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Back to the Merton ideals? Corporate fraud, scientific dishonesty, and the need to reform academic institutions and identity

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Abstract

For a long time, plagiarism and data manipulation have been dealt with as serious issues in science and medicine. Reluctantly, academic dishonesty and manipulation are also becoming important issues in social sciences, with prestigious journals recently retracting several published and highly cited papers. This paper provides statistics on retracted papers during the last 12 years in management and economics as reported in several comprehensive databases, Ebsco Business Source Premier, Emerald, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, Springer, Taylor & Francis Online and Wiley Online Library and analyzes which, if any, explicit policies journals have formulated in this area. Drawing on recent analyses of persistent corporate fraud, the paper discusses the role of similar mechanisms for the non-discovery of academic fraud, such as institutional endorsement and ascription, fragmented control and mimetic herding. This analysis is related to current forms of academic identity construction, where publications outlets and numbers trump substance, and referencing is more important than reading or reflecting. The paper ends with a menu of possible remedies, from journal policies and the practices of employment committees to the everyday actions of individual academics.

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Back to the Merton ideals? Corporate fraud, scientific dishonesty, and the need to reform academic institutions and identity

1. Introduction

In 2002, a giant case of corporate fraud, the Parmalat case, exploded in Italy. “According to the Public Prosecutor, fraud had commenced in 1990 and continued undetected for twelve years. Few, if any, financial observers had seen through it. Until late 2002 securities analysts consistently issued positive recommendations of Parmalat’s stock.... /until/ Parmalat filed for bankruptcy protection on 24 December, 2002... As *Time Magazine* (2004) pointed out, ‘one huge mystery remains: how could such a crude forgery have continued for so long, and on such a massive scale?’” (Gabbioneta, Greenwood, Mazzola, & Minoja, 2012: 3, 10).

Nine years later, another case of massive fraud was exposed, but now in the academic field: the Diederik Stapel-case. At the time of writing (13 02 08), forty-eight (48) of the papers published by this once leading Dutch psychologist in established academic journals are retracted – with more to come. And the same ‘Parmalat question’ is asked: “One of the great unanswered questions about the Stapel affair is how he got away with such blatant number-fudging, especially in a discipline that claims to be chock full of intellectual safe-guards, from peer review to replication by competitive colleagues. How can proper science go so wrong?” (Brean, 2011).

For a long time, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty have been dealt with as a serious issue in science and medicine, as documented by Furman, Jensen and Murray (2012) in their analysis of 677 retracted papers in biomedicine 1972-2006. Reluctantly, plagiarism and manipulation have also become important issues in social sciences and management, with prestigious journals such as *Research Policy* and *Organization Science* recently retracting several published papers (Lichtenthaler, 2009a, 2010). There are strong reasons to believe the suggestion in *Research Policy* (Furman et al., 2012:288):“...that within the vast under-scrutinized literature much false science remains unacknowledged”. This conjecture is supported by various that several forms of academic dishonesty is on the rise, “more extensive than previously thought, and often does not result in detection or sanctioning of the plagiarist when discovered” Lewis, Jonathan, and Douglas

Beets, 2011: 491).

Against this background the purpose of this paper is threefold:

- + to provide data on the retracted papers during the last decade in business and economics and document journal policies (if any) to combat this problem,
- + to suggest an explanation, inspired by institutional analyses of corporate fraud, to the question why many forms of academic fraud tend to go undetected for such a long time, i.e. to answer the question “why can they get away with it”.
- + to propose a range of remedies, on the individual and institutional levels, which could reduce the occurrence of fraud in economics and management, in the process also increase the general quality of publications in terms of their contribution and generative interest.

The paper is structured as follows: Next, we present key elements in a recent institutional analysis of corporate fraud (Gabbioneta et al., 2012), complemented by observations on academic publishing and identity building in Alvesson & Sandberg (2013). The next section provides a short description of methods and data selection. This is followed by a section detailing 12 years of retractions in management and economics journals, and the few explicit journal policies in relation to the problem which we have been able to identify. In the analytical section the institutional framework used in analyzing corporate fraud is applied to the academic arena, complemented by the reflection comments on academic identity building in Alvesson & Sandberg (2013). The final section is devoted to remedies and actions: what journals and editors can and should do, what academic “rating agencies” and search engines should be required to do, and what we all as active academics might do when reflecting on ourselves and reviewing our colleagues.

2. Academic dishonesty and the analysis of corporate fraud

During the last 10 years, studies on dishonesty in universities have increased rapidly (Honig and Bedi, 2012). Many of them, however, focus on dishonest behavior among students (Arhin and Jones, 2009; Jensen, Arnett, Feldman, and Cauffman, 2002; Küçüktepe, 2011; Şendağ, Duran, and Fraser, 2012). There is now also a considerable number of studies on plagiarism and dishonesty among academic researchers in various sciences (see Bartlett, 2005; Clarke,

2006; Collberg and Kobourov, 2005; Enders and Hoover, 2006; Gill, 2006; Lacetera and Zirulia, 2011). Recently, studies on plagiarism and academic dishonesty in the fields of economics and business have also started to increase. An example is Honig and Bedi (2012), who found that almost 1 of 4 papers submitted to the Academy of Management conference contain some degree of plagiarism. There is a paucity of management and economics journals in accounts of retracted papers, however, leading to the observation by Lewis et al (2011: 492): “business professions and their journals for example could suffer from the perception that plagiarism is not taken seriously...” In a survey to economic journals regarding their strategies related to plagiarism, Enders and Hoover (2004) found that most editors in this field tended to deny the existence of the problem, and if encountering plagiarism, preferred to avoid publicity. Thus in responding to the question: “*In a clear case of plagiarism, which of the following are appropriate responses?*” only 30% indicated that a public notice of plagiarism would be the most likely response (Enders & Hoover, 2004:490).

To understand and deal with the problem of academic dishonesty, one important topic concerns the motives of the fraudsters. An even more important topic, however, concerns the norms, institutions and mechanisms which make fraud, and serial fraud, possible. For the analysis of this problem, studies of corporate fraud are an important inspiration. In the following we will build on the account of the infamous Parmalat case in Gabbioneta et al (2012). Parmalat was a globally expanding Italian firm in the food packaging industry which was widely seen as a highly successful modern corporation. This, however, was based on fraudulent accounting which could go on for more than 10 years in spite of the company’s high visibility, its high-profile auditing firms, and recurrent cooperation with leading investment banks. The analysis by Gabbioneta et al. (2012) pointed to several mechanisms explaining this paradox, such as institutional endorsement, fragmented control, institutional ascription and mimetic herding.

The strategy of Parmalat was one of acquisition-led growth financed through debt, which conformed closely to the prevailing wisdom of financial markets. As a result it was consistently endorsed by investment bankers, analysts and financial media, and this in turn reduced the incentives for a critical scrutiny of the net outcome of the firm’s many and far flung acquisitions. Moreover, the control of the complex corporation was fatally fragmented, with one firm, Deloitte & Touche, responsible for auditing the Group reports, and another firm for the detailed auditing of its subsidiaries. This fragmentation was not seriously

discussed in the financial community, since “securities analysts and institutional investors typically do not collect and examine accounts embracing all the companies within a corporate group. Instead, they rely on the group’s *consolidated* accounts and the accounts of its major subsidiaries. ...” (Gabbioneta et al., 2012: 12)

Processes of institutional ascription and mimetic herding were also at play. Many different professionals - auditors, financial analysts, regulators, etc. - were supposed to analyze and control the expanding company, but these professionals tended to “become mutually over-confident and over-influenced *by each other* to the extent that their independent critical assessments and judgments are compromised (Gabbioneta et al. 2012:1).....Even though professional gatekeepers are supposedly ‘independent’ and are expected (and claim) to conduct their own analyses, they each assume that other professional firms – including audit firms – are behaving ‘professionally’ – i.e., professionals ascribe professional diligence to other professionals /../ and are thus clearly vulnerable if an integral link in the network – in our case, the audit firms – fails to meet those expectations.” (Gabbioneta et al., 2012:15). Moreover, the various professions involved tended to assume that others in the network were conducting independent analyses and thorough control “even as they themselves practice mimetic herding”. (Gabbioneta et al., 2012:16).

As we will discuss in the analysis (section 5) similar processes seem to be at work in the academic world contributing to the problem of academic fraud. A related concern, discussed by Alvesson & Sandberg (2013) in another but highly relevant context, is the current forms of academic identity construction and publishing behavior: - “Who am I? I am a person who has published in this or that journal. We see indications of this identity construction all the time in author presentations in journals. Here, many people mention affiliation and then emphasize where they have published. ... A particularly problematic effect of constructing an identity based on where you publish is that ...researchers start to care more about the publication outlet than the actual research contribution” (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013:136)

This focus on *where* rather than *what* has important consequences for what used to be a core academic activity, careful and conscientious reading: “...if a colleague peeks into your office and sees you are reading a book you almost feel embarrassed and guilty; you are supposed to write papers not reading books....for many reading (with the notable exception of reading for the purpose of writing a peer review) has become a less important activity than

writing. This leads to the possibility of academics writing for fellow writers, which are only interested in ‘casting their eyes on whatever promotes their own writing agendas’ ...”

(Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013:136)

As will be discussed below, this way of constructing identity has serious consequences for the possibilities to maintain the academic virtues of rigor and critical scrutiny, and for exercising meaningful control.

3. Method: Definitions and databases.

There are several definitions of academic dishonesty in the literature (Tibbetts, 1999; McCabe and Bowers, 1994). This paper uses the following definition by Lambert, Hogan and Barton (2003): Academic dishonesty is the “*fraudulent action or attempt by a writer or writers to use unauthorized or unacceptable means in any academic work*”. Several forms of academic dishonesty such as fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, duplication, least publishable units, and neglecting support (Akbulut, Şendağ, Birinci, Kılıçer, Şahin and Odabaş, 2008) are defined in the literature. There are different definitions of these kinds of academic dishonesty. Some of those definitions include the following:

- “*Fabrication is the use of invented, counterfeited, altered or forged information or data*” (Akbulut et. al. 2008:464),
- “*Falsification is manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record*” (Pimple, 2002:195).
- “*Duplication misrepresents the work as original and a contribution to the literature*” (Broome, 2004).
- “*Least publishable units is slicing the results of a study to publish in several places in a way that deteriorates the integrity of the study*” (Akbulut et al. 2008: 464).

In this list, “duplication” can be seen as a synonym for plagiarism but plagiarism is only one form of academic dishonesty. The Free Dictionary (2012) defines plagiarism as “*the appropriation of another person’s ideas, processes, results or words without giving appropriate credit*”. Scholars define plagiarism in a similar vein; however, some extend the definition, adding that “*plagiarism involves intentionality*” (Fialkoff, 1993; Honig and Bedi, 2012:102). While many scholars use this definition, several papers have added *self-plagiarism*

in their discussions, editorial forewords (Chalmers, 2009; Dellavalle, Banks and Ellis, 2007; Smith, 2007) or empirical studies (i.e. Honig and Bedi, 2012). In this paper both plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be examined.

To analyze the occurrence of and reaction against academic dishonesty and plagiarism in management and economics journals, this paper builds on recent news reports, a review of the existing literature, and retractions as reported in online databases for the period 2001 – 2012. We used the key words, “Plagiarism”, “Academic Dishonesty”, “Retraction Notice”, “Retracted Paper”, “Statement of Retraction”, to search for retractions in Business Source Premier, Emerald, ScienceDirect, JSTOR Springer, Taylor & Francis Online and Wiley Online Library. They cover all leading business and economics journals. We also searched these databases for explicit policies dealing with academic dishonesty, using the keywords “Retraction Letter”, “Plagiarism Policy”, “Academic Dishonesty Policy” and “Originality Policy”. The paper also includes updates from the website RetractionWatch (<http://retractionwatch.wordpress.com>), which was launched in 2010 by two entrepreneurial science journalists with the intention to list all publicly retracted papers. Each identified item (retracted papers, etc.) was counted one by one and double counts were eliminated.

The search has several limitations. One concerns the exact number of economics and business journals currently published. The Business Source Complete states that it covers “nearly 2,000 peer-reviewed journals” (Ebsco Business Source Premier, 2013b). JSTOR (2013b) announces that it contains 1144 business and management journals. ScienceDirect Publisher Elsevier declares that it includes more than 200 business and economics journals (ScienceDirect, 2013b). Springer reports that it has 142 business and 171 economics journals in its database (Springer, 2013b). Taylor & Francis Online states that it has 249 Economics, Finance, Business & Industry related journals in its database (Taylor & Francis Online, 2013b). Finally Wiley Online Library announces that 171 management, 159 Economics, 44 Finance and accounting 44 journals (Wiley Online Library, 2013b). On this basis, it can be said that the paper is based on sources covering at least 2000 management and economics journals. The key words used in our study constitute another possible limitation, since some journals might use other terms to state the same act.

4. Retractions: Published responses to manipulation and plagiarism

How does the academic community react when confronted with plagiarism or outright

number-fudging? In the Stapel case (see introduction), three investigative university committees were initiated in the Netherlands, Tilburg University launched a criminal fraud case, Diederik Stapel himself returned his PhD and sought mental health care (Brean, 2011), but later returned to the publishing field by mean of his autobiography! (Borsboom and Wagenmakers, 2013) In some other reported cases, the consequences for the misbehaving individual have also been severe, including dismissals; see for example Dalton (2002) regarding one previously distinguished researcher at Bell Labs, who was later fired (Service, 2002). Another case is Milena Penkowa at the University of Copenhagen who after an investigation of her publications by an international panel resigned from her work (Investigation into the research of Milena Penkowa, 2012). In a few cases, probably less than 10, misbehaving authors have been punished with publishing bans for various period of time (see RetractionWatch, 2013b). In the recent Lichtenthaler case, however, which involved manipulated papers in several leading journals (seven retractions as of late 2012), there is no public information regarding other personal consequences for the manipulator, and to our knowledge, no publishing ban has been announced by any journal.

Against this background our discussion below how the academic community reacts on exposed dishonesty will squarely focus on retractions. Also here it is difficult to find robust data, however, since the reported numbers of retracted papers vary across databases. According to a search using the key word “retracted paper” in the ScienceDirect database over 700 papers were retracted from scientific journals, most of them medical journals between December 1985 and November 2012. See also Furman et al (2012). As for management, ScienceDirect indicates that only a few journals have retracted published papers. One of them is *Research Policy* which retracted two papers of Lichtenthaler published in 2010 and 2009 (Lichtenthaler, 2010; Lichtenthaler, 2009a), and one paper of Gottinger, published in 1993 (Gottinger, 1993; Research Policy, 2007). A similar search on “retracted paper” in the EBSCO Business Source Premier database identified more than 20 papers with a retraction notice in management and business journals, whereas a search in the Emerald database uncovered only 7 retraction notices from management journals such as *Journal of Business Strategy*, *Management Decision* and *Journal of Services Marketing*.

Academic business journals tend to behave inconsistently in relation to plagiarism and manipulation across papers, however. In the Lichtenthaler case, the Retraction note in *Research Policy* mentioned several other suspicious papers by the same author published in

other journals (Research Policy, 2012). Following this note, *Organization Science* (Lichtenthaler, Ernst and Hoegl, 2010) and *Strategic Organization Journal* (Lichtenthaler & Ernst, 2009a) retracted the involved papers. However neither *R&D Management* (Lichtenthaler 2009b) nor *Journal of Production Innovation Management* (Lichtenthaler & Ernst, 2009b) have so far retracted their mentioned papers.

According to our consolidated count, based on these three databases EBSCO, Emerald and Science Direct, business journals retracted 41 papers between 2001 and February 2013 (and retracted no papers before 2001. For an overview see Table 1. (The authors of this paper will be grateful for any additional information or retraction will be suggested by readers).

Table 1 List of Retracted Papers at Business Journals

No	Author(s)	Title	Pub Year	Ret Year	Journal
1	Dias Leal C. L., José Barroso Castañón A., Ferreira Castro P.	Stabilizing additives in stone mastic asphalt	2008	Feb 2013	<i>Clean Technologies and Environmental Policy</i>
2	Jones P., Comfort Daphne & Hillier D.	Marketing Sustainable Consumption Within Stores: A Case Study of the UK's Leading Food Retailers	2012	Feb 2013	<i>J. of Food Products Mark eting</i>
3	Rathnayake C.	Romance of Leadership in the Public Sector Higher Education in Sri Lank	2010	Jan 2013	<i>Int. J. of Public Administratio n</i>
4	Choudhury K.	Service Quality Dimensionality: A Study of the Indian Banking Sector	2007	Dec 2012	<i>J. of Asia- Pacific Business</i>
5	Lichtenthaler U, Ernst H.	Technology licensing strategies: the interaction of process and content characteristics	2009	Nov 2012	<i>Strategic Organization</i>
6	Lichtenthaler U, Erns E, Hoegl M.	Not-Sold-Here: How Attitudes Influence External Knowledge Exploitation.	2010	Nov 2012	<i>Organization Science</i>
7	Ernst H., Lichtenthaler U. & Vogt C.	The Impact of Accumulating and Reactivating Technological Experience on Research and Development Alliance Performance	Mar 2011	Nov 2012	<i>J. of Management Studies</i>
8	Lichtenthaler U. & Ernst H.	Integrated knowledge exploitation: The complementarity of product development and technology licensing	May 2012	Nov2012	<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>
9	Lichtenthaler U.	Product business, foreign direct investment, and licensing: Examining their relationships in international technology exploitation	Oct 2009	Oct 2012	<i>J. of World Business</i>

Table 1 List of Retracted Papers at Business Journals (Cont.)

No	Author(s)	Title	Pub Year	Ret Year	Journal
10	Trampe D., Stapel, D., A, Siero, F. W., & Mulder, H.	Beauty as a tool: The effect of model attractiveness, product relevance, and elaboration likelihood on advertising effectiveness	Dec 2010	Oct 2012	<i>Psychology & Marketing</i>
11	Haverila M.J.	Behavioral Aspects of Cell Phone Usage among Youth: An Exploratory Study	2012	Jul 2012	<i>J. of International Consumer Marketing</i>
12	Lichtenthaler, U.	The role of corporate technology strategy and patent portfolios in low-, medium- and high-technology firms	Apr 2009	June 2012	<i>Research Policy</i>
13	Lichtenthaler, U.	Determinants of proactive and reactive technology licensing: A contingency perspective	Feb 2010	June 2012	<i>Research Policy</i>
14	Brouillat E.	An evolutionary model of recycling and product lifetime extension	May 2009	Oct 2012	<i>Tech. Forecasting and Social Change</i>
15	Liu J, Smeesters D. & Trampe D.	The Effects of Messiness on Preferences for Simplicity	Jun 2012	Aug 2012	<i>J. of Consumer Research</i>
16	Trampe D., Stapel A.D. & Siero F. W.	The Self-Activation Effect of Advertisements: Ads Can Affect Whether and How Consumers Think about the Self	Apr 2011	Aug 2012	<i>J. of Consumer Research</i>
17	Balan, S.; Vrat, P.& Kumar, P.	Information distortion in a supply chain and its mitigation using soft computing approach	Apr 2009	Aug 2012	<i>Omega</i>
18	Bobot, L.	Conflict Management in Buyer-Seller Relationships	2010	Summer 2012	<i>Conflict Resolution Quarterly</i>
19	Soroor J., Tarokh M. J., Khoshalhan F. & Sajjad S.	Coordinated supplier bid selection based on customer order placement using an autonomous F-AHP-QFD oriented methodology	Sep 2011	Jun 2012	<i>Int. J. of Production Research</i>
20	Headey B., Muffels R., Wagner G. G.	Choices Which Change Life Satisfaction: Revising SWB Theory to Account for Change	2010	May 2012	<i>Social Indicators Research</i>
21	O.Anis & Mohamed F.	Failure Factors in Tunisian Micro-enterprises :Introspection through Cognitive Mapping	Dec 2011	Apr 2012	<i>J. of Small Business & Entrepreneurship</i>
22	Tseng H-C, Duan C-H., Tung H.-L., Kung H.-J.	Modern business ethics research: Concepts, theories and Relationships	2010	2012	<i>J. of Business Ethics</i>
23	Iselin E. R., Lokman M. & Sands J.	Multi-perspective strategic goal setting, performance reporting and organizational performance	2008	2012	<i>J. of Applied Accounting Research</i>
24	Lionel Bobot	Functional and dysfunctional conflicts in retailer-supplier relationship	2011	2012	<i>Inter.J. of Retail & Distribution Management</i>
25	Ma. L, Jiang X., Wang J., Xu Z., Li Z.	Study on the expression specifications of geometrical products for function, design, manufacture and verification based on the improved GPS language	2007	Dec 2011	<i>International Journal of Advance Manufacturing</i>
26	Wang, F.; Lin, J. & Liu, X.	Three-dimensional model of customer order decoupling point position in mass customisation	Jul 2010	Jul2011	<i>Inter. J. of Production Research</i>

Table 1 List of Retracted Papers at Business Journals (Cont.)

No	Author(s)	Title	Pub Year	Ret Year	Journal
27	Guerrero S. & Herrbach O.	The impact of development and information sharing practices on employee retention-related attitudes: exploring the mediating role of organizational trust	Dec 2009	Dec 2011	<i>Human Resource Management J.</i>
28	Tang, K.; Robinson, D. A. & Harvey, M.	Sustainability Managers or Rogue Mid-Managers?: A Typology of Corporate Sustainability Managers	2011	Sep 2011	<i>Management Decision</i>
29	<u>Mosley</u> P.	Trust and conditionality; Or, can the World Bank 'Leopard' change its spots?	2011	Sep 2011	<i>The Review of International Organizations</i>
30	Wang, S.D.; Zhou, Y.W. & Wang, J.P.	Coordinating ordering, pricing and advertising policies for a supply chain with random demand and two production modes	2010	Oct2011	<i>Inter. Journal of Production Economics</i>
31	Liu, F.Y.	Pricing Currency Option Based on Fuzzy Techniques	2009	Mar 2010	<i>European Journal of Operational Research</i>
32	Liu C.M.	The perceptions of waiters and customers on restaurant tipping	2008	2010	<i>J. of Services Marketing.</i>
33	Anderson J.	Expanding globally with local vision: foreign market entry and the value chain	2009	2010	<i>J. of Business Strategy</i>
34	Yang, L. & Shen, H.	A pilot study on facial anthropometric dimensions of the Chinese population for half-mask respirator design and sizing	2008	Sep 2009	<i>Inter. Journal of Industrial Ergonomics</i>
35	Hamalainen P., Hall M., & Howcroft B.	A Framework for Market Discipline in Bank Regulatory Design	Feb 2005	Sep 2009	<i>J. of Business Finance & Accounting</i>
36	Gottinger H. W.	Estimating demand for SDI-related spin-off technologies	Feb 1993	Sep 2007	<i>Research Policy</i>
37	Carosa, C.	Passive Investing: The Emperor Exposed?	Oct 2005	May 2007	<i>J. of Financial Planning</i>
38	Sheu S.H. & Yang L.	The Generally Weighted Moving Average Control Chart for Monitoring the Process Median	Jul 2006	Jan 2007	<i>Quality Engineering</i>
39	Papadoulis, K. J.	European Integration, Europeanization and Administrative Convergence: The Greek Case	Jun 2005	Sep 2005	<i>J. of Common Market Studies</i>
40	Naser, K. & Nuseibeh, R.	User's Perceptions of Corporate Reporting: Evidence from Saudi Arabia	Jun 2003	Jun 2005	<i>British Accounting Review</i>
41	Bellmann K. & Khare A.	A systems dynamic perspective on the development of recycling strategy for end-of-life vehicles	Aug 2001	Unknown	<i>Technovation</i>

Source: Ebsco Business Source Premier (2013a), Emerald (2013), JSTOR (2013a) ScienceDirect (2013a), Springer(2013a), Taylor & Francis Online(2013a), Wiley Online Library(2013a), Karabag and Berggren (2012).

*The articles are ordered according to their retraction years (Ret. Year).

To assess the number of retractions in economics journals, we searched the databases Business Source Premier, Emerald, JSTOR and ScienceDirect. The JSTOR database contains more than 170 economics journals, but the search in this database identified only one paper as

retracted in 2007 (Gerking and Morgon 2007). Although the title is Retraction note, the note reports corrections in the paper which is still in the database, Gerking and Morgon (2007). Apart from this paper, there was no other 'Retraction Notice', 'Retracted Paper Notice', 'Retraction Letter' or 'Statement of Retraction' listed in any of the economics journals in this database. Another database, *Emerald*, did not show any retractions of economic papers. A search in ScienceDirect resulted in 5 retracted papers. A summary of all identified retracted economics papers is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. List of Papers Retracted from Economics Journals*

No	Author(s)	Title	Pub. Year	Ret. Year	Journal
1	Rosoi G. N.	Financial integration and international transmission of business cycles: evidence from dynamic correlations	May 2012	Nov 2012	<i>Applied Economics Letters</i>
2	Flyvbjerg B., Skamris Holm M. K. and Buhl S. L.	Inaccuracy in Traffic Forecasts	2006	Mar 2012	<i>Transport Reviews</i>
3	Oteng-Ababio M.	Economic Boom or Environmental Doom: E-waste Scavenging as a Livelihood Strategy among the Youth in Accra, Ghana	2011	Mar 2012	<i>Urban Forum</i>
4	Liu C.-S. & Lai M.- Y.	The vehicle routing problem with uncertain demand at nodes	2009	Jul 2011	<i>Transportation Research Part E</i>
5	Baum S., Bill A. & Mitchell W.	Employability and Labour Under-utilization in Non-Metropolitan Labour Markets	2009	Jan 2011	<i>Regional Studies</i>
6	Hahn S.	The convergence of fictitious play in games with strategic complementarities	2008	July 2010	<i>Economics Letters</i>
7	Chong A., Guillen J. & Lopez-de-Silanes F.	Corporate governance reform and firm value in Mexico: an empirical assessment	Sep 2009	Dec 2010	<i>J. of Economic Policy Reform</i>
8	Nofsinger J. R.	Social mood: The stock market and political cycles	2007	Jun2009	<i>J. of Socio-Economics</i>
9	Knapp W. & Schmitt P.	Metropolitan Driving Forces," and "Uneven Development	2008	Feb 2009	<i>Regional Studies</i>

*Source: Ebsco Business Source Premier (2013a), Emerald (2013), JSTOR (2013a) ScienceDirect (2013a), Springer(2013a), Taylor & Francis Online(2013a), Wiley Online Library(2013a), Karabag and Berggren (2012).

*The articles are ordered according to their retraction years (Ret. Year)

The scarcity of retractions in management and economics journals, noted also in Lewis et al (2011), pose interesting questions, such as: Are economics in general more academically honest than for example medical researchers? Do these journals have more effective policies in place to prevent plagiarized or manipulated papers to enter the publication

gate? What do they do when they encountered an academically misconduct or plagiarized submission? To answer these questions, the key words “Plagiarism Policy”, “Academic Dishonesty Policy”, “Originality Policy” were used in searches of EBSCO, Emerald, JSTOR and ScienceDirect.

The EBSCO database covers leading journals such as Academy of Management Review, Academy of Management Journal, Administrative Science Quarterly, Journal of Management Studies and Strategic Management Journal. The search in this database only found one published specific policy for plagiarism and screening in the Academy of Management Journal (From the editors, 2012).

JSTOR contains leading economics journals such as *Econometrica*, *The American Economic Review*, *Journal of Political Economy*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *Econometric Theory* etc. The search in this database could not uncover one single plagiarism or academic dishonesty policy published in any of the economics journals covered by this database. A search in Emerald resulted in a similar lack of published policies in business and economics journals. A similar search in ScienceDirect identified one management journal, *Research Policy*, with an explicit discussion of academic dishonesty and plagiarism (see Martin, 2007: “Keeping plagiarism at bay - A salutary tale”). One step further away from authors, the big publishing houses, such as Elsevier, Inform, IEEE, etc, have started to make detailed information available on how to detect and handle plagiarism, and on journal websites there are sometimes links to these general guidelines. But usually these links are indirect and not easily visible to time-pressured authors preparing their manuscripts for submission.

To sum up, a majority of established journals in management and economics either do not have explicit and transparent policies to deal with plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty, and/or do not screen submitted papers for originality or for suspicious statistics. Apart from a few publicized cases discussed above, the consequences of exposed misbehavior are unknown and we have noted the inconsistent response in academic journals also in highly publicized cases. How then about the academic “rating agencies” and search engines, such as ISI Web of Knowledge and Google Scholar? How do they react to exposed cases of fraud and plagiarism, when exposed in the form of retractions by academic journals? In very public instances, such as the Stapel case, ISI has added “Retracted” to his officially retracted ISI papers; but for other papers represented in the list above the response has been less

transparent. In several cases when we searched for publications by involved authors at ISI we have just found a silent removal, with no mentioning of retractions. Thus the manipulating author will still be seen as an honest academic worker for those who only search his/her publication list at ISI.

A more difficult problem, however, is the growing importance of Google Scholar, which is rapidly becoming the search engine of choice in all major scientific fields, in spite of its many deficiencies and noise factor (Personal message, Lawrence, 2013 03 11). Google Scholar makes publications visible and accessible, which is a very good thing. But by the search engine's very construction, papers uploaded from several sources (which is the normal case), will show up as scientific contributions, even if the involved journal has retracted them. With the tendency of Google Scholar dwarfing other search engines, there is a significant risk that manipulated papers will continue to accumulate citations and support the career of the dishonest academic, also long after the original exposure. To give an example: If you do searches using the keywords "D Stapel" on Google you will find abundant information regarding his fraudulent behavior. But if you use the same keywords to search the supposedly more scholarly "Google Scholar" you will only find a list of papers, numbers of citations, and various versions etc. with no mentioning of retractions or manipulation.

5. Analysis: Institutional ascription and academic fraud

The analysis of corporate fraud above pointed to so several important institutional elements, such as professional endorsement, fragmented control, mimetic herding and institutional ascription. These mechanisms seem to be highly present also in the cases of persistent academic fraud. Table 3 compares the two contexts.

Table 3: A comparison between institutional ascription and academic fraud

<i>Corporate</i>	<i>Academic</i>
<i>Institutional endorsement: conform to behavior expected by relevant communities</i>	
Executives conformed to expectations in financial community of credit-driven international growth by mergers and acquisitions; and the real value of these acquisitions was never scrutinized.	Fraudulent academics attend the right conferences, publish in prestigious journals, and build legitimacy by virtue of previous presence in the same cluster of conferences & journals, etc.
<i>Fragmented control</i>	
One set of auditors for the Group level, another for divisional levels. Focus of financial analysts on consolidated figures, e.g. net corporate debts, no scrutiny of subsidiaries.	Individual academics anonymous review individual papers; academic committees do reviews based on consolidated CVs, publication lists etc. without reading papers; editors and rating agencies hesitant to report retractions
<i>Institutional ascription and mimetic herding</i>	
If one professional group gives a green light, other professional bodies follow suit, without an independent analysis. Professional firms assume counterparts to be professional also when they themselves practice mimetic herding	Research evaluators assume journal editors & reviewers are thorough and professional, also when they themselves practice mimetic herding, and neither reanalyze publications nor check patterns.

In the academic world, the problem of undetected fraud is aggravated by institutional endorsement of “unchecked collegiality”, such as the pervasive tendency to excuse co-authors, also in cases of serial fraud. This problem of endorsing sloppiness is evident in the Stapel case (See RetractionWatch, 2013a): “His coauthors had no knowledge of his actions and were not involved in the production of the fraudulent data”.

But if co-authors don’t do any ‘due diligence’, why are they co-authors? If not accomplices by intent, so they be seen as accomplices by negligence. By failing to nail down co-authors, the academic institutions implicitly endorse a continued lack of control, in an interesting contradiction to the academic self-perception rigorous control and critical scrutiny. The final joint report investigating the Stapel case, however, does address the problem of

collegial sloppiness in clear verba: “ It is almost inconceivable that co-authors who analysed the data intensively, or reviewers of the international "leading journals", who are deemed to be experts in their field, could have failed to see that a reported experiment would have been almost infeasible in practice, did not notice the reporting of impossible statistical results, ... and did not spot values identical to many decimal places in entire series of means in the published tables. Virtually nothing of all the impossibilities, peculiarities and sloppiness mentioned in this report was observed by all these local, national and international members of the field, and no suspicion of fraud whatsoever arose.” (Flawed Science, 2012:53).

The tendency to endorse a chevalier attitude to co-authorship, as involving no real responsibility, is related to the pressure on academics – and universities - to accumulate publications. This trend is related to current academic identity construction as discussed in Alvesson & Sandberg (2013) where getting papers published in ‘prestigious journals’ has become the overriding objective. The real contribution is seldom noticed or acknowledged, which is related to a diminishing tendency to actually read other scholars’ papers. When academics are presented, in journals, at conferences or seminars, the presenters tend to dwell not on their theoretical or empirical contributions, but list their number of publications in specific journals. The implicit message is clear: what counts is the publication list, not the content, since few will ever read it.

6. Discussion: Back to the Merton ideals?

To sum up, there are several indicators of academic dishonesty and plagiarism among academicians and researchers, but the response in leading business and economics journals’ has been slow and hesitant. The preceding account shows that management journals rarely retract papers, and economics journals do it at an even lower rate. Moreover, at ISI, the previously most influential database for bibliometric analyses and publications search the process slow report retractions papers seem to be inconsistent and ad hoc. At Google Scholar the emerging academic search giant, there are no procedures in place at all to deal with retractions or report of retractions.

The analysis has pointed to several institutional elements involved in academic fraud, similar to the mechanisms which make persistent corporate fraud possible. These mechanisms include: fragmented control with a division of labor between those supposed to do the detailed scrutiny (anonymous reviewers of individual papers) and those checking the “consolidated

accounts” (employment committees, research funding agencies); processes of institutional endorsement which reduces critical scrutiny when endorsed professional behavior is adhered to; institutional ascription and mimetic herding where various professions influence each other, and a general tendency to excuse co-authors when manipulation is exposed. The critical question now is what we, as the academic community can do about the problem.

An idealist answer would be to call for a “return” to the CUDOS ideals, articulated by Robert Merton 70 years ago, according to which of scientific publishing should nurture values such as sharing of knowledge without pay, search for knowledge free from special interests, as well as organized scepticism (Merton,1973/1942).

A cynic might answer that this ideal has never been realized in any actually existing academic community; however, if academics abstain from any elements of idealism and professional code of conduct different from, e.g., lobbyists, consultants or lawyers, how could we insist on public relevance and trust? Below follows a list of possible remedies at different levels, related to work practices, academic institutions and academic identity building. Some argue, as Furman et al (2012:288) that “high barriers limit the amount of knowledge published and the increased scrutiny of submitted research may delay publication, perhaps rendering the system of knowledge production less efficient”. We are of the opposite view: If more careful reading and closer scrutiny will substitute quality for quantity and reduce the volume of papers published per annum, that might be a good thing with positive side effects, such as increasing the opportunities to actually read, reflect and react on other colleagues papers, instead of just referencing them

+ *The journal level*

Journals should publish explicit and visible policies related to academic dishonesty, including appropriate sanctions, such as graded publishing bans. Manipulated papers should of course be publically retracted. Use of software screening for plagiarism could be a helpful standard operating procedure when receiving submissions. In many journals the role of editors need to be strengthened, including an obligation to screen papers by authors in other journals before sending them out for anonymous reviewing.

To encourage academic colleagues to read, reflect and react, journals could also do much more in terms of encouraging focused debates, with clear articulation of different

arguments.

Moreover, conscientious reviewers need to be awarded, for example by special editorial thanks to hard working reviewers by name. Why not an annual a list of “Our best reviewers in year...”? This could be used in the CVs by the awarded persons, and strengthen the incentives to write good reviews by all.

To contribute to a more reflective academic discourse, editors could ask reviewers to check submitted papers for engaged reading (indicated by summaries of arguments, page references, or quotes) instead of massive but diffuse referencing, where the reader doesn't know if authors have actually read the listed papers or just copy-pasted a reference list.

+ *Academic reviewing, promoting and employing bodies*

Employment committees and research review groups need to be encouraged to actually read papers, for example by asking members to do independent summaries of papers mentioned instead of just comparing publication lists. As a consequence, some academics might have to concentrate and serve on fewer committees– but is that a bad thing?

+ *Academic reporting agencies and searching engines*

The academic community needs to ask our reporting and rating agencies and search engines with academic pretensions to formulate, announce and implement policies for dealing with plagiarism and other forms of dishonesty, including retraction or notices of retraction. In the Google Scholar case, retraction /withdrawal of false science papers is probably impossible; however, the search giant could be required to tag a “retraction note” to each paper in its system which has been retracted by the relevant journal. To accomplish this, high level intervention will probably be needed, involving top level authorities in the EU and the US responsible for science and education.

+ *Rethinking academic identity building*

This critical but difficult endeavor could start with small steps, for example:

Present speakers by their substantive contributions instead of journal name-dropping;

cultivate doubt against academic jobbing and excessive publishing, (“150 papers”, xx journal

editorial boards),

indulge in and defend close reading instead of massive referencing.

+ *Academic rigor and active co-authorship*

This is basically about applying the maxim: If you want the gain, be prepared to share the pain. Co-authorships are essential both to increase creativity and productivity and to endure the grueling review process conducted by many leading journals. However, there is also a disturbing tendency to “trade publications” and enlist names without any real contribution or control involved. To counter this trend, journals could develop their copyright forms considerably, and include items where all authors are required to state their specific contribution and non-contributions.

Summary

This paper has presented an overview of the current state of academic fraud in the management and economics areas as indicated by retracted papers. By applying a framework developed for understanding corporate fraud we have analyzed the reasons why persistent fraud can go undetected in spite of the academic reviewing processes. We have related this to current forms of academic identity construction and briefly discussed the modern problems of research dissemination made possible by global search engines, and ended with an idealistic list of remedies at individual and institutional levels. Academy identity building and current work practices may be at the heart of the problem, and hopefully the paper will contribute to a discussion on rethinking in these areas.

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