would be practical, or helpful, should also be the subject of industry discussion. As a result of this research, the news organisations might also be enjoined to reassess attitudes and processes.

It is to be hoped that this level of ideological rethink would lead to a reassessment of news organisation attitudes and processes. The argument is not about setting up cumbersome new administrative structures, nor about softening or removing pressing injunctions to "get the news". Rather, it might be recommended that these organisations engage in some self-evaluation of the effect of their injunctions. Just recognising the effect on journalists of clarion calls to get the story at any cost, would logically lead to clear advice to staff that attribution of authorship remained paramount, whatever the day's pressures. Setting aside extreme cases of individual dishonesty, that alone would surely result in a lessening of plagiarism cases. It seems reasonable to expect that even the acknowledgement by news organisations of a culture of copying would mitigate against the practice.

Another result of such self-evaluation, might be a re-acknowledgement or restatement of assigning value to authorship. Often in the frenetic world of journalism, original authorship would appear to be subsumed in a presentation geared toward proclaiming news organisation ownership. Young community newspaper reporter Emma Dawe was unequivocal in asserting her belief that the temptation to steal would largely disappear if the author's name was routinely attached to ever story. "I'm a big byline fan. For that reason. For accountability. If you don't want to put your name on your story, perhaps there's an ulterior motive." Few news organisations would accede to such universality, because bylines are commonly regarded as acknowledgement or reward for good or comprehensive work. But Dawe has put her finger on the need to acknowledge original authorship—especially for material within stories drawn from elsewhere. If such accountability through attribution became the norm, it is inconceivable that newsroom plagiarism could do anything but substantially diminish.

APPENDIX A: Permissions from interviewees

Re: Ethical approval for Masterate research of Alan Samson

To Whom It May Concern:

I understand that the information I have imparted in interviews with Massey University School of Journalism lecturer Alan Samson, is to be used in his Masterate thesis on news media plagiarism, and may subsequently be repeated in an academic publication and conference.   I also understand that, as a senior news media contributor, I am likely to be named in the publications, and am happy to be so.

Yours Sincerely,

Kevin Norquay
News Editor
New Zealand Press Association

APPENDIX B: Survey plagiarism questions

15.   Has your own journalism ever been plagiarised?

Yes

No

16.   If yes, how often. Give brief details of *how,* and the medium you were plagiarised in. E.g. was it in a newspaper, radio, internet etc

17.   Has this (or most of this) plagiarism been:

* A few words/sentences, such as for backgrounding

* Whole quotes lifted without attribution

* Quotes and text lifted without attribution

* Entire story plagiarised

18.   Do you consider plagiarism a growing problem?

Yes

No

19.   If yes, why do you think this is, and what should be done about it?

APPENDIX C: Question template for interviewees

From 517 responses (in print, radio and TV to editors and freelancers), 235 comments on the issue, how it's perceived, with thoughts on how to deal with it.

Nature and extent of plagiarism
1. Is plagiarism a problem in this country? How common?
2. Is it getting worse?
3. On a scale of 1 to 5, five being the most serious?
4. If so, why so?
5. Broadly, how would you define plagiarism?
6. What are your experiences – on the extent and nature of the phenomenon as you have observed it?

Survey responses suggest some of the most common forms of plagiarism are:
- Taking quotes of difficult-to-match people
- Small offices/organisations from other media, including community radio and internet, lifting news items
- Not attributing or withholding attribution, including of bylines with copy sharing between news groups
- Cutting and pasting for background
- Breaking copyright rules (as, a paper syndicating a freelancer's work

Do you agree? Why or why not?

Reasons for plagiarism
They suggest the most important reasons are:
- the Internet
- laziness
- dwindling resources
- inadequate monitoring/regulation
- end of copy sharing, media competition

Do you agree these are the most? Why or why not?

Solutions
Suggested solutions include:
1. Regulatory bodies need more clout
2. Editors need to copy check/insist on attribution
3. Guidelines/some sort of directives need to be set up
4. Financial sanctions against Internet infringers.
5. Monitoring mechanism on each publication
6. Copyright breaches need to be pursued and prosecuted
7. Naming and shaming
8. Random checks of journalists' work
9. Zero tolerance policy implemented
10. Taught more strongly at universities/polys: ethics, checking sources, attribution rules
11. Employ more staff.
12. Resource fact checking.
13. Pay staff more and work on encouraging job satisfaction
14. Develop a web tool to be applied
15. Give everyone bylines

Any final thoughts?

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