

Reviewing, Evaluating, Editing and Research Integrity: An Educational Scenario by the EnTIRE project

Background

Professor Daniels is a well-known sociologist in the faculty of social sciences at a public university. Besides her involvement in several international research projects, she actively participates in the faculty's Master's in Medical Sociology and the PhD program in the Sociology of Health and Illness. Professor Daniels is frequently invited to discuss current topics in medicine and healthcare on TV and radio. She has a reputation as a consultant for the government and for industrial partners. Currently, her research group is working on an interdisciplinary project called METHINOSH. The project investigates innovative empirical methods that rely on the use of social media platforms for data collection. Some of her MA and PhD students are also involved in this project. Having already achieved some preliminary results with regards to mapping the current landscape of social media usage for research in the social sciences, the METHINOSH team are planning to submit a paper (M1) and continue their data collection activities.

Issue 1

Professor Daniels receives an email to review a manuscript (M2) for a relatively new academic journal, *New Methods in SSR*. After reading the abstract of the manuscript, which seems to have significant overlaps with the research topics of their manuscript draft (M1), she accepts the journal's invitation to review. However, a few days later, having realized that she has no time to undertake the review due to pre-existing commitments, Professor Daniels asks her PhD student, Mr. Roberts, to read the manuscript and develop the review, as she believes that it will support his professional development. Mr. Roberts finishes the review within the indicated timeframe and sends his written comments to Professor Daniels, who, without checking the review, forwards it to the editorial office of *New Methods in SSR*. The submitted review is extremely critical, providing an extensive list of further tasks to be completed. It recommends that M2 is accepted only when major revisions

have been incorporated. The review also requests further references, explicitly

mentioning a paper written by Professor Daniels.

1a. Questions for Researchers

1. Does it matter that the peer review task was completed by Mr. Roberts (a PhD student) and not by Professor Daniels, as was initially instructed by the journal? What are your reasons?
2. Should Professor Daniels have withdrawn from participating in this peer review process because her draft manuscript (M1) contains significant similarities to the paper she was required to review? What are your reasons?
3. What steps could Mr. Roberts and Professor Daniels have taken to increase the transparency of this particular peer review process?

1b. Questions for Research Administrators

1. As a research administrator working for the academic and research support office at Professor Daniels' university, you are responsible for a variety of tasks related to project budget, communication, contracts and regulatory compliance. How can you ensure that researchers participate in review and evaluation tasks for the wider scientific community in a way that upholds the standards of good research practice?
2. How could you improve the evaluation and review standards and procedures at your institution?

Issue 2

Professor Daniels' research group submit their paper (M1) to a highly prestigious journal, *Current Methods in Social Science*. The paper receives extremely positive reviews. It is accepted without recommendations for revision and published online only four weeks after submission. A couple of weeks after the publication of M1, the editor of *New Methods in SSR* receives a complaint from the corresponding author of M2, which was reviewed by Mr. Roberts. The corresponding author of M2 refers to the newly published paper (M1) in *Current Methods in Social Science*. They claim that it contains one of the innovative methodological models developed in their study as well as a table representing

the main features of their model. The corresponding author of M2 argues that this is theft of ideas and indicates a malfunction in the review process. They make a request to the editors of *New Methods in SSR* for an urgent investigation into the peer review process for M2. Two weeks have passed and the corresponding author of M2 has still not received an adequate response from the editorial office. Because Professor Daniels is the first author of the paper that contains the suspicious content (M1), the corresponding author of M2 decides to send their complaint to the research integrity office at Professor Daniels' institution.

2a. Questions for Researchers

1. Is it an ethically acceptable practice for a peer reviewer to use ideas that they have identified when reviewing the work of other researchers? If not, what are your reasons? If it is acceptable, what conditions must be met in order for a peer reviewer to employ these ideas in their own work?

2b. Questions for Research Ethics Committees and Research Integrity Offices

- 1) After receiving the allegations from the author of M2, your committee decides to conduct an investigation. The committee is requested to consider the integrity of the peer-review process of M2 and the potential plagiarism in M1. In the case of M2, how and in what ways was the integrity of the peer-review process compromised?
- 2) Procedural fairness is a significant requirement for investigating research misconduct and questionable research practices. Investigations and decision-making procedures of committees should follow fair procedures, including transparent processes that respect the rights of all parties. In this case, what steps could your committee take to ensure that the investigation is carried out fairly and in ways that respect the rights of all those concerned?

Suggested Resources

For Researchers:

- ECCRI: [The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#)
- ICMJE: [Recommendation](#)
- ENRIO: [Handbook](#)
- ENERI project: [Research Ethics and Research Integrity Manual](#)
- COPE: [Ethical Guidelines for Peer-reviewers](#)

For Research Administrators:

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Related Scenarios

This scenario has been inspired by the following case studies:

- <https://publicationethics.org/case/reviewer-requesting-addition-multiple-citations-their-own-work>
- <https://publicationethics.org/case/reviewerauthor-conflict-interest>
- <https://publicationethics.org/case/reviewer-asks-trainee-review-manuscript>
- <https://publicationethics.org/case/breach-peer-review-confidentiality>