Opinion Piece

Scholarly Publishing with *Critical Intersections in Education*

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Introduction

This short paper aims to offer potential authors with detailed information and guidelines on how to potentially publish in our journal, *Critical Intersections in Education* (CIE). The contents of this paper have been inspired by a workshop of the same title that we organized for OISE’s 16th Annual Graduate Student Research Conference (GSRC 2016). While preparing for the workshop, we reflected upon our past and present editorial work, with the goal of addressing issues and challenges that we faced as editors. This paper is an expanded version of our presentation.¹

This short piece consists of three parts. First, we will provide a brief history of CIE, and discuss challenges that we have faced while working as editors. Second, in order to address these challenges, we will de-mystify the editorial process, with the understanding that most of the editorial work in academic journal publishing is veiled to authors who would like to submit and publish papers. Having a transparent process to scholarly publishing, this part will help prospective authors to understand how editorial work and reviews are processed after the submission of their manuscripts, and how they can improve their manuscripts. Third, we will offer more detailed and practical guidelines and advice on preparing, submitting, revising, and editing manuscripts. This final section is based on

¹ The presentation slides can be found at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxcC3AeNZFJS-SVVKemg1Y0tfOGs/view.
our editorial experiences working for CIE. However, we believe that most of our suggestions will be applicable to scholarly publishing in general.

**Brief history and challenges to CIE**

*Critical Interactions in Education* commenced publishing on its online platform in 2013. As an OISE student-run and independent journal, it succeeded *Transform*, which ceased publication in the early 2000s. Since its revival in its current form, CIE has published five issues (including this issue), with its third editorial team working during this current term. One aspect of CIE that makes it unique among academic journals is that, as an independent journal, it aims to offer scholars with a space where they can develop innovative and interdisciplinary analysis, ideas, and proposals in relation to education. In the editorial in the journal’s first issue, CIE editors suggested that the goal of CIE is as follows:

> providing a critical and interdisciplinary forum for analysis of, and engagement with, issues that fall under the fluid interdisciplinary umbrella of ‘education’. Within this shared space, graduate students are encouraged to communicate their unique perspectives and experiences, and to challenge, and hopefully inspire, practitioners and scholars of education, alike (*CIE* Editorial Board, 2013, p. iii).

Despite the CIE’s positioning in the academic journal field, we have faced the challenge of publishing a sufficient quantity of quality papers in the journal. This difficulty stems primarily from a structural issue in the market of academic publication. We have seen that graduate students are more likely to submit their high quality papers to established and prestigious journals in spite of the fact that emerging journals like CIE play multiple important roles in the ecology of academia. Confronting this structural challenge, we have taken several strategies to secure quality manuscripts; for example, we decided to open a new type of publication called short papers, and have been collaborating with the GSRC organizing committee.

Our experience has shown that those who submit papers to CIE are largely comprised of emerging scholars in the field of education or graduate students who are starting their academic career. The composition of the authors who access our journal for publication, in fact, has raised another layer of issues in relation to our editorial work. Specifically, we have been required to perform two roles in our communication and collaboration with authors. We have not only been reviewing submitted papers and made editorial decisions on them as editorial boards do in other journals, but have also offered various forms of guidance and provided assistance on issues regarding scholarly publishing. Although we still think that both editorial duties are essential in our work, we have found that a considerable part was concerned with more general questions about writing and publishing an academic paper. Thus, we hope that this piece will help potential authors to obtain detailed guidelines and information on how to successfully proceed to publication with CIE.

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2 In this sense, we believe that papers already published in CIE are well-qualified.
Unveiling editorial works

CIE receives four types of manuscripts: full research article, short paper, book review or review essay, and visual essay. Of these types, full research articles are the most academic, formal, and conventional form of publication. Thus, we expect manuscripts submitted under this category to be properly aligned with the genre of academic writing. This expectation does not mean that the full-research article should be organized in a fixed order (e.g., Introduction-Literature Review-Methodology-Findings-Discussion-Conclusion). Rather, it suggests that full research articles should be: 1) theoretically grounded, 2) methodologically robust, and 3) engaged in the body of relevant research literature. Despite having received papers with compelling data and/or arguments, we have frequently rejected them or required major revisions. This is usually due to the fact that theoretical backgrounds have not fully been investigated or articulated and/or analysis have not been conducted in a thorough manner. Opinion or essay papers should not be submitted as full research articles as this would be a cause for rejection as well. References regarding academic researching (e.g., Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 2008) and academic publishing manuals (e.g., American Psychological Association, 2010) will provide guidance and examples on how a research article should be shaped.

A short paper format was recently introduced to authors wishing to submit to CIE, in order to strengthen practical implications and incorporate issues concerning (im)possibilities of critical intervention into educational practices. We admit that given the proposed length of this type of manuscript, authors may find it challenging to fully develop theoretical frameworks and cover a sufficient number of previous studies. In fact, in evaluating short papers, we primarily draw our attention to the key question of whether the paper critically examines practical possibilities of critical theories. Even if a short paper does not include a number of previous studies, the author should make an important and strong link between theory and practice.

We also accept manuscripts of book reviews/review essays and visual essays. We highly encourage potential authors to submit their manuscripts in these two categories. Especially, given the journal’s interest in the concept of multimodality, we expect visual essays to contribute to proposing an alternative mode and style of academic writing and publication. Additionally, we would like to emphasize that opinion pieces are not typically accepted by CIE. The editorial board only invites authors to write opinion papers when it finds that an urgent issue in relation to OISE, University of Toronto, or other educational communities needs examining and discussing (e.g., Yosef-Hassidim, 2013).

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3 We thus far have only published a single review paper (i.e., Uddin, 2013).
All of the manuscripts submitted to CIE are required to go through the two-step review process, as seen in Figure 1. First, the manuscripts undergo an internal review, conducted by the editorial board. We usually assign two internal editors to a single paper, and these two editors read and review it to determine: 1) whether the themes of the paper fits within the scope of our journal, 2) whether the organization of the paper is academically structured, and 3) whether the format of the paper is well-aligned to APA-style guidelines. In a monthly editorial meeting, based on two editors’ opinions, we decide to move the internally reviewed paper to the next round of peer-review, that is to say, external review, request for revision and resubmission, or reject the manuscript. During the editorial board meetings, we have extensive discussions, guided by two questions relating to the journal’s scope and themes; first, how the paper incorporates a critical perspective in the research, and second, what pedagogical implications the paper provides to the readers? Thus, a paper whose approach and theme are critical but not pedagogical, or pedagogical but not critical, would be subject to a decision of “revise and resubmit.” We do not offer advice on how “critical” and “pedagogical” should be conceived as this could take many shapes and forms. Generally, we encourage authors to revisit and problematize established concepts and ideas that they discuss in their papers.

Once a paper has reached the external review stage, we assign it to two reviewers with the appropriate expertise and background to review it meaningfully.4 These two external reviewers not only make suggestions and comments on the reviewed paper, but also propose an editorial decision. Because of this process, papers published in CIE are deemed as double-blind peer-reviewed and refereed. The criteria for sending a paper for external review consist of three parts: 1) whether the manuscript has a strong focus, a clear structure, and valid argumentation, 2) whether the manuscript is clearly written and well-organized, and 3) whether the manuscript has been carefully edited and adheres to APA

4 We highly encourage you to participate in this academic community as reviewers as well as authors. We strongly believe that the work of reviewing other colleagues’ works will grant you a valuable opportunity to engage in a stimulating academic dialogue and to grow as an intellectual.
style guidelines. When external reviews are completed, the two editors read through reviewers’ comments, and based on opinions of the two editors and the two external reviewers, the editorial board make a final editorial decision.

Accepted papers are often required to undergo further additional revisions by the author(s) to ensure accurate editing and formatting. We highly urge authors to edit their papers in as perfect a form as possible. CIE editors edit and format the final draft, and upload it on the online journal system after the author’s final edits and revisions are completed.

**Advice for potential authors**

Given our experiences, we can pinpoint two major reasons that a submitted paper is not processed in a timely manner and often fails to be published. First, it does not follow the journal’s guidelines. For example, it is not properly formatted and edited by the authors. We have seen unedited versions of course papers submitted. Second, after recommendations from journal editors are sent to the authors for required revisions, the paper is not resubmitted, despite its potential for publication. We hope that the following advice will help potential authors to address these two issues and that they will have clear visions and expectations regarding their submissions to CIE.

1. Be familiar with the author’s guidelines and checklists posted on the journal’s website. One of the major reasons for a “revise and resubmit” request is due to a failure of the author of the manuscript to follow these guidelines; for example, it did not conform to the style and reference guidelines of American Psychological Association (APA) 6th edition, or did not follow the measures to ensure blind reviews and confidentiality of research participants.

2. If the submission is your first engagement in academic publishing, acquaint yourself with CIE’s standards for a quality paper. Consult with papers already published in CIE. Carefully read all relevant documents such as CIE’s descriptions (focus and scope), guidelines and checklists.

3. Before you submit a draft, edit your work properly. Make sure that the guidelines of APA 6th edition are being respected. Ask your colleagues to review your paper with a critical eye and offer suggestions. More practically, reading your paper out loud may help to improve the flow of your paper. Avoid unnecessary jargon. Focus on building concise and articulate statements supported by valid evidence, literature, and argumentation. Please double-check all in-text references with the reference list. Remind yourself that appropriate editing before submission will allow your paper to proceed more quickly through the publication process.

4. If you submit your course paper, keep in mind that the format and organization of your course paper does not always fit with the scope and format of our journal. One of the common mistakes that we have been observing is that graduate students submit their own course papers to CIE without any substantial revision and reformatting. In most cases, such papers are required to “revise and resubmit” or are rejected. We encourage you to improve the quality of your course papers by forging more critical, augmentative, and edgy perspectives and incorporating a
greater number of recent relevant studies. We also ask you to rewrite the paper to fit in with the format that the journal is looking for.

5. Asking for revisions is a common practice in the scholarly publishing. Take a revision as a positive sign. It is highly rare that a submitted paper is accepted as it is. In most cases, internal and external reviewers ask that you revise your paper in multiple rounds. Note that reviewing and revising is a process rather than a product, and that it is an essential part of scholarly publishing. The editors will provide a letter with suggested revisions. Gather what information is most valuable from this letter, and use it to revise your paper. You do not have to agree with every editorial comment, but please do take feedback into careful consideration when making your revisions, as it will refine your arguments.

6. The communication between authors and editors plays an important role in academic publishing. Try to reach editors first when you have any issues and concerns. Also, after the paper is accepted and copy edited, you should not make revisions to the final version of your manuscript. You should make revisions or corrections as recommended by the editors.

7. You should be aware of the concepts and scopes of plagiarism. Authors would unintentionally commit plagiarism when they naively cite original works, do not give proper credit to existing studies, or do not paraphrase original texts on the basis of your interpretation of them. Note that you should first try to ensure academic integrity as a member of academic communities.

References


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