

EDITORIAL

The End or Beginning? Either Way, the Credits Are Not Rolling Yet!

Editorial Team

Robert M. Capraro	Mary Margaret Capraro	Jacqueline Leonard
Chance Lewis	Melva Grant	Marlon James
Eduardo Mosqueda	Jamaal Young	Ali Bicer
Tarcia Hubert	Alesia Mickle Moldavan	Susan Ophelia Cannon
Hyunkyoung Kwon	Michael S. Rugh	Jonas L. Chang

JUME Quick Facts

New Leadership Term Began April 15, 2019

First Volume Delivered May, 2020

Current Acceptance Rate: ~11%

Now a SCOPUS Indexed Journal (as of 2020)

Average Time to Initial assignment: ~3 Days

Average Time to Decision: ~36 Days

Average Time to Publication: ~8 Months

Double-Blind Peer Review: Yes

Number of Reviewers Assigned: 2–3, Plus an Editorial Board Member

Thank you to all our reviewers, editorial board members, authors, and those who chose the *Journal of Urban Mathematics Education (JUME)* as their outlet of choice this past year. *JUME* has had many recent successes, and we in the editorial team plan to release the salient performance data for the journal. For *JUME* to advance its mission, we believe that accountability and transparency are essential. To this end, our readers will from now on receive an annual progress report about *JUME* in our first issue of each year.

The editorial team has worked to bring timely issues to press as quickly as possible without jeopardizing the review process. However, the review process has been tough at times. Given the very difficult year amidst the dual pandemics of racism and COVID-19, reviewers exceeded expectations. Our typical time to send manuscripts to reviewers was three days, and our average time to decision was 36 days. Unfortunately, some of the variation around those numbers has been less than laudable. The range for time to send to reviewers was 0–9 days, and the range for time to decision was 12 days to 101 days. We could never have imagined the difficulties we would face in moving manuscripts quickly through the review process. While these timeliness indicators are certainly not the best case, they are clear benchmarks for moving forward. We are starting here and hope that next year we are able to report improvements.

In order to improve time to reviewers and time to decision, we have three focuses. First, we will work to expand our reviewer pool so that we can select from a broader population of committed reviewers and burden the few much less. Second, we will seek to start a mentoring program for reviewers. A goal held by our team is to ensure every manuscript receives an excellent, positive, and productive review. Therefore, the team tended to rely on a few reviewers who excelled at providing a caring and respectful review even when their recommendation was to decline the manuscript. If we can get this mentality to spread, it has the potential to change the education publishing landscape as a whole. Our third focus is to ensure that each member of the *JUME* team feels accountable and empowered to make their own decisions and to move quickly and decisively for every submission on which they are the action editor. The number of submissions is already on the rise, but this will be a double-edged sword. Time to publication is slowly increasing, as is our backlog. We are concerned that the granularity of this first reflection will not be sustainable. The relatively modest number of submissions currently allows for a great deal of detail with regard to the important metrics in our *JUME* Quick Facts table, but as submissions increase, we are sure a much less fine-grained analysis will result and other issues related to circulation growth will creep into the process.

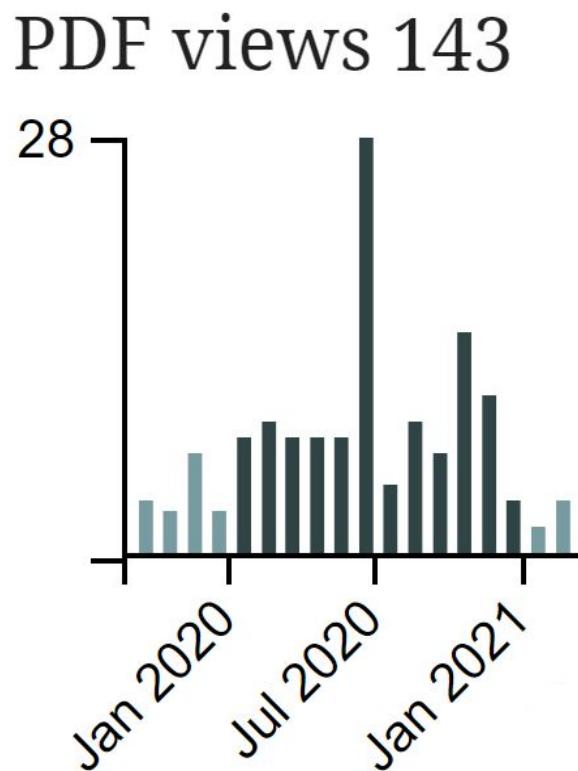
For the next two years, we are committed to meeting our goals of publishing two issues per year with 2–3 research manuscripts in each issue. *JUME* will publish special issues as they align to the interests of our readership and mission of the journal. We will not substitute special issues for a regular issue unless that special issue

is of such importance that making it a regular issue makes a statement. When we assumed the mantle of leadership, there was at least one failed search for an editor-in-chief and the journal was closed to submissions for a year. Therefore, when we began our term, the manuscript flow was zero, as was the backlog. We have worked to build both. We are pleased to say that manuscript flow is steadily growing; a graph at this point would be gratuitous and the growth unsustainable. But if we just compare the first month of last year to the first month of 2021, we are on track to show an increase. If we were CEOs tasked with predicting first quarter numbers, we would expect a 10% increase for the quarter and a 20% gain year over year in manuscript flow. We are currently building a backlog, and we are actively working to manage that backlog to be no more than one issue. What this means is that no author should wait for more than one issue after entering the post-production phase for the publication of their manuscript. We are pleased that *JUME* is both free and open access, and our goal is at some point to move to publishing when ready and moving away from issues. A backlog is important to this endeavor and to producing a quality journal; it means we are able to select the highest quality manuscripts while providing time to nurture authors through the revise and resubmit phase. When we attached the targets to our chests, and unfortunately to our backs as well, one tenet on which we stood was that everyone who can make a decision understands and is committed to nurturing every manuscript on which there is a revise and resubmit. It is a fact that even when all the best things happen some authors decide, for what are often deep personal reasons, to not resubmit. We stand ready to help.

In our first year of leadership, we sought to bring relevant editorials to the field and allow our readers and authors to determine the research direction for the journal. Our planned range for 2020 was 4–6 research articles, and there were five research articles published. We also published editorials that we believe help readers to decide into which sections of the journal to submit their work. Those editorials also help to provide clarity about what is expected in those sections and how to best situate their work to fit into a section that best fits an author's research agenda and scholarly mission. Additionally, we provided guidance in some editorials about our expectations for quantitative rigor and have the same planned for qualitative methods. Our *International Research* section is receiving a large number of submissions, and there is a great deal of interest in that section.

Our publication range for 2021 and 2022 for research articles will continue to be 4–6. We will work to move to a publish-when-ready format and move past any arbitrary limit on the number of research articles we publish in each issue. However, citations to our articles are essential to our metrics both for those published in *JUME* and in articles submitted to other journals as well. In doing so, we will continue to get the message out about the impactful research published under the *JUME* masthead recently and historically.

The path to acclaim starts with ensuring that authors receive recognition and reputational prestige from their association with the journal. To accomplish this, we have retroactively applied digital object identifiers to every article and enabled credit for reviewers through the ORCID system. This allows the proliferation of third-party indexers, speedier distribution, and access through the digital cloud. We continue to be indexed in the Directory of Open Access Journals and to comply with their very high standards. Now every article has a graph indicating its online, direct access readership (see Figure 1). We also have a new interactive Artificial Intelligence Agent that examines the keywords for all the articles published in *JUME*, compiles the most common, indexes them, and creates an interactive word jumble. That jumble allows a reader to click a keyword, after which the agent retrieves all the articles that used that keyword (see Figure 2). This same system, through ORCID, is linked to Google Scholar and automatically updates an author's Google Scholar Profile and directs readers to their work published in *JUME* directly without the need to have library or university credentials when accessing articles through our other third-party indexes. Now this is what we mean by being truly open access.



KEYWORDS

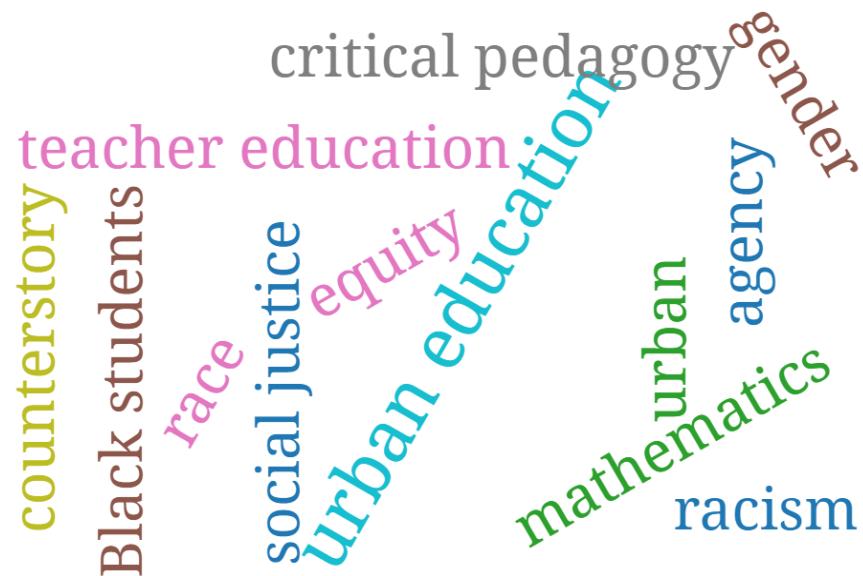


Figure 2. Example of Interactive Keywords

Our success this past year has been remarkable. Our acceptance rate for 2020 was ~11% (see Figure 3). When comparing the rate to historical data, the trend is declining. However, we do not have information to make a fair comparison based on flow per year. Several updates to the Open Journal System software prevents this metric. Despite this, we believe that moving forward we will be able to report the flow rate and acceptance rate over time and to be able to chart this information. While flow was sufficient to exceed all our first year's goals and to achieve a comparable acceptance rate to high-quality journals, we hope that eventually moving to a publish-when-ready format will both increase the acceptance rate while improving the timeliness for publishing manuscripts. The end result will be that some years we may publish more articles and in other years less. We are in our first year of being a SCOPUS-rated journal, and we look forward to our first metrics being posted. It will be important to carefully scrutinize how the journal fits in the urban mathematics landscape and to be sure that we are citing *JUME* appropriately and working to make sure that *JUME* articles get the best possible publicity. We have additionally reestablished the journal's Facebook account. We have also installed an ORCID plugin to ensure that an ORCID link is listed for every author. These changes allow each author to have the necessary tools to get the word out about their publications and to help generate citations of those works.

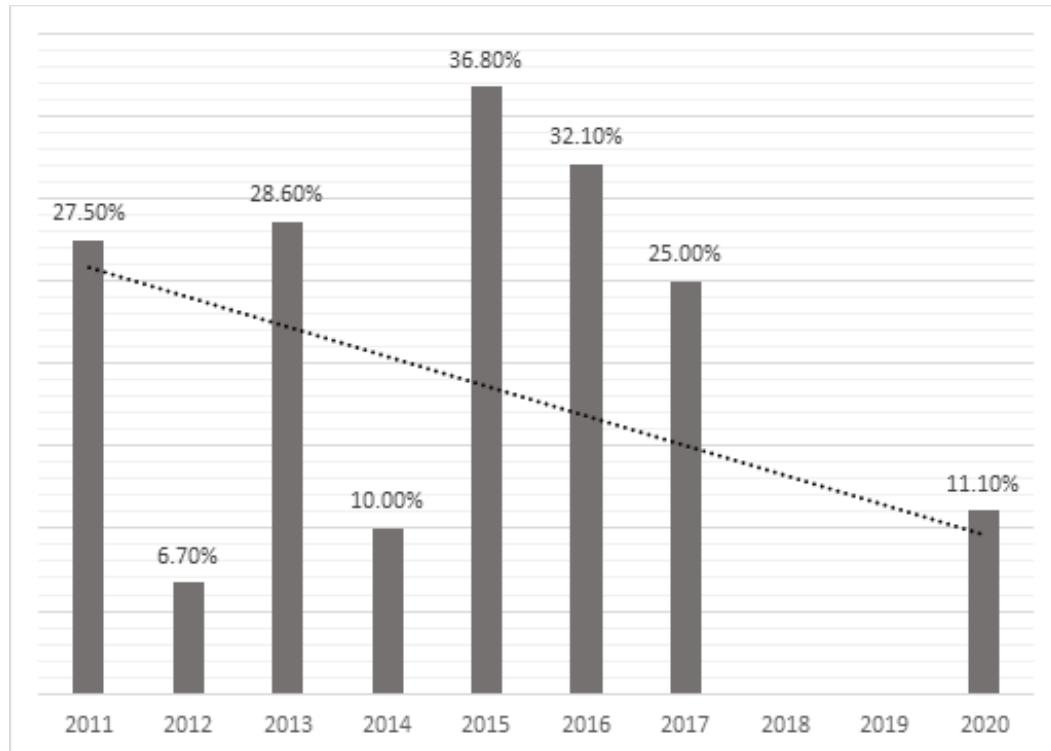


Figure 3. Acceptance Rate by Year

We have discussed our successes of this past year, but let us now look forward to the year that is to come. We at *JUME* have long sought to be disruptors, both in mathematics education and at national funding agencies more broadly. This role requires foresight, transparency, and a proactive mindset, which we seek to bring to a growing conversation regarding discrimination and prejudice in the publication process. *JUME* is not without fault, but one of our goals is to make our weaknesses as well known as our strengths, to look within and without, and to seek assistance in remediating where we fall short. We are excited to join our peer editors in mathematics education and urban education should they decide to follow suit, and we hope to issue unified and univocal stances to reduce discrimination and prejudice in publication, funding, and access to publication outlets.

Every endeavor, however, must have a beginning, and these often are composed of small steps. Discrimination and prejudice in the publication process is complex, and clear data is a necessity for understanding the myriad issues involved, particularly if we, as a field, wish to understand whether major problems arise in the role of the reviewer, as is so often cited to be the case, or in the role of the editor. To this end, we at *JUME* join the American Psychological Association (2021) in the mission “to better understand the demographics of our participants, and to identify and improve any gaps in representation across our network of authors, reviewers, and

editors” (para. 1). As such, *JUME* will soon initiate a plan to collect demographic information for published articles inclusive of ALL authors and reviewers and to publish this data in each year-end review, for authors who wish to disclose such information. In discussing this decision, it was suggested that we have all submissions include demographic information; however, there was a concern that authors might be worried about how such information would be used and whether or not requesting demographic information at the submission stage would influence the publication process. Instead, we are going to pilot the voluntary submission of demographic information of published authors, including race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability/ability status, rank or graduate student status, institution one graduated from, and terminal degree graduation year as well as if authors have ever received international funding or funding from the author’s home nation’s national funding agencies as a PI or Co-PI. We believe this last category of information is important to collect because funding is nearly essential for most of us in the academy to do our work. Without that demographic variable, it is impossible to know if any group is underrepresented because they are omitted from the funding stream.

The decision to collect this voluntary information is not without cause. The *JUME* editorial team understands that there is a problem in the editorial process; we know that there are too few faculty of color and too much service work required of these few individuals who are often disproportionately taxed with culture- and equity-related tasks. How do we know this? We know this because we performed a careful review of our own practices and because we have looked at the demographic information currently available for our past publications, which is presented in Table 1. We feel it is necessary here to state that this information has gaps, as it was our goal to avoid misrepresenting any scholars while compiling the data presented in this table. To this end, we only included those scholars who the members of the editorial team are familiar with and are certain of how they would identify themselves. We did not categorize any scholars whose self-identity we were not certain of. We were confident in doing so due to the many years of experience collectively represented by the members of the *JUME* editorial team and the resulting familiarity that these members have with most major and upcoming scholars in the field of urban mathematics education. This method also resulted in a minimal loss of data, with each column of the table losing less than four percent of its original pool of scholars. Yes, there are many flaws to this approach to data collection, but some practice toward wokeness is better than none, even if a few steps are made in error. Again, major systemic changes must begin with small steps, and we will reiterate that the demographic information collection policy of *JUME* is changing in order to fill gaps and minimize inaccuracies in the available data. The information presented now, however, we believe to be satisfactory to discuss larger historical trends in *JUME*’s own publication process and to justify the need for collecting more accurate demographic data.

Table 1
Demographics of *JUME* Authors and Reviewers

Demographic	Authors 2008–2020*	Reviewers Who Completed a Review 2016–2020	Reviewers Who Declined to Conduct a Review 2016–2020	Reviewers Who Accepted to Conduct a Review and Later Remitted 2016–2020
Asian	5.3%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Black (non-Hispanic)	41.0%	5.0%	79.0%	9.0%
Latin or Hispanic Descent or Origin	36.0%	11.0%	21.0%	9.0%
White (non-Hispanic)	14.0%	84.0%	<1%	82.0%

Note. All numbers in this table are estimates based on editorial team members' familiarity with the author or reviewer.

*This includes both primary authors and co-authors.

The demographic survey will not be limited to the broad categories presented in Table 1. Authors and reviewers will be able to provide their own demographic information with more fine-grained insights into their classifications or place of origin. For example, categorizing the initial data presented in Table 1 was complicated by the act of describing certain geographic regions as subsets of larger ones (e.g., Should “Asian” be inclusive of everyone with roots going back to the continent of Asia despite the many different contexts present within the landmass?). With the implementation of our new demographic survey, *JUME*’s authors and scholars will be able to more accurately self-identify their ethnicities and heritages (e.g., “South Asian” or “East Asian” rather than “Asian.”). Our desire is that collecting such demographic information will capture nuances of identity with great accuracy and that doing so will promote discussion of urban mathematics within an international framework and additionally enable and empower discussion of how each author’s mathematical identity is shaped by unique mathematics education experiences.

Another goal of the editorial team is to better understand the representation of authors of all gender identities and sexual orientations in urban mathematics education and to recognize their contributions. It is for this reason that the voluntary demographics survey will allow contributors to indicate their gender identity and sexual orientation. Additionally, we recognize the unique experiences of LGBTIQ+ students, teachers, and mathematics education scholars and seek to make the journal a space where conversations and studies rooted in such experiences can be shared.

Our mission to strengthen the inclusive nature of *JUME*'s scholarly community will be further supported by the voluntary demographics survey allowing contributors to indicate and specify their disability/ability status. Scholars in the field of urban mathematics education have long studied how best to support the mathematics achievement of exceptional learners, and such learners who enter the academy must be able to share their unique research perspectives, developed from their own mathematical identities and experiences, with their peers. We will strive for *JUME* to be a space where such scholars know their work fits and will be fairly represented.

As we implement these changes, we recognize that our path is not without faults, but it is important to keep in mind that most journals are reluctant to provide this level of transparency. As such, there is no long-standing model for transparent editorial practices for us to follow, though we find the recent guidance of the American Psychological Association and the implementation of its own demographics survey a good place from which to start. The best we can do for *JUME*, for the field and community at large, and for urban mathematics students is to provide further transparency of our own editorial practices. For these reasons, we believe that collecting demographic information for authors and reviewers is the correct course of action to take in order to improve the representation of all scholars in *JUME*. With all this being said, the editorial team agrees that without there ever having been a previous discussion about demographic characteristics or opportunity with the journal, it appears that the people doing the work in urban settings are represented well within our authorship pool. We feel this is a strength of the journal and of the team historically.

We have discussed our desire and reasoning for collecting new data with our demographics survey, but what do we have to announce regarding our current data in the first annual progress report for *JUME*? In answering this question, let us first ask one that is essential for discerning an equitable editorial process: “Who is doing the reviewing?” Often, reviewers act as the gatekeepers to publication. Additionally, it is often the reviewers who tend to favor their own paradigms and topics and who approach reviewing myopically. At least, this tends to be the scapegoat for when editors and editorial teams are questioned about publication decisions. So what are the characteristics of a *JUME* reviewer? To answer this, we reviewed the last four years of reviewer information. We were limited to four years because software updates made reviewer information older than this unreliable. Additionally, we do not have sufficient information on reviewers for manuscripts that were not published.

When considering the last four years in which manuscripts were published, of those reviewers who completed a review, the ethnic/racial breakdown appears to be the following: less than 1% Asian, 5% Black, 11% Latin or Hispanic, and 84% White (see Table 1). We were also interested in knowing more about reviewers who either decline or remit a review. Of the 62% of those who declined to conduct a review, less than 1% appear to be Asian or White, 79% Black, and 21% Latin or Hispanic. For reviewers who accepted to conduct a review and who remitted that review, 82%

appear to be White, 9% Black, 9% Hispanic or Latin, and less than 1% Asian. What this means is that when an author of color submits a manuscript, they have an ~80% chance to have White reviewers.

On the surface, these trends may appear problematic, but with context, they are signs of the health and utility of *JUME*. Considering that the National Center for Education Statistics confirms that 77.5% of Full and Associate Professors are White Americans (McFarland et al., 2018), we fully expect that the vast majority of our reviewers would reflect these demographics. In fact, given our focus on the education of youth from disenfranchised communities and schools, it is inspiring to see that so many of our senior White professors are supporting, strengthening, and facilitating the publication of research by *JUME*'s diverse authors. More than eight in 10 authors for *JUME* are faculty of color publishing work concerning mathematics education for an equally diverse population of students in urban schools. Moreover, our data also note a relatively low rate of reviews by faculty of color (16%); specifically, only 5% of reviewers are African American. Yet, within an appropriate context, these data should be expected. Only 5.5% of Full and Associate Professors are African American in the United States (McFarland et al., 2018). On the other hand, Latin and Hispanic scholars only account for 4% of Full and Associate Professors in the United States (McFarland et al., 2018) but represent roughly 11% of *JUME*'s reviewers, which we recognize and applaud. *JUME* also fully recognizes that faculty of color are faced with a "minority tax" (Baez, 2000; Trejo, 2020), asked to perform diversity work and support underrepresented students in addition to their academic and administrative duties. Black and Brown mathematics education faculty are often too overburdened to be able to accept every extra task asked of them. It is also a reality that Black and Brown faculty are trying to navigate the tenure and promotion process in a typically White institution, devised by White faculty, and governed by White administrators. Therefore, many faculty of color find themselves making choices between their personal missions and those for which they receive credit toward promotion, tenure, and recognition. Given all of this, *JUME* will continue to focus our support for equitable access to a research publication that advances minority scholarship and research to improve mathematics education in urban schools and classrooms.

We hope that the steps being taken in 2021 will advance this goal and that the *JUME* editorial team's decisions allocate the effort necessary to raise *JUME* to the prominence of other major journals both within and beyond our field. We expect that being included in SCOPUS, working on our author metrics, adopting ORCID identification, and getting the journal's social media accounts active will have a positive impact that will allow faculty of color to more easily prioritize *JUME* for their service to the field and to become active reviewers. These steps already appear to be bearing fruit. We are pleased that every one of our inaugural editorial board members decided to extend their service. We were also able to add one new international board member who is interested in our collective work.

There are some other prejudicial considerations in the publication community, far too many to detail here, but they range from the notion that great mathematics education research comes from only a small number of universities or from those graduates who come from them to the idea that urban mathematics education is a niche and not a mainstream educationally scientific area of interest. We have not completed our review of institutions represented in our author and reviewer pools. Too many years, as well as faculty tendency to move or change universities, make this work arduous to complete with a high level of dependability. Therefore, we intend to collect these data moving forward so that we will have accurate information to determine if any institutional bias exists, and we will report this information in the 2021 *JUME* report that will be published in the first issue of 2022.

We would like to conclude this introduction to this issue of *JUME* by thanking the many wonderful scholars who will join the journal in bettering the editorial process and strengthening the voices and representation of all urban mathematics education scholars, especially those in the most vulnerable positions within and outside of the academy. We believe that *JUME* is well positioned to make a meaningful contribution to our field and to provide a high-quality outlet suitable for graduate students and junior faculty looking to break ground on their research agenda and establish their reputation as well as for senior scholars looking to make powerful statements about the teaching and learning of mathematics in urban contexts, at home, across the street, or across the globe. While this editorial summarizes our first year of publication as the new editorial team, it also welcomes in the new year with all the hopes and dreams it brings, but make no mistake, this editorial team is still working hard, reevaluating our procedures, and establishing new benchmarks by which to make thoughtful decisions moving forward.

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