Peer Review

Role Play:

This is a 3-person role play involving a peer reviewer, a lead author and a journal editor

Roles:

Peer Reviewer

Lead Author

Journal Editor

Character Description:

Peer Reviewer

You are well known in your research field and provide manuscript reviews for various journals in your discipline. You have received an article to review. As you begin reading, you realize that its nearly identical to an article you just reviewed for another journal—it was a good article that you recommended accepting with minor revisions.

Although the titles and formatting are slightly different the references of each are nearly identical and the data presented are very similar. Because these are blind reviews you do not know who the authors are. Still, you ask yourself: OK, are these manuscripts from the same author and is he/she blatantly trying to get away with publishing duplicative material in two different journals? Or are there two different authors who are racing to be the first to write up the paper and perhaps to claim sole or first authorship? Or, is it just a misunderstanding about who was to submit the article for publication and where?

You decide this really is a problem for the journal editor to solve, and give her a call.

Character Description:

Lead Author

You are well known in your research field and have just submitted a paper to a journal for possible publication. The work on the paper is original work although you have depended on an assistant for data analysis. You are aware of that the assistant works in another lab and with a researcher who is exploring a concept that is similar to the one on which you are working.

*Scenario One*

The Peer Reviewer receives two papers from different journals. The papers are remarkably similar: they have the same preliminary data and nearly identical references listed. The peer reviewer decides to consult with a trusted colleague about how best to handle this. The peer reviewer also has the option to decide to phone the editor for whom he regularly reviews.

*Peer Reviewer calls the Journal Editor.*

*Peer Reviewer:* “OK, this is a little unsettling, but … I recently finished a review for your journal and recommended publishing the article. But today, I agreed to review a paper from another journal, and it was nearly identical. I cannot imagine someone would plagiarize themselves. I’m not sure what’s going on, but I thought I should let you know.”

*Journal Editor:* How do you respond?

*Scenario Two*

*The Journal Editor phones the Lead Author of the article he recently accepted.*

*Journal Editor: “*Hey, how are you? You won’t believe this. But I just received a call from someone who reviewed your article that we accepted. He says that earlier today he agreed to review an article for a different journal. It’s nearly identical to the paper we just accepted—the data and even references differ very, very little. He’s not sent me a copy of the other paper, but read me excerpts, and there’s no mistaking it—it describes your study. I think we need to put your article on hold while we figure out what’s going on.”

*Lead Author:* How do you respond?