

AAPOR Webinar 2022

A Beginner's Guide to Publishing Methods Articles

Ashley Amaya

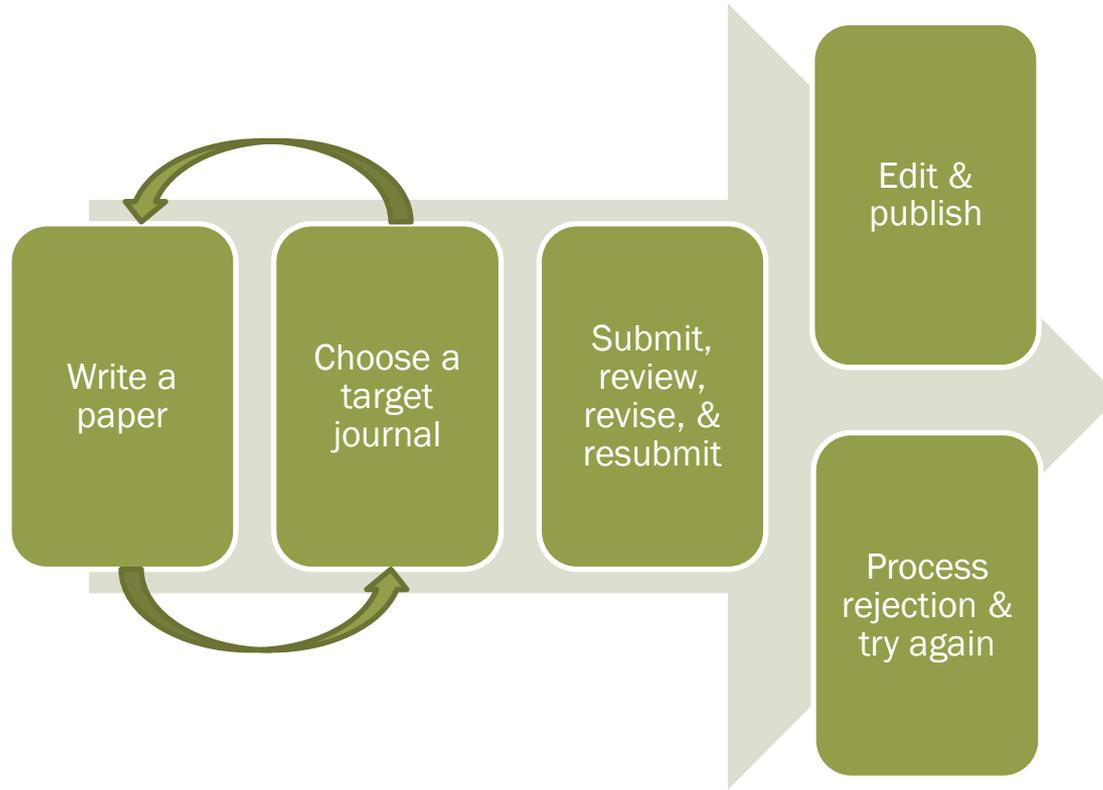
Senior Survey Methodologist

Webinar Objectives

Participants should leave this course with...

- A checklist of items to keep in mind when writing and responding to a review
- An understanding of each step of the publication process
- The ability to choose a target journal for publication

Steps in the Process



WRITE A PAPER

Writing: What Makes Writing Journal Articles Different

Formality

- Limited contractions
- Avoid slang
- Perfect grammar

Audience

- Targeted/more specialized in field

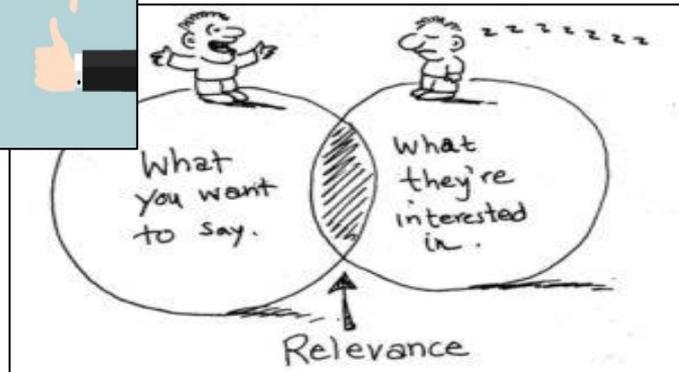
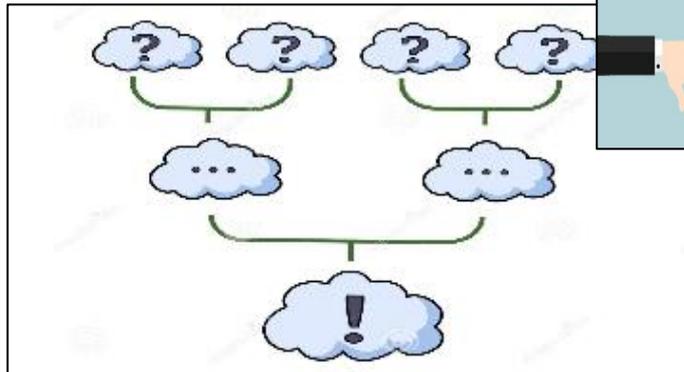
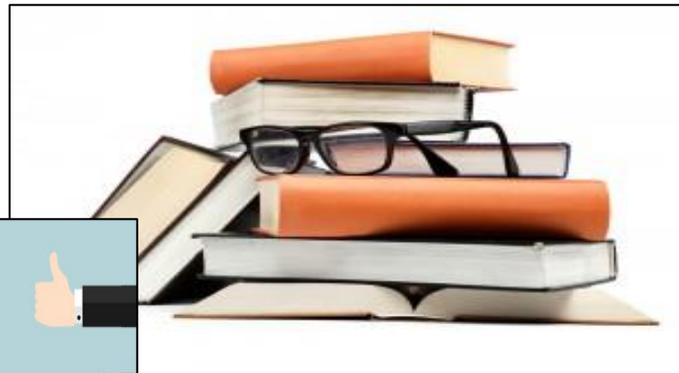
Structure

- Standardized

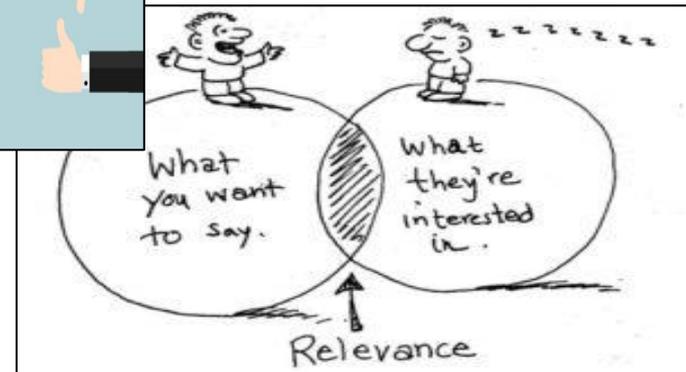
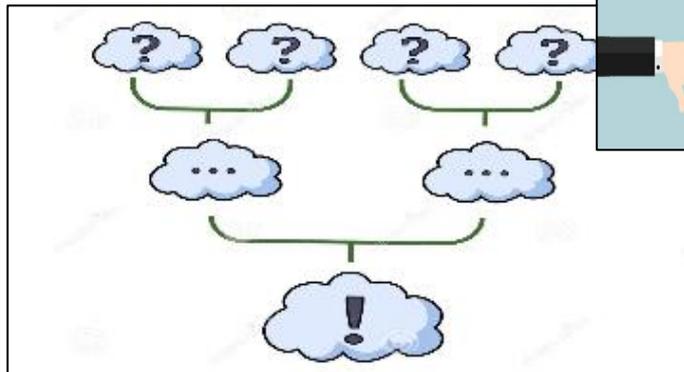
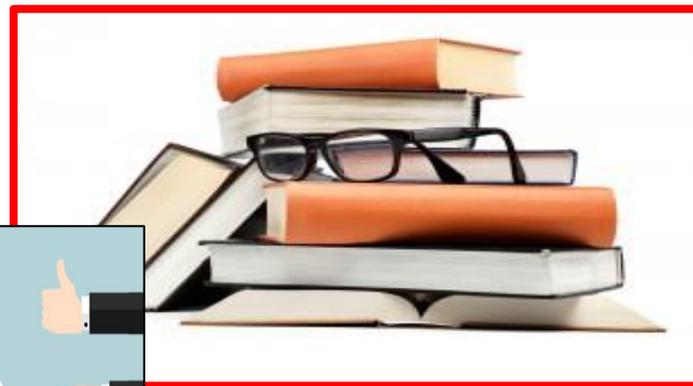
Objectivity

- Not a sales pitch
- Conclusions based on findings

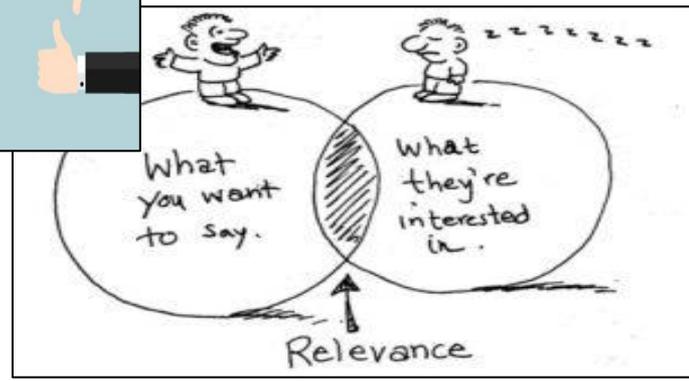
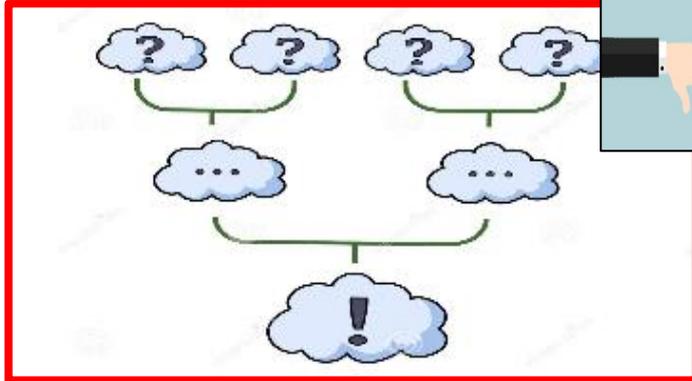
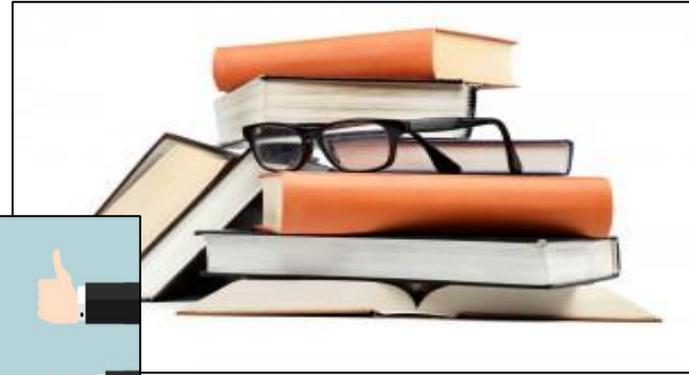
Writing: Big Picture Ideas to Make Writing Easier



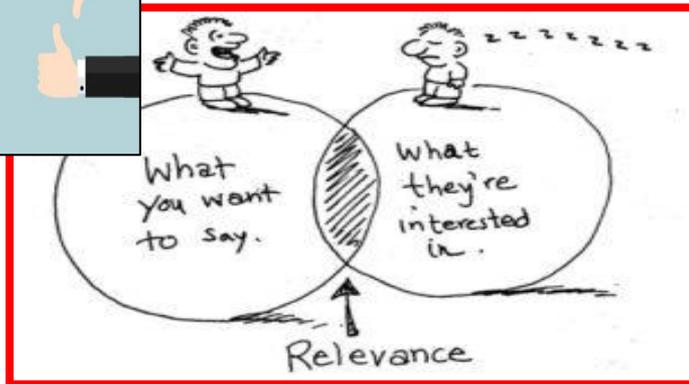
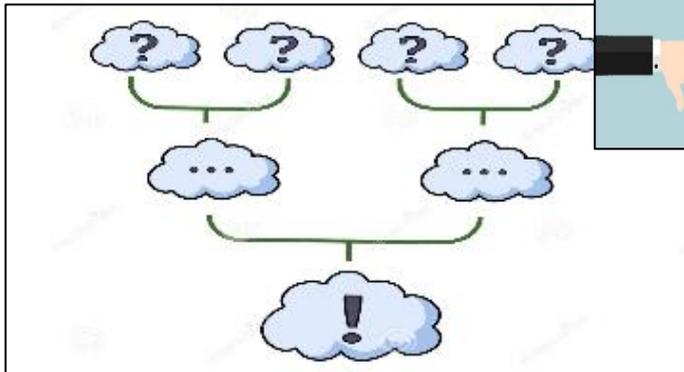
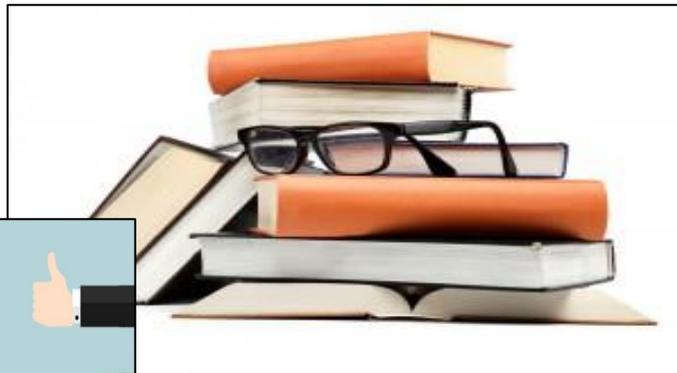
Writing: Big Picture Ideas to Make Writing Easier



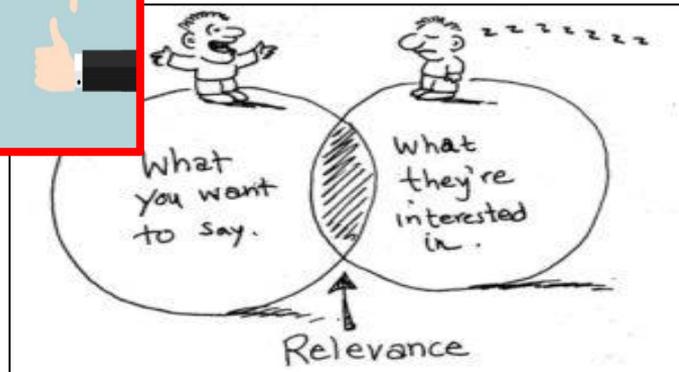
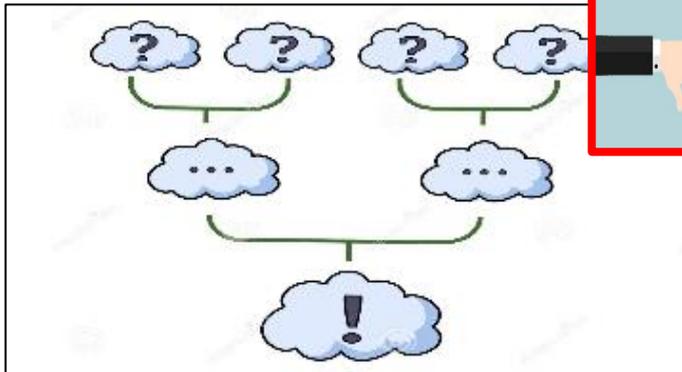
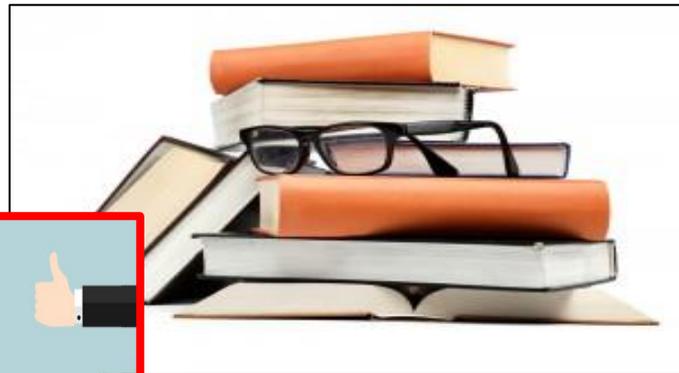
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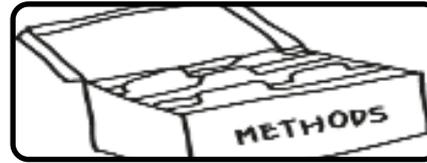
Writing: Big Picture Ideas to Make Writing Easier



Writing: Big Picture Ideas to Make Writing Easier



Writing: Recommended Paper Structure



Writing: Introduction



- ~10% of the paper
- What is the problem?
- Why is it important?
- What research question will be answered?

Writing: Introduction Example (Groves 2006)

One unique value of sample surveys as a tool to document human thought and behavior is their ability to describe large populations without bias and within measurable levels of uncertainty. While the mathematical probability theories required for this inference are a century old (Pearson 1903), and their application to samples of humans about 70 years old (Neyman 1934), recently we have been reminded that this power of surveys is dependent on full measurement of a probability sample. That is,

the original theories assume that nonresponse is absent. However, in the past few decades, developed countries have seen an increase in the rate of sample persons not being measured (de Leeuw and de Heer 2002). Hence, it is important to understand the potential impact of nonresponse on the ability of surveys to describe large populations.

Recent articles suggest that changes in nonresponse rates do not necessarily alter survey estimates (Curtin, Presser, and Singer 2000; Keet Merkle and Edelman 2002). However, the most common prescription for survey researchers is to minimize nonresponse rates. For example, Alreck and Settle (1995, p. 184) say, "It's obviously important to do as much as possible to reduce nonresponse and encourage an adequate response rate." Babbie (2007, p. 262) is bold enough to say, "A review of the published social research literature suggests that a response rate of at least 50 percent is considered adequate for analysis and reporting. A response of 60 percent is good; a response rate of 70 percent is very good." Finally, Singleton and Straits (2005, p. 145) note, "Therefore, it is very important to pay attention to response rates. For interview surveys, a response rate of 85 percent is minimally adequate; below 70 percent there is a serious chance of bias." All of these quotations come from books used to teach students about survey methods.

This combination of observations--an inferential paradigm that requires 100 percent response rates, declining response rates, evidence that nonresponse rates do not predict nonresponse bias, and rules of thumb that urge survey practitioners to maximize response rates-together seem a recipe for confusion among practitioners.

For these reasons, now is a useful time to synthesize the literature on nonresponse rates and nonresponse bias in surveys.

This article (1) reviews statistical notions of nonresponse bias, (2) evaluates different designs for assessing nonresponse biases, (3) reviews the research literature on the relation of nonresponse rates and nonresponse bias, and (4) updates the discussion on the relative merits of probability sampling in the presence of nonresponse. It emphasizes studies of persons (versus organizations), one-time surveys (versus longitudinal surveys), and surveys in the United States and Western Europe (versus the developing world).

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Writing: Theory

Theory

- Summarize by argument, not by cite
- Do not cherry-pick your literature
- What is the theoretical justification for your research question/hypothesis?
- What has been done to date and why has it not answered your research question?

Writing: Theory Example (Couper, Blair, & Triplett 1999)

There is a small but growing literature comparing e-mail to mail data collection. A key focus of these comparisons has been on the relative response rates achieved using these alternative approaches. A second area of interest is related to efficiency gains from e-mail, both in terms of reduced costs and in terms of timeliness or speed of turnaround. Several studies have also examined differences in the quality of the data obtained by the two methods, whether in terms of item missing data rates or in terms of distributions of substantive responses. Coverage issues have received little attention, the assumption being that access to e-mail is a prerequisite for inclusion in the study.

The few mode experiments that have been conducted vary on so many different dimensions that it is difficult to make direct comparisons between them. It is also difficult to extract definitive trends from this small body of literature. While it is unequivocal that e-mail surveys are faster than mail surveys, and cheaper in terms of data collection costs, **the findings on response rates and data quality are more mixed. We summarize the response rate findings for each of these studies briefly in Table 1.**

First, we note that only three of the studies (Kiesler and Sproull 1986; Tse, Tse, Yin, Ting, Yi, Yee, Hong 1995; Tse 1996; Schaefer and Dillman 1998) randomly assigned subjects to mode. In the other cases, those with known e-mail addresses were assigned to e-mail while others were assigned to mail. Second, only two of the studies (Parker 1992; Schaefer and Dillman 1998) found higher response rates for e-mail than for mail. We also note the large variation in response rates across these studies, from a low of 18% to a high of 75% for mail, and a low of 6% to a high of 67% for e-mail. These dramatic differences between studies likely reflect many design differences, from the population surveyed, content and length of the instrument to methods of delivery and number of contacts. Clearly, more studies are needed before definitive conclusions are drawn about response rate differences between mail and e-mail.

While several of the authors have speculated on the reasons for the differential nonresponse in their studies, there has been no systematic attempt to explore the mechanisms underlying these differences. We believe it is important to distinguish between access failure and respondent resistance (to use Sossian and Sharp's (1980) terminology). In other words, are low e-mail response rates in some studies due largely to delivery problems or to sample person unwillingness to complete an e-mail survey? If the former is the case, improvements in e-mail technology and coverage may reduce the gap between mail and e-mail. On the other hand, if there is differential respondent resistance by mode, concerns about nonresponse error may be greater. If there is greater unwillingness to do an e-mail survey than an equivalent mail survey, is this due to technical difficulties in reading, completing and returning the instrument, or are there differential concerns about confidentiality?

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Writing: Methods



- Invest time/space here. Refer to the AAPOR reporting standards
- What data are you using and how were they collected?
- What analytic methods are you using and why?

Writing: Results



- Organize by research question
- Design your tables/figures so they could stand alone
- Describe the results, how they address your research question, and what may explain the findings

Writing: Summary



- ~10% of the paper
- What is the answer to the research question?
- What are the limitations?
- What should researchers do next (implementation or more research)?

Writing: General Tips for Writing Success

- Read more tips for strong writing
 - <https://www.thoughtco.com/difference-between-good-and-bad-writer-1689269>
- Read!
 - Do a thorough lit review before you write your research question
 - Note what you (don't) like about others' writing styles
- Block off the time
 - Don't multitask
 - Don't rush
- Write an outline
- Just do it!
- Question yourself (after the first draft)
 - Why did I make that decision?
 - Is this relevant to the research question?
 - Is this common knowledge?
- Get a second (and third) opinion (and don't ignore it)

CHOOSE A TARGET JOURNAL

Target Journal: Why It's Important

- Journals differ on:
 - Audience
 - Disclosure requirements
 - Review processes & quality
 - Topics of interest
 - Timeliness/queue
- Choosing a 'good fit' will:
 - Make writing easier
 - Reduce edits for the revise and resubmit process
 - Increase the chance of acceptance

Target Journal: Consideration Factors

Topic	Quality	Review Type	Timeliness	Cost
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Survey methods• Survey statistics• Computer/data science• Applied methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General management• Perceived quality• Impact factor• Disclosure requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peer-reviewed• Editor-reviewed• Self-published	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time to first review• Time to online publication• Time to print	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publication fees• Open-access vs. subscription

Target Journal: Popular Journals for Survey Methods



Survey Research Methods

Journal of the European Survey Research Association

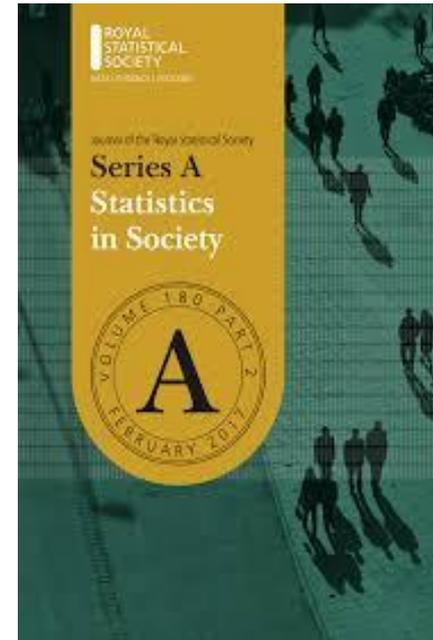
Target Journal: Popular Journals for Survey Statistics



Target Journal: Popular Journals for Survey Methods and Statistics



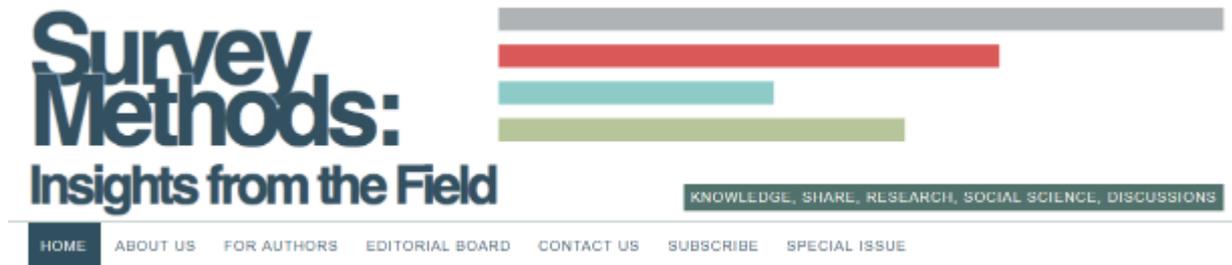
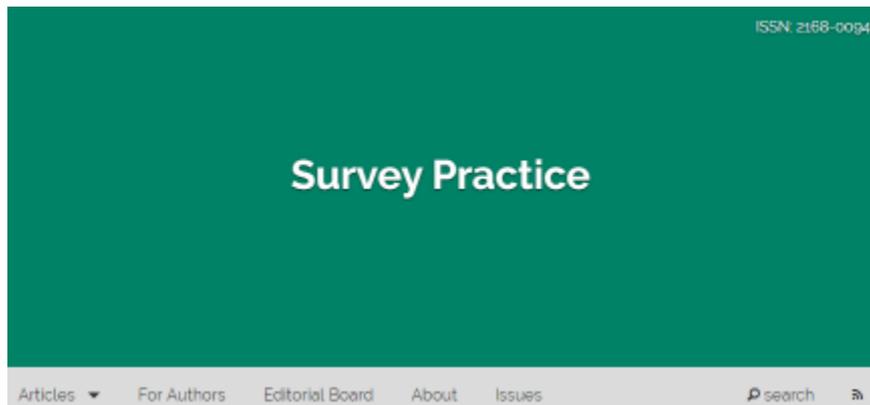
mda
methods, data, analyses



Target Journal: Popular Journals for Computer/Data Science



Target Journal: Popular Journals for Applied Methods



Target Journal: Help Choosing a Target Journal

- Journal Guide: <https://www.journalguide.com/>
- Elsevier Journal Finder: <https://journalfinder.elsevier.com/>
- Ask the editor
- Ask an experienced colleague

SUBMIT, REVIEW, REVISE, & RESUBMIT

Review: Publication Steps and Timeline



Review: Publication Steps and Timeline



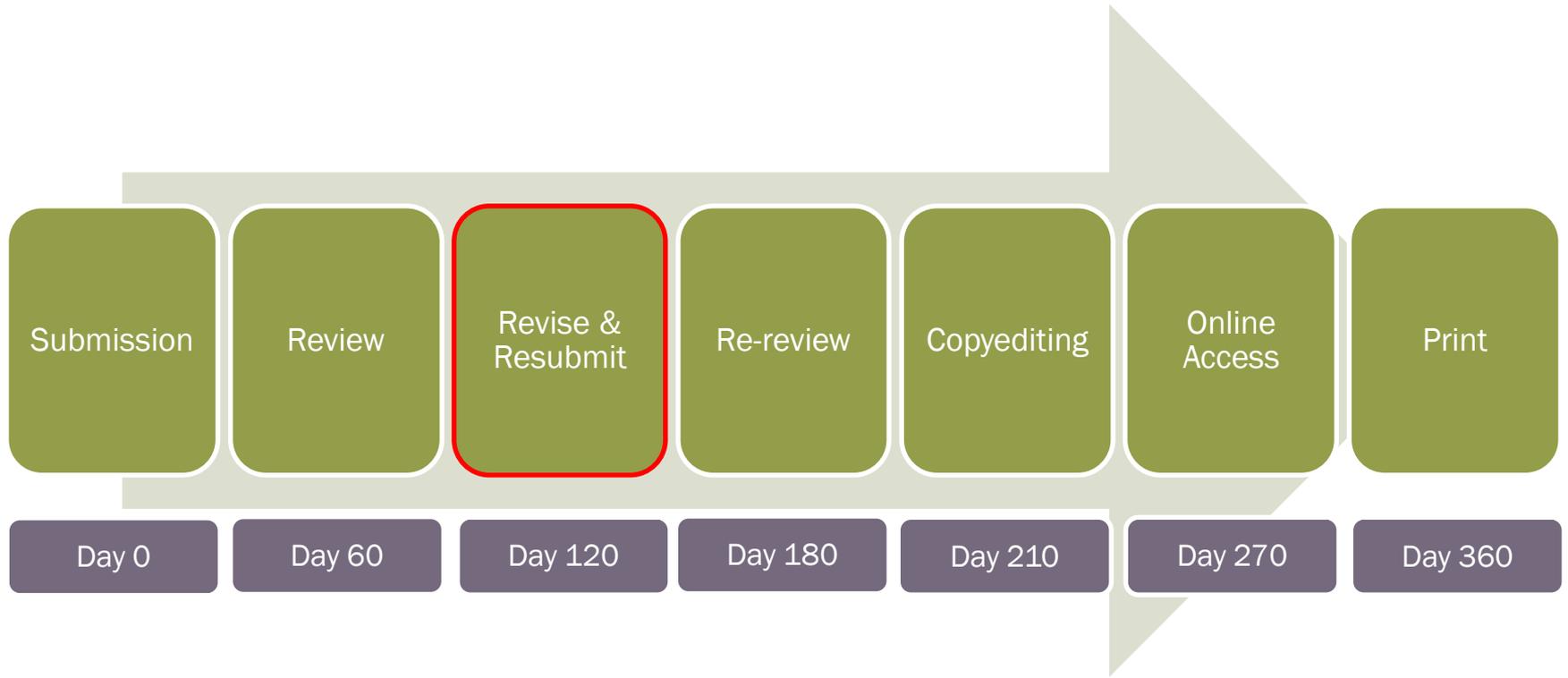
Review: Questions Reviewers Ask Themselves

- What is your research question or hypothesis?
 - Is it clearly stated at the end of the introduction?
- What does this paper contribute to the literature?
 - How does it extend theory?
 - Why is it important?
- Does everything align?
 - Do the analyses address the research question?
 - Do the analyses support the conclusion?
- Is this paper appropriate for this journal?

Review: Things that Make Reviewers Grumpy

- Poor writing
 - Typos, grammar, and generally unclear text
 - Making unfair assumptions about readers' knowledge
 - Including information not relevant to your research question
- Poor structure
 - Order & label of sections should mimic research questions
- Writers who have not done their homework (i.e., poor literature review)

Review: Publication Steps and Timeline



Review: Revise & Resubmit

- What to expect
 - You will receive reviewer feedback – bullets or paragraphs on big picture and small items
- Common feelings while reading a review...
 - I'm a bad researcher
 - This is never going to be finished
 - The reviewer just didn't get it

Review: Revise & Resubmit

- Strategies to respond to a review
 - Read the entire review
 - Set it aside for a few days
 - Re-read and process each comment one at a time
 - Write the response to reviewers

Review: Response to Reviewer Example

Reviewers –

Thank you for all of your thoughtful and considerate feedback. We appreciate the attention to detail and recommendations for improvements to this manuscript. We have edited the paper accordingly and responded to your specific comments below.

Reviewer #1:

1. *Further discuss the potential for alternative explanations of nonresponse such as respondent fatigue. It is arguable that restricting the analysis to include only respondents who had some interaction with an interviewer might fit more cleanly with the underlying hypotheses. I would expect to see some effort in the paper to address both survey fatigue and the noncontact issue. (Reviewer comment is paraphrased.)*

We have added a discussion of survey fatigue (page 26) and included the recommended Abraham, Maitland, and Bianchi citation in the introduction (page 5).

However, we have not limited the analysis to contacted individuals. We conducted a separate analysis (paper forthcoming) to test the social integration hypothesis. We found that the effect of integration held in both significance and magnitude across both types of nonrespondents (i.e., refusers and noncontacts).

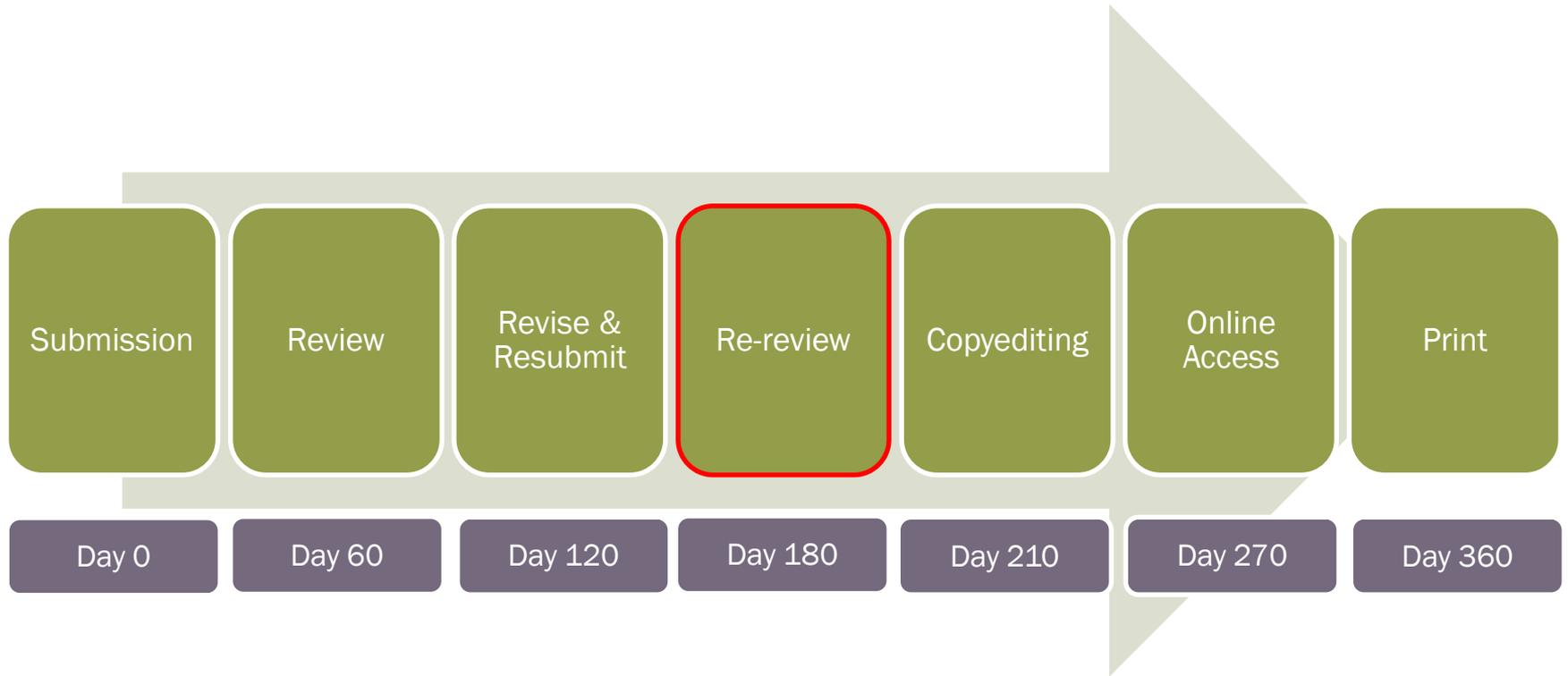
2. *As for the remark of the author that nonresponse in the CE supplement will cause the results of the paper to be “conservative” seems questionable to me. It might be clearer to say that such selectivity might tend to weaken any associations by over representing people who have enough of an interest in civic engagement to have completed such a supplement.*

We have clarified our argument and adopted language similar to your suggestion (page 9).

3. *I would also recommend being cautious about using the term “ignorable”, which is normally used with a specific technical meaning—in the context (page 17, line 25) “unimportant”, “negligible” or similar term might be more appropriate.*

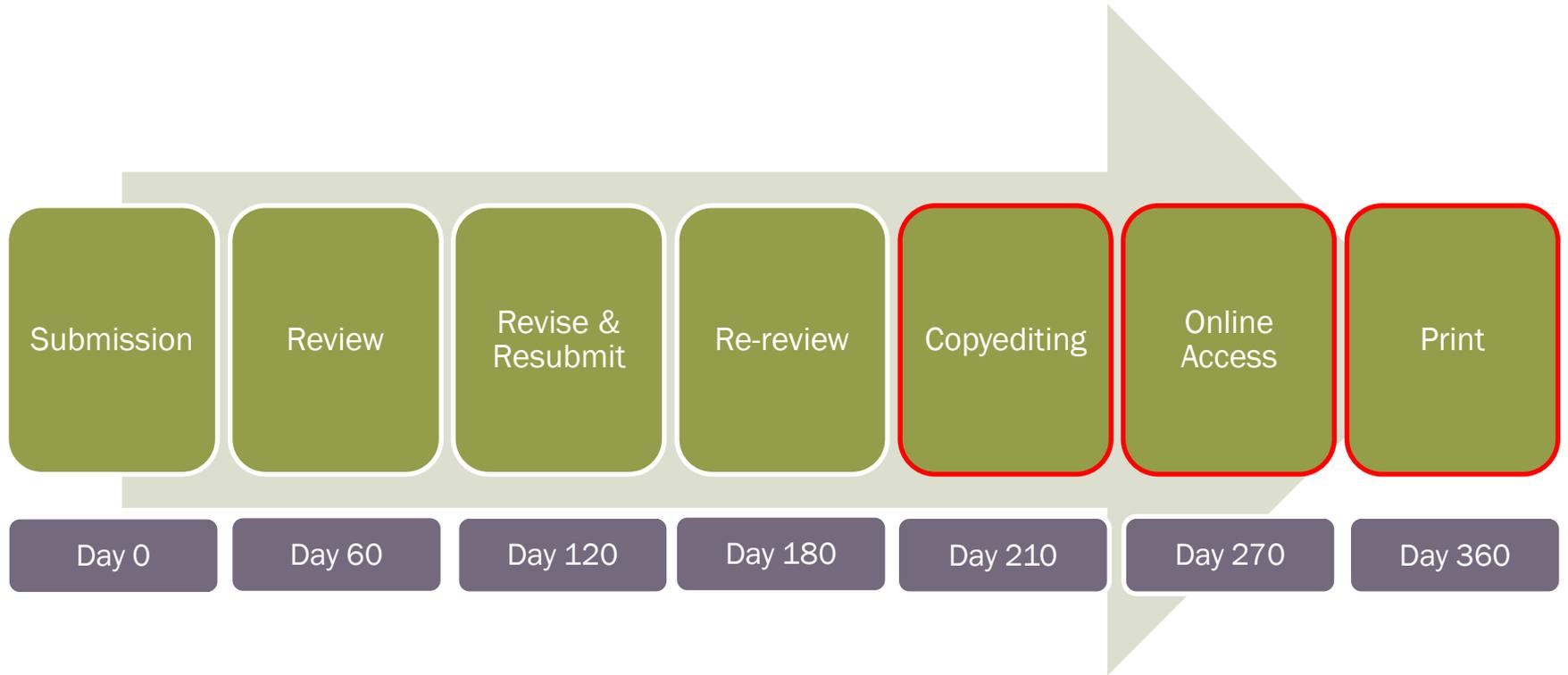
We have replaced “ignorable” with “negligible.”

Review: Publication Steps and Timeline



EDIT & PUBLISH

Review: Publication Steps and Timeline



PROCESS REJECTION & TRY AGAIN

Rejection: Why

- Desk rejection
 - Far exceeds word limits
 - Not in line with mission
 - Poorly written
- Reviewer rejection
 - Reasons vary – a rejection will come with reviewer comments.

Rejection: Processing

- What to do when you receive a rejection
 - Read the entire review
 - Set it aside for a few days
 - Re-read and process each comment one at a time
 - Share the comments with a mentor or more experienced researcher and discuss
 - Decide what's next
 - Was this just the wrong journal? -> Resubmit elsewhere
 - Is the rejection due to writing/organization? -> Rewrite and/or bring on a co-author to help then resubmit elsewhere
 - Is the rejection due to things that cannot be overcome? -> Take away points to avoid next time and move on
 - Is the rejection due to a hole that can be fixed? -> Fix it (or bring on a co-author to help) then resubmit

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