

January 20, 2018

Dear Doctor Chang,

I have now received reports from four reviewers and Annette Brown regarding your manuscript, “A replication recipe: list your ingredients before you start cooking,” (*Manuscript Number 2278; Discussion Paper Number 2017-74*).

Based on the feedback I have received, I am inviting you to submit a revision. Your revision should address the individual points raised by each of the reviewers. In addition, you should include a separate document that provides a point-by-point response to each of the reviewer’s comments. You are not required to do everything the reviewers say, but if you disagree with a recommendation, you should state your reason. A successful revision will include addressing the following:

1) Several reviewers commented on your emphasis that a replication plan should specify a flowtime and a budget (money and effort), with some unimpressed by the value of this emphasis, while another (Annette Brown) found this a good thing. Essentially, these are stopping rules. It would be a good idea if you would explicitly identify these as such, and to explain why stopping rules are (especially) desirable in the case of replications.

2) Several reviewers also commented on the value of pre-registration, again with different reviewers taking different positions. It would be good if you elaborated further why pre-registration is especially valuable for replications, since pre-registration is designed to discourage another “stopping rule;” that is, keep trying different empirical procedures until one is able to disprove the original study.

3) In light of the fact that you have chosen to promote two procedures, one designed to implement a stopping rule, another designed to interfere with a stopping rule, you may want to consider how these affect each other. For example, if the goal of pre-registration is to keep the replicator from experimenting until they disprove the original study, might not a fixed flowtime and budget become an excuse to stop researching once a negative result is obtained?

4) Several reviewers also commented on your statement “if the data set that I downloaded was obviously flawed, then I would give up and work on another research paper” (page 8). Please elaborate what you mean by “obviously flawed.” More generally, since your paper more than the other submissions in the Special Issue emphasizes the need to have stopping points, please explain what one would do when one “gives up.” Would you write up the results that you obtained prior to giving up? Would there be any value to doing so (think file drawer effect)?

5) There is no need to discuss the additional criteria you used in selecting Haurin and Rosenthal (2007). It is sufficient to give the evidence that it is an “influential economics article” and that it has not been previously replicated. The other criteria are not important and can be dropped from the paper.

6) Be clearer about the intent of your replication. Is the purpose of your replication to confirm whether Haurin and Rosenthal’s (2007) numerical estimates are reliable? Is the purpose of your replication to determine whether their conclusions have external validity across various extensions? Your response to Reviewer 2 suggests the latter. Maybe it’s both (which is fine)?

Whatever your intent, as commented by Reviewer 3, this should be made more explicit, as it determines the context of how one should determine the results of the replication – the importance of which you emphasize in your introduction.

7) As noted by several reviewers, you are vague about what exactly you plan to replicate. “...replicating Figures 1,2,3,7, and 8” leaves too much unspecified. What are these figures? Why are they important? Are all the figures equally important? Is it necessary that each figure be closely replicated? And how close is close? If specifying an exact metric is too difficult, maybe you could give some examples of what would be considered a sufficiently close fit, and what would be considered not close enough.

8) It is somewhat ironic that after emphasizing the importance of pre-registration, that your replication plan does not present a well-specified example of what a registered plan might look like in the replication of Haurin and Rosenthal (2008). This should be the meat of your paper, so be more explicit and detailed about what exactly you would do.

9) Finally, on page 6, you state that you would not want the original authors’ transformed data. Why not? Wouldn’t having their transformed data help you figure out why you were unable to replicate certain results should you encounter problems? Why would you not want to have access to these data if they were available?

A revision that satisfactorily addresses the points above, as well as responding to the individual reviewers’ concerns, is likely to result in a favourable publication decision.

Thank you for submitting your manuscript to *Economics: The Open-Access, Open-Assessment E-Journal*. I look forward to receiving your revision.

Sincerely,

W. Robert Reed
Co-Editor, *Economics E-Journal*