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Child Development Special Section: Registered Reports in Child Development

Child Development invites manuscripts for the first of two planned Special Sections on Registered Reports, edited by Moin Syed (University of Minnesota), Michael C. Frank (Stanford University), and Glenn I. Roisman (in his role as Editor-in-Chief of *Child Development*). **Letters of Intent were due by September 20, 2020. Stage 1 Registered Report submissions are no longer being accepted.**

Child Development invites manuscripts for the first of two planned Special Sections on *Registered Reports in Child Development*. The Special Section Editors are Moin Syed (University of Minnesota), Michael C. Frank (Stanford University), and Glenn I. Roisman (in his role as Incoming Editor-in-Chief of *Child Development*). **Letters of Intent were due by September 20, 2020. Stage 1 Registered Report submissions are no longer being accepted.**

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Research in the social and biological sciences is undergoing a wide-ranging effort to improve methods and practices toward the goal of producing a more transparent, reproducible, and credible body of findings. Registered Reports have been proposed as one solution to the lack of transparency regarding the degree to which empirical contributions represent relatively confirmatory versus exploratory analyses (Chambers, 2013). Registered Reports—which can be viewed as a supplement to the more common research report formats already offered at *Child Development*—are a form of empirical article in which the conceptualization, methods, and proposed analyses are pre-registered and reviewed prior to the data being collected and/or analyzed. In this model, decisions about publication are based on the strength of the research

conceptualization and design, not on the resultant pattern of findings. This article format has the potential to eliminate a variety of problematic research practices, including inadequate statistical power, selective reporting of results, and publication bias. (Note that the Editor in Chief of *Child Development* generally encourages submissions to *Child Development* that make use of pre-registration—which can address some of these issues as well—even if not submitted for consideration in the Special Sections on Registered Reports.)

At the same time, questions naturally arise about the fit of the Registered Report model with some areas of child development research. It is important to build confidence in our field that the format is compatible not only with producing technically sound scholarship, but also high impact research of the sort routinely published in the journal. As such, this Special Section aims to examine the fit of the Registered Report format with scholarship from a variety of developmental domains. Doing so will produce evidence regarding how the format can be used to produce high impact developmental scholarship, which will facilitate its addition as a regular format at the journal—alongside the more common research report formats already offered—should this experiment prove successful. An additional goal of the Special Section is to build infrastructure at the journal for processing Registered Reports. The Special Section Editors will oversee the project to build a smooth editorial work-flow for Registered Reports, and will train the current Editorial Board of *Child Development*, who will serve as the action editors for the submissions to the Special Section.

The review process for Registered Reports is divided into two stages. In Stage 1, reviewers assess study proposals, including the Introduction and Method section (inclusive of hypotheses and all relevant materials), before data are collected (for projects involving new data collection—see below for more discussion of secondary data analysis). In Stage 2, reviewers consider the full study, including results and interpretation. Following Stage 1 peer review, manuscripts will be accepted, offered the opportunity to revise, or rejected outright. Manuscripts that pass Stage 1 peer review will be issued an *in principle acceptance*, indicating that the article will be published pending successful completion of the study according to the exact methods and analytic procedures outlined, as well as a defensible and evidence-bound interpretation of the results. Exploratory analyses not originally specified in the Stage 1 proposal are permitted, so long as they are clearly labeled as exploratory in the Stage 2 manuscript. For more detailed information about expectations regarding submissions for this Special Section see Author Guidelines for Registered Reports. In addition, some answers to frequently asked questions about the Registered Reports concept are available on the Center for Open Science website.

One of our primary goals in promoting a set of two Registered Reports Special Sections at *Child Development* is to encourage authors across the broad and diverse field of child development to consider how the Registered Reports model works for their own area of study. The diversity of intellectual backgrounds in the editorial team for this issue (which will ultimately include all regular members of the Editorial Board) is meant to accommodate submissions across a wide range of substantive domains and populations and also to encourage potential methodological advances and innovations in the Registered Report format. We hope authors will think critically about how the Registered Report model might be applied to new topics. Authors are encouraged to contact the editorial team to discuss these issues in the planning stages of their initial letter of intent (see below), particularly if they involve any deviation from the standard Registered Report model. For example, authors may consider how the model can be adapted for archival datasets with research questions not previously examined using these data. In this way, we hope the resultant Special Section of *Child Development* will serve as a model for researchers in other areas to see how the Registered Report approach might work for their own research. **The key constraint for this first of two Special Sections is that the proposed work must be completed and submitted for Stage 2 review within one year after in principle acceptance (i.e., post-Stage 1 review).** (Note that that additional time may be granted with sufficient justification). Papers accepted after Stage 2 review will be immediately published online and all papers in this first Special Section on Registered Reports will subsequently be bundled with an editorial in the regular print version of the journal as a set.

In addition, we will be later announcing a second Special Section of *Child Development* devoted to Registered Reports based in part on the lessons learned in our first effort, with the plan for this second Special Section to accommodate Registered Reports requiring more than a year to complete data collection and analysis (e.g., longitudinal studies).

Authors who plan to submit a manuscript for the special section must **submit a letter of intent (LOI) by June 1, 2020 OR September 1, 2020. The editors will consider LOIs in two waves**. Authors may submit by June 1, in the interest of receiving a decision on LOIs from the Special Section Editors early. LOIs received after September 1 will not be considered. LOI feedback is limited to the editors' final decision. However, they will address queries regrading teh Registered Report Special Section. **Please also note that LOI timelines and feedback may be impacted by COVID-19.** Letters of intent MUST include:

1. a tentative title;
2. a brief (approximately 500 words) scientific case for consideration of the proposed submission emphasizing both: (a) the significance of the focal research question for advancing research in an

important domain of child development and (b) the quality (i.e., rigor and potential reproducibility) of the proposed methods. An optimal Registered Report will be well positioned to make a significant contribution to a substantive domain irrespective of the key findings;

3. A statement that the proposed work fits within the scope of the Registered Report format.
4. a statement confirming that all necessary support (e.g., funding, facilities) and approvals (e.g., ethics) will be in place for the proposed research upon submission of the Stage 1 manuscript;
5. an anticipated timeline for completing the study if the initial submission is accepted (i.e., with submission for Stage 2 review within one year of Stage 1 review);
6. a statement confirming that, following Stage 1 in-principle acceptance, the authors agree that their Stage 1 manuscript will be hosted indefinitely on the SRCD website even should the manuscript be withdrawn post-IPA;
7. the names and affiliations of all anticipated authors;
8. contact information for the corresponding author.

The Special Section Editors will review letters of intent for fit with the section and work to provide the broadest representation of high-quality submissions.

Letters of intent should be sent electronically as Word documents to cdev@srcd.org. (Do not send letters of intent directly to the Co-Editors as letters of intent directed in this way may not receive consideration). In the accompanying e-mail, please include "Special Section on Registered Reports, Part 1" in the subject line. Following a review of received letters (roughly 1 month after the Letter of Intent deadline above), potential contributors will be contacted to submit manuscripts for **Stage 1 review that will be due by January 15, 2021**, though Stage 1 manuscripts will be reviewed as they are received by members of the Editorial Board on a rolling basis. In general, Stage 2 manuscripts should be 40 pages in length or fewer, inclusive of everything (body text, references, tables/figures, etc.), but extensive use of web supplements is strongly encouraged (longer manuscripts will be considered if sufficiently justified). Thus, Stage 1 manuscripts should be 20 or fewer pages. Manuscripts submitted will be subjected to full Stage 1 peer review, to be conducted via *Child Development*'s submission site.

Questions concerning the substance of submissions should be directed to: Moin Syed (moin@umn.edu), Michael Frank (mcfrank@stanford.edu), and/or Glenn I. Roisman (roism001@umn.edu); questions concerning the submission process should be directed to the SRCD Publications Manager, Melissa Lutchkus, at cdev@srcd.org.

References

Chambers, C. D. (2013). Registered reports: a new publishing initiative at Cortex. *Cortex, 49*, 609-610.

The development of this Call for Registered Reports at *Child Development* preceded the current COVID-19 pandemic. We have proceeded with this Call because the stakeholders we consulted viewed the Registered Report format as perhaps an ideal one for developmental scientists to move ahead with their programs of research: planning the next set of in person and remote assessment empirical studies of child development, pre-registering analyses of existing developmental data, and, more broadly, keeping our vital developmental science moving forward—all while attempting to improve on the status quo of confirmatory science in our discipline. We nonetheless reserve the right to extend deadlines described above in light of the evolving state of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on in-person and other kinds of research on child development.