

---

To: The AIB Executive Board, the JIBS Consulting Editors Board and the JIBS Editorial Review Board

From: Lorraine Eden, JIBS Editor-in-Chief

Re: Enforcing and Clarifying the JIBS Code of Ethics – JIBS Joins COPE

cc: The JIBS Editorial Team

Date: December 2, 2009

---

### **JIBS CODE OF ETHICS: BACKGROUND**

When my editorial team and I began running JIBS in July 2007, one of the earliest policy documents we wrote was the JIBS Code of Ethics; see [http://www.palgrave-journals.com/jibs/jibs\\_ethics\\_code.html](http://www.palgrave-journals.com/jibs/jibs_ethics_code.html). The reason why I am writing you today is that we are in the process of updating the Ethics Code and I wanted you to know about the changes, why they are happening, and ask for your help.

Patterned after ethics codes adopted by the science and medical journals and organized into three sections (Authors, Reviewers and Editors), the JIBS Code of Ethics outlines the ethical norms we want followed at JIBS during the research and publication process. Every author who submits a manuscript to JIBS, for example, is asked on Manuscript Central to confirm that they have read and followed the JIBS Code of Ethics. It has been a point of pride for JIBS that our Code of Ethics, as far as we know, was the first written and adopted by any scholarly business journal.

However, the JIBS Code of Ethics was written without any “teeth” in that it did not outline what the punishments would be for violations of the Code. Each time an issue cropped up (for example, a case of plagiarism) the JIBS Editors dealt with the problem on a case-by-case basis. Unfortunately, for whatever reasons, several violations of the JIBS Code have come to light over the past few months, typically through the conscientious whistle-blowing activities of our reviewers. As a result, the JIBS Editors have decided that we need to become more actively involved in implementing and enforcing the Code.

### **JIBS JOINS COPE**

The JIBS editors are now launching a multi-pronged strategy for strengthening ethical standards and behaviors at JIBS.

First, JIBS has joined COPE, the Committee on Publication Ethics, <http://www.publicationethics.org>. COPE was founded 12 years ago by a group of medical journal editors concerned about publication misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, attempted or actual redundant [self-plagiarizing] publication, attempts to pass off fraudulent data, unethical research, breaches of confidentiality, etc.). Many publishers,

including Palgrave (our publisher), have signed up all of their journals as COPE members.

Second, JIBS is now in the process of rewriting the JIBS Code of Ethics to link it more closely with the COPE Code of Conduct. Third, the JIBS Editors are now following the general structure for handling ethical violations, outlined in the COPE templates. (The COPE templates can be downloaded here: <http://publicationethics.org/flowcharts>.) Fourth, we are rewriting and tightening the Manuscript Central questions that authors complete when they submit a manuscript to JIBS. This is to ensure that authors are aware of the ethical norms and practices at JIBS, and are less likely to just “check the box” without reading the statements.

Fifth, the JIBS editors will be speaking out more on ethical issues in journal publishing. There are many potential minefields in the publication process that can trip up an unwary or unprepared author, reviewer or editor. Often, issues are not clear cut and it is possible to make mistakes. Discussing possible situations and how they might be handled/avoided is a useful way to raise faculty awareness. For example, at the 2009 Academy of Management meetings, for the first time, all doctoral consortia received some training on publication ethics. Starting as of now, the JIBS Editors will become more actively involved in training faculty about ethics in journal publishing at events such as the JIBS Paper Development Workshop, Meet-the-Editors sessions, and Doctoral/Junior Faculty consortia at our various national and international meetings.

## **CODE OF ETHICS VIOLATIONS**

When an ethical violation occurs at JIBS, the authors are told there has been a violation of the JIBS Code of Ethics and presented with the facts (for example, the plagiarized or redundant sections of the paper are highlighted and attached). The focus is the facts, not the motive or motives behind the actions; and each situation is treated in confidence. Once the authors have responded, a final editorial decision is made and the file is closed. For a minor violation this might involve simply rewriting part of the paper; for a major violation, the manuscript would normally be rejected from further review at the journal.

It may be helpful if I provide some examples of recent ethical problems we have seen at JIBS:

1. Redundancy (“self-plagiarism”) – multiple paragraphs are identical in two papers, one of which is the JIBS submission; the other could be an existing published paper or a paper under review at another journal. Some examples: (1) An author submitted a paper to JIBS, having already published much of the same paper (multiple whole paragraphs) in another journal. (2) An author submitted a paper to JIBS with multiple paragraphs of the JIBS paper also appearing in a submission under review at another journal. In such cases, the JIBS Editors may differentiate between major and minor redundancy depending on the amount and content of the self-plagiarized material. For example, a single duplicate paragraph describing the research methods would probably be seen as minor redundancy and the authors asked to rephrase the duplicate sentences. However, multiple paragraphs would be considered major redundancy, leading to rejection of the manuscript. (Note: There are some exceptions to this rule, for example, the

author may receive permission in advance to publish the duplicate material elsewhere, such as a JIBS journal article later appearing as a book chapter.)

2. Failure to cross-reference (“slicing and dicing”) – cutting up a research project into multiple papers and not clearly identifying in each paper what exactly is new in that paper relative to other manuscripts by the same authors. By failing to cross-reference the other manuscripts, the author misleads the reviewers and editor into believing that each manuscript is much more novel than it really is. In such cases, the author has not provided sufficient information for the editor and reviewers to make informed judgments on a submission’s contribution. Some examples: (1) A manuscript was under review at JIBS when a similar manuscript by the same author appeared in print in another journal. Comparison of the two manuscripts showed that the theory, primary dataset, and some of the hypotheses were identical in the two papers so the originality of the JIBS submission was significantly reduced. (2) A manuscript was under review at JIBS and a similar manuscript by the same author was under review at another journal. A reviewer of both submissions identified significant overlap in the primary dataset, hypotheses and tables. In these cases, the author of the two submissions either did not cross-reference the manuscript under review at the other journal or referenced it only in passing. As a result, each manuscript looked like it was making a greater contribution to the literature than it really was, once compared to the second manuscript. (Note: It should be mentioned that, in either situation, if the author had fully cross-referenced the other paper and clarified the novelty of one paper relative to the other, this might have enabled a reviewer to identify the author and thus violated the JIBS double-blind review process. To comply with double-blind review, the author could have blacked out the author’s name when cross-referencing the second manuscript in the text and bibliography, or provided information on the second manuscript to the JIBS Editor at the time of submission. The JIBS Manuscript Central Originality Questions provide space for an author to identify related manuscripts and upload them for review.)
3. Violation of the arm’s length rule (“forum shopping”) – the corresponding author nominates one or more editors and/or reviewers who are not at arm’s length from all the authors of the manuscript. The motivation behind such nominations appears to be similar to “forum shopping”, that is, looking for a sympathetic forum (editor and/or reviewer) for the manuscript. The arm’s length standard would exclude, for example, recent or current co-authors, colleagues in the same department, one’s dissertation committee members or former dissertation students, someone who has provided written feedback on the paper, etc. However, regularly, JIBS sees authors nominating individuals who are clearly not at arm’s length. Some recent examples: (1) An author nominated as a reviewer an individual who was a co-author on another manuscript. (2) An author nominated as an editor one of his/her current co-authors. (3) An author nominated as a reviewer someone who was thanked in the Acknowledgements for providing comments on the paper. In each of these cases, while the nominated individual most likely would have provided an independent and unbiased assessment of the manuscript, the appearance of unbiasedness and independence is lost.

I also provide at the end of this letter one example of how we are currently handling violations of the JIBS Code of Ethics; see attached in Box 1 a JIBS template letter for authors who have engaged in major redundancy (self-plagiarism).

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

To conclude, journal ethics is a public good. We all benefit when authors keep high standards for themselves in their journal submissions. Reviewers can be confident that manuscripts are wholly original and have not appeared or will appear anywhere else, and that the novelty in the manuscript has been accurately portrayed by the author. Editors do not have to worry about originality or “slicing and dicing”. The costs of search, monitoring and enforcement are reduced for the editorial team, particularly for the Area Editor and the Editor-in-Chief who must handle these situations. Authors do not suffer the loss of reputation (and other possible impacts such as denial of promotion or tenure) that can occur if major ethical violations become public knowledge.

The JIBS editors hope that, through a combination of preventative education and clearly outlined consequences for violations, we can improve the quality of journal ethics at JIBS, with perhaps positive spillover impacts on other scholarly business journals.

We ask for your active engagement in this process. We would welcome your help. For example, we welcome your thoughts, as core members of the JIBS community, as to how JIBS could and should further improve the ethical standards of JIBS and the broader IB community of scholars. This topic will also be placed on the agenda for discussion at the JIBS Editors and Boards meeting at the AIB meetings in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2010. Lastly, please forward this letter to your co-authors, colleagues, students and other interested individuals as a way to encourage more dialogue on this critically important topic. We need to raise awareness of the ethical dilemmas in publishing and encourage the spread of best practices.

Please email your comments and suggestions to Lorraine Eden, JIBS Editor-in-Chief, at [editor-in-chief@jibs.net](mailto:editor-in-chief@jibs.net) or Anne Hoekman, JIBS Managing Editor, at [managing-editor@jibs.net](mailto:managing-editor@jibs.net).

=====

**BOX 1: JIBS TEMPLATE LETTER TO AUTHOR(S) OF SUBMISSION WITH MAJOR REDUNDANCY**

Dear Professor XX:

After your JIBS submission was sent out for double-blind review, one of the reviewers contacted the JIBS Office, declining to review the manuscript on the grounds that much of the JIBS submission was identical to another manuscript [currently under review at / previously published in] [JOURNAL NAME].

The individual attached both manuscripts. I have now read through the two manuscripts and highlighted the identical sections in the two papers. Both highlighted papers are attached to this letter.

Also attached also are copies of the JIBS Code of Ethics and your responses to the Originality Questions which you completed in your Manuscript Central submission. Your answers to the Originality Questions state that no part of your submission, in whole or in part, has been published, is in press or is under review elsewhere, and that you have read and followed the JIBS Code of Ethics. The Code is quite explicit regarding the requirements that every submission to JIBS must be an original work, with no part of the submission having been published, in press or under review at another journal.

JIBS is a member of COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics); <http://www.publicationethics.org>. The journal has adopted explicit policies based on the COPE Code of Conduct that apply in cases of violations of journal ethics.

After examining all the relevant materials, I have concluded that there is substantial, exact overlap between the [JOURNAL NAME] submission and your JIBS submission. Multiple paragraphs are identical in the two manuscripts, which the COPE and JIBS codes refer to as major redundancy (“self-plagiarism”).

As a result, the following policies will be applied to your manuscript:

1. I am rejecting your manuscript from further review at JIBS.
2. The Editor of the other journal has been informed of the redundancy. *[Include #2 if the manuscript is currently under review at another journal. Delete #2 if the other manuscript is already published.]*
3. You may continue to submit manuscripts to JIBS, but with the explicit understanding that the JIBS Code of Ethics for Authors must be followed in any new submission to JIBS.
4. Should there be a second violation of the Ethics Code, you will be banned from submitting to JIBS for a period between one and five years, with the term length to be set by the JIBS Editor-in-Chief.
5. This matter will be treated as confidential within the JIBS Editors. The reviewer has been asked, and has agreed, to also treat this matter as confidential.
6. Please acknowledge receipt of this letter and your awareness of its terms and conditions.

Sincerely,

Lorraine Eden, JIBS Editor-in-Chief