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## Towards a More Equitable Future: CERJ Efforts to Advance Equity in a Post-pandemic Era

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## CERJ editorial efforts

Below I list efforts attempted by CERJ in the past year towards greater equity, from optimising the editorial process to investing in alternative formats of publication.

### *Demystifying the editorial process and peer review*

Academic publishing is an integral part of the scientific process, yet peer-reviewed scholarly journals are often perceived as black boxes, especially by graduate students who are new to the process. In response to the prevalence of misconceptions and fears regarding publishing research as journal articles, we held two public information sessions in February 2021. Not only did the editorial team introduce the steps involved in the editorial cycle, but we also invited previous CERJ authors to share their experience of publication and jointly took questions from the audience. To further illuminate the black box of peer review, we also opened up our reviewer training session to the public for the first time, so that everyone could learn more about the peer review process. In addition, we also built two Facebook groups: “CERJ Community”, an open-to-all group for exchanging ideas and sharing tips about academic writing and publication, and “CERJ Reviewers 2021”, a group dedicated to reviewers, both of which maintained by the CERJ team to offer support whenever needed. To us, all these steps are about *access*, *support* and *community*, three top keywords related to equity in the public discourse echoed by our efforts.

### *Optimising the publishing model: distributed editorial power*

As the Chief Editor, I recognise the privilege and power I have over the direction of the journal and the outputs it generates. I firmly believe in the value of distributed editorial power, and therefore I did my best to set up a mechanism where such power is balanced and distributed among a team of experts, as opposed to a single person: The team of editors for Volume 8 have diverse research backgrounds and methodological expertise, ranging from second language education to arts-based education, from qualitative to quantitative and mixed methods. Throughout the entire editorial process, every editorial decision was made jointly by at least two editors – (at least) one Sub-editor and the Chief Editor. For complex cases, the entire editorial team were involved to reach the optimal decision through thoughtful deliberation. We also maintained open and candid conversations with CERJ reviewers, discussing and following up with their comments in a collaborative manner. Like with any process where subjectivities are involved, we had to make some very difficult decisions but through this mechanism of distributed editorial power, we believe we made the best decisions we could, upholding quality, rigour and integrity as our priorities.

Even though words such as “power” did not appear as a top keyword in the public sphere, what we did aligns with the key idea underpinning equity – redistributing power for fair and just procedures and outcomes.

### *Power back to the author and enhanced accessibility: bilingual highlights and abstracts*

Taking the baton from the editorial team for Volume 7, we are very proud to continue their initial step in practising multilingualism to enhance *access* to knowledge. Honouring the same spirit, we did something slightly different this year: Instead of the editorial team specifying what languages abstracts should be translated into, we return the power back to the author and let the author decide what language they want their research to be communicated in. We also encouraged the authors, if they can, to translate the abstracts on their own, to retain the nuances of meaning that may be lost in the translation by translators external to the research. Furthering our endeavour towards increasing *access*, we added bilingual “highlights”, succinct bullet-point summaries of the key insights of the research. We believe bilingual highlights and abstracts, as standalone pieces accessible to wider audience in diverse linguistic communities, could facilitate the dissemination of research insights and bridge the gap between academia and the wider public.

### *CRedit author statement: from authorship to contributorship*

In this volume we also included CRedit author statement (Contributor Roles Taxonomy). The CRedit taxonomy of contributor roles was proposed in response to the insufficiency of the conventional authorship model, particularly in the case of multiple authorship, to properly reflect each author’s roles and contributions (Brand et al., 2015). There are many benefits to using the CRedit taxonomy, such as greater transparency and accessibility of credits and the prevention of authorship disputes. As a journal for graduate students, we believe it is our role to introduce such tools to our graduate community early on, to prepare them for more transparent and open collaboration both at present and in the future.

### *Joining Peer Community In Registered Reports (PCI RR): investing in a more open future*

Last but not least, I’m excited to announce that CERJ has recently joined Peer Community In Registered Reports (PCI RR) as the first journal in education. Registered Report is an alternative format of publication aimed to address publication bias (e.g., only positive and significant results get published) and prevent questionable research practices (e.g., *p*-hacking) (Chambers, 2013). It is also different from

the conventional peer review model in that peer review takes place *before* research is undertaken, thereby making the feedback from reviewers more constructive and useful for the researcher. Even though we value the benefits such publishing model could bring to the research community, it is unfortunately challenging for CERJ to implement the traditional RR model within the fixed timeline each year. [PCI RR](#), a *community-driven* initiative launched in April 2021, is a new type of RR initiative committed to reviewing and recommending RRs across disciplines from STEM to the social sciences and humanities. This RR initiative operates independently from journals and thereby allows for flexibilities beyond CERJ’s timeline constraint. Figure 2 illustrates the full cycle of the PCI RR process. By joining as a PCI RR-friendly journal, CERJ benefits from the expertise of the PCI RR recommenders and the rigour of the RR process while serving as a potential outlet for registered reports in the field of education. As an open access journal, we believe what PCI RR represents the promise of a more open future, one that aligns with our efforts to reform academic publishing for greater openness and transparency and we are confident that this format would be a great addition to our existing formats. More information on this new publication

track can be found on [our official website](#).

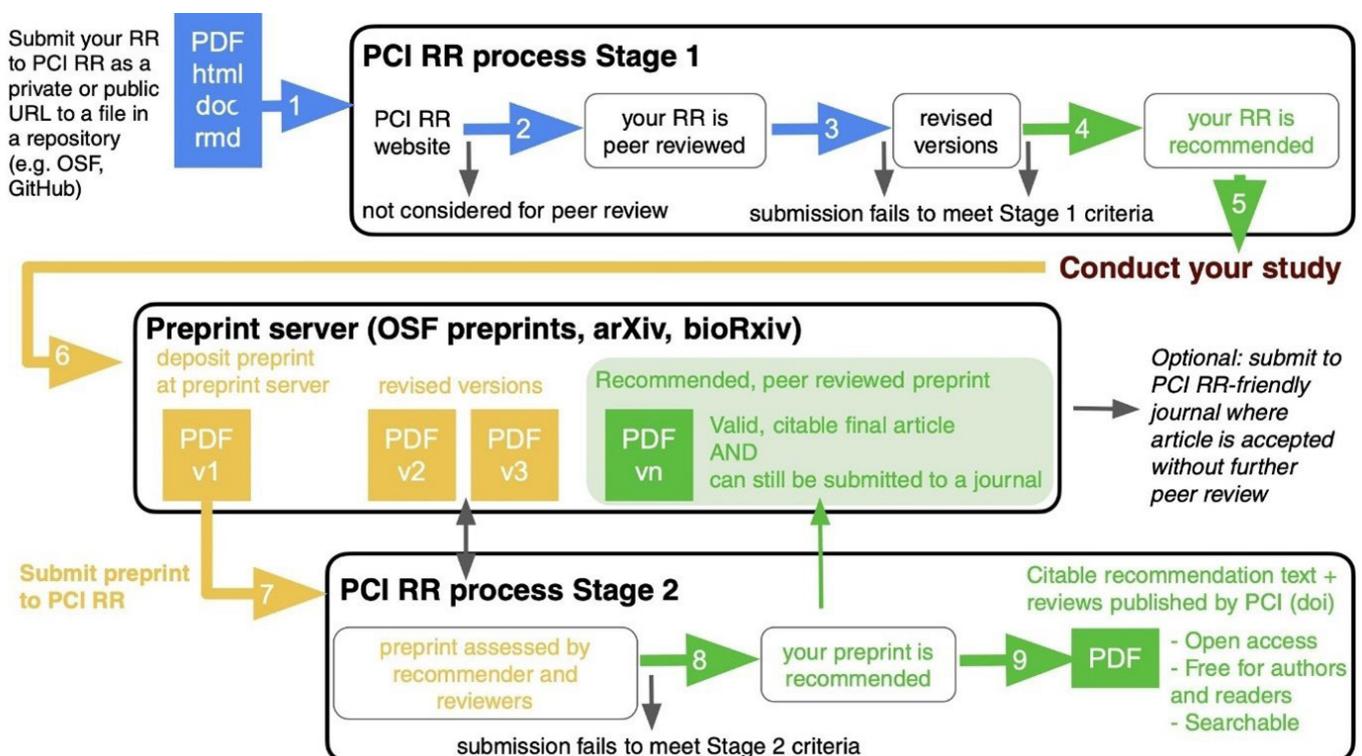
### CERJ author contributions

The past year has not been easy for many of us, CERJ authors included. In fact, the impact of COVID-19 on research output is increasingly felt in terms of the resources for high quality research. We saw in the submissions and during editorial communication authors mention having to reformulate their research questions, give up their original research design, significantly reduce the sample size or shift on-site data collection to completely online, all because of the pandemic. Despite these on-going challenges, we are proud to reveal to CERJ readers the high-quality content of this volume. What is particularly gratifying to us is the concordance between CERJ and the graduate community on the topic of equity. Such unplanned yet concerted efforts towards greater equity from both the editorial team and the authors, while echoing and complementing the public discourse on equity, is what makes this volume particularly precious.

Volume 8 contains three different formats: Research Paper, Literature Review and Critical Review. A *diverse* range of innovative and emerging topics are covered –

**Figure 2** PCI RR process

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financial literacy education for Amazonian fisherwomen, haptic learning potential of collage, positive psychology and L2 writing strategy, linguistic identity construction through poetry writing, the teaching of theory of mind, sustained attention development for older children in high poverty communities and teachers' perception of cyberbullying. We are also delighted to see greater *diversity* in research methods, spanning from qualitative to quantitative and longitudinal analytical approaches. It's also exciting to see the graduate community embrace greater openness and transparency of research, as evidenced by the adoption of pre-registration in one of the research papers. Also *diverse* are the languages in which the research in this volume has been translated – Chinese, French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish.

*Inclusion* is one salient theme in Lily Stone's playful and subversive reinterpretation of "Lucy's Picture" to unveil the haptic potential of collage. The embodied, tactile nature of collage is of the potential to serve as an inclusive and accessible means of learning, particularly for blind and partially sighted people, for whom many subjects of learning are inaccessible due to the heavy reliance on visual cues. Also about *inclusion* is Kyleigh Marie Kai-Li Melville's literature review on the importance of verbal interaction in the development of social understanding in children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). She critiqued existing literature's use of the deficit model of autism and called for more qualitative research that employs a humanistic model. In nice complement is Claudia Pik-Ki Chu's literature review on the teachability of theory of mind (ToM) in school settings. Taking a perspective different from Kyleigh, Claudia focused on the heterogeneity in learning effects for school children and drew more attention to the sociocultural and pedagogical differences across societies in children's ToM development.

*Community* and *justice* are what underpinned Raquel Scarpa-Gebara and Jonas Batista's research on a financial literacy education programme for fisherwomen in Amazonian coastal communities. It is particularly timely to see a piece by authors whose ontological positionality and methodological choices were inspired by Paulo Freire in 2021 – the 100th anniversary of his birth. Through inductive thematic analysis, the authors revealed to us how praxis enables a transformative journey, one of Freire's key intellectual legacies (2001). They outlined how Amazonian fisherwomen shifted their perception of self and group identities through education, and thereby challenged elements of structural and cultural violence inflicted upon them. Also about *community* and *justice* is Yufei Cai, Maria Tsapali, Zewelanjji Serpell, Teresa Parr, and Michelle R. Ellefson' study on sustained attention for older children from high poverty communities in the USA. One of the first to examine changes in sustained attention in ethnic

minority students from high poverty areas, the study demonstrated the possibility that sustained attention improved continuously in these children, despite the difficulties associated with growing up in high poverty environments. Sharing the concern over *justice*, Peter Hurtubise drew our attention to a different issue – cyberbullying, and examined how *teachers'* perception of cyberbullying may influence their response to it. With significant increase of online interaction due to the impact of COVID-19, the issue of cyberbullying certainly merits greater attention and compels educational researchers and practitioners to take action to redress such injustices.

Drawing on positive psychology, Yuchen Zong proposed to infuse hope in L2 writing strategy instruction to empower learners to push through rough times, thereby placing focus not only on the linguistic development of language learners, but also their mental *health*, a topic of particular salience in this post-pandemic era. Lastly, we have Olivia Halsall's work, straddling between second language education and arts-based research, which uncovered *new* dimensions of linguistic identity, expressed through poetry writing, that are more reflective of the characteristics of the contemporary age.

CERJ author contributions and CERJ editorial efforts converge on the common theme of equity, yet each from unique angles and with diverse approaches – from promoting greater openness in the editorial process to shedding light on equity issues through research. Some of these efforts echo the voices in the public discourse, be it *justice* or *inclusion*; Others, on the other hand, touch upon equally important elements that complement and expand the public discourse, be it power or openness and transparency. We feel proud and grateful to have taken on this journey together with the graduate community, but we are also humbled by the force majeure of the pandemic. Though we take pride in our attempted efforts, we recognise the gaps in this volume. For instance, the issue of racial equity, particularly regarding the Black community, is not dealt with in depth by submissions to this volume. What we can say is that we have been working diligently since day one and never for once did we give up when things got difficult or overwhelming, while fully aware that all our efforts constitute but one small step towards the right direction. The endeavour towards greater equity is not a year-long journey, and with hope we will pass on the baton to the next editorial team, reviewers and authors to continue on what we and past CERJ teams have built.

## Acknowledgements

I am beyond grateful to have a strong team of editors this year, who've been here with me throughout the editorial journey, despite all the challenges and difficulties

along the way. My profound gratitude goes to Nicola Morea, who took on additional work without a word of complaint and reliably offered help when most needed, to Samantha Hulston, who consistently delivered high quality work ahead of time, to Carla Plieth, who's always meticulous and has a keen eye for detail, to Camilla Hadi Chaudhary, who gracefully handled with care and patience some delicate situations, and to Ciara McFaul, who has been making a contribution to CERJ Volume 8 since day one. I must say my short "captions" of the editors do not even remotely do justice to their strong expertise and the admirable qualities that I see in them. I am very lucky to have worked with this fantastic team of editors, who've played an essential part in CERJ's success.

I also acknowledge with deep gratitude the work of Nayana Padmanabhan, who's done a brilliant job maintaining our social media platforms. My thanks also go to Ioannis Katsantonis for his critical contribution to the preparation of CERJ events, and to Maggie Nelson, for her knack for hosting events and her help with securing sponsorship. I also want to express my gratitude to Giovanna Lucci for her professional help and thoughtful suggestions regarding Volume 8 cover and template.

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We are also thankful for previous CERJ authors, Ryan Irvan, Yan-Yi Lee and Emily Rushton who kindly attended our information sessions as guest speakers and shared their experience with the audience. We are greatly indebted to Dr Xuesong (Andy) Gao, Associate Professor at the School of Education, University of New South Wales, Australia for delivering our first open-to-public peer reviewer training session. His candour and rich editorial and review experience were appreciated by the audience and us. We also want to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to all the anonymous peer reviewers who volunteered significant amount of personal time and offered constructive and professional feedback to CERJ authors. We also thank Volume 8 authors who've chosen us and worked collaboratively with us to improve their submissions to be the best version they can be. We are also grateful to the

translators and proof-readers of our bilingual abstracts and highlights, who are acknowledged and credited in the corresponding publications.

Big thanks go to Professor Susan Robertson and Dr Louis Major for their support as advisors to CERJ. I am also hugely grateful for the kind help and thoughtful advice from Dr Corina Logan and Professor Chris Chambers, two of the co-founders of PCI RR. CERJ joining PCI RR as the first educational journal couldn't have happened without their support. My sincere gratitude also goes to Professor Linda Fisher, my supervisor, who fully supported me to work on CERJ in parallel with my PhD.

Last but not least, our appreciation extends to the graduate community at the faculty of education who elected us and trusted us with the precious opportunity to serve as the editorial team for Volume 8, without whose support CERJ could not have been where it is today.

### About the author

**Meng Liu** is a PhD candidate in Second Language Education, whose substantive research interest lies at the intersection of Applied Linguistics and Educational Psychology. Meng's most recent publications are in the [Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development](#), the [Journal of Child and Family Studies](#), and the [Cambridge Educational Research e-Journal](#). Besides her PhD, Meng is also interested in research methods and is working towards a master's degree in Social Science Data Analysis. She is an advocate of Open Scholarship, a Cambridge Digital Humanities Methods Fellow, and a Data Champion at the University of Cambridge.

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