

## Replication Section

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### Section Editor's Introduction

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Science is supposed to be about the search for truth. Journal editors, as guardians of the publication process, are often thought to be concerned about publishing the truth. Indeed, editors are responsible for publishing research upon which others can rely. In this regard, one might even go so far as to assert that journal editors have an affirmative responsibility to correct mistakes in their journals. Isn't that what the scientific method is supposed to be about? One would be wrong to think so, at least insofar as the economics profession is concerned.

Yet it is not difficult to imagine that journal editors do not like to admit that they have published erroneous results. Consequently, when a researcher finds an error in a published article, writes it up, and sends it to an editor, the researcher should not be surprised if his work is quickly dismissed.

Journal editors form a club, whether explicitly or implicitly. If no editor likes it known that he has published erroneous results, it should not be too difficult to believe that any single editor will treat other editors as he would like to be treated: I don't want it known that I have published erroneous results, so I will not make it known that some other editor has published erroneous results. Consequently, not only will editors not correct mistakes in their own journals, neither will they correct mistakes in other journals.

I know of an author who meticulously documented gross errors in an important article in a top journal; these errors essentially destroyed the original article. Needless to say, this piece of replication work was rejected by the top journal, and by several other journals that had published articles citing the original article in the top journal. There is no doubt in my mind that the original article is incorrect and not worthy of being in the literature, but there is no self-correcting mechanism at work in the economics literature whereby incorrect results are removed from the literature.

The implicit protection that journal editors provide for each other can easily be dismissed on the grounds that such stories are merely hearsay. I am especially pleased, therefore, to publish such a story. This issue offers two articles, both by Professor Graham Davis. The first documents clearly and unequivocally that a piece of work published in *Economics Letters* is not replicable. The second documents the tribulations he endured as he sought to have his correction entered into the (allegedly) scientific literature of the economics profession.

Clearly *Economics Letters*, as does every journal, needs to provide some mechanism whereby incorrect results can be corrected. Not to do so is the height of hubris: everything ever published in the journal and everything that ever will be published in the journal contains no material errors; therefore there is no need for any process whereby errors can be corrected. Perfection on earth has been attained, at least in the minds of most editors of economics journals.