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Research in the Teaching of English: From Alchemy and Science to Methodological Plurality

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Abstract

Academic journals reflect the evolving stances toward knowledge-making in disciplinary fields. This article traces shifting debates about methods over more than 50 years in *Research in the Teaching of English* (*RTE*), the flagship research journal of the National Council of Teachers of English. By drawing on historical evidence, I demonstrate how the journal reflected methodological shifts in the field of writing studies over that time period and the significant influence of editors in advancing certain approaches to research on the teaching of writing over others. Such insights drawn from long-standing journals like *RTE* are valuable to editors and readers of newer journals like *The Journal of Writing Analytics* because they offer useful lessons about the need for mentorship of an editorial pipeline as well as how methodological change must be of a journal's identity to account for shifting disciplinary approaches to the study of writing.

Keywords: disciplinarity, empiricism, history, research, writing analytics

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1.0 Introduction

The formation of knowledge in a disciplinary field is not merely about what scholars claim to be knowledge but who is claiming to know and "*how* they claim to know it" (North, 1988, p. 1; emphasis in original). Lu and Horner (forthcoming), for example, contend that "the history of writing studies scholarship (and other fields) includes instances of discernible changes to scholarly knowledge—both the knowledge a discipline accepts as legitimate, and the views of individual scholars." Because such changes in knowledge-making undergird disciplinary identity, there is the impulse to document such changes. Writing studies is no exception to this impulse, and a review of scholarship reveals that many histories of writing studies have traced what teachers of writing or researchers were doing at specific moments in time—and the curricular and political implications of those actions (e.g., Durst, 1992; Hess, 2019; Hillocks, 2011; Russell, 2002). Fewer have traced *how* writing studies scholars have come to know what writing is and what it does—in other words, what social changes or methodological advances have shifted how writing studies comes to think about what writing does, who does it, and why they do it. Yet, understanding how the *how* of disciplinary research came to be is not insignificant, particularly in a field that purports an interdisciplinary identity. Such a perspective asks, *How did we come to understand how writing research should be conducted, who conducts it, who are its subjects, and what counts as data?* To answer this question, we can trace what methods are used and what source of knowledge is used in service of those methods. Is it, for example, first-person testimony, a large-corpus, advice drawn from an expert panel, or other contributory perspectives?

A survey of current research books in the field evidences a clear affinity for qualitative methodologies as well as a blending of empirical, historical, rhetorical, and linguistic approaches—approaches that rely on sources of knowledge drawn from observational data, connections drawn across textual fragments, hermeneutic interpretation, and statistical analysis of corpora of words (Bazerman & Prior, 2004; Kinkead, 2016; Nickoson & Sheridan, 2012). But this was not always the case in writing studies, as we can see if we look further back (e.g., Hillocks, 1986). Take the case of empirical research: Lauer and Asher's *Composition Research: Empirical Designs* (1988) identifies eight empirical research designs, including true experiments, prediction and classification studies, and program evaluations alongside case studies, ethnographies, and meta-analyses. Their vision of what constitutes research and how it should be conducted looks very different than recent work.

Books, of course, strongly represent the interests and expertise of their authors. As a result, tracing a methodological history of a field may yield a more nuanced portrait of shifting disciplinary norms for collecting and reporting data on writing. Such portraits, moreover, might yield not merely an understanding of what has changed about research in writing studies over time but also how those methodological shifts have reflected (or not) social changes outside the field. Academic disciplines, after all, are not immune to the social contexts in which researchers live and work, and certain kinds of questions about writing and writers have more salience at certain historical times than others. Moreover, *who* is asking those questions about writing at

certain historical moments profoundly shapes what is asked about writing and what subjects offer data that is seen as relevant or worthy.

As the flagship research journal of the National Council of Teachers of English, *Research in the Teaching of English* (*RTE*) has been integral to the formation of knowledge in writing studies for more than 50 years. Published four times per year, *RTE* is a multidisciplinary journal (education, English, applied linguistics) composed of original research articles and short scholarly essays on a wide range of topics of concern to those who teach languages and literacies around the world, both in and beyond schools and universities (Editorial report, 2017). The average circulation of the journal is 2,000, which includes print and electronic subscriptions. Yearly submissions currently average about 200 articles per year, with an acceptance rate of 4.97% in 2017. The last reported impact factor was 1.976 (Editorial report, 2017).

As occasional reviews of the journal have demonstrated (Herrington, 1989), what knowledge is to be gleaned from empirical research and even how empirical research is to be defined has not remained constant over the journal's history. In this article, I trace how the methodologies represented in *Research in the Teaching of English* have shifted over its first 50 years in publication. As a case study, I examine the most recent editorial span when *RTE* was under Ellen Cushman and Mary Juzwik's co-editorship from 2012–2017. In doing so, I explain how research has been represented in the journal (i.e., *How have methods, subjects, and sources of data shifted over time?*) and how the journal's identity has been shaped by the editorial leadership (i.e., *How are editors' ideas about what constitutes research reflected in who and what is published in a journal?*). Based on this analysis, I argue that journals do not simply represent a field. Instead, journals are ideological knowledge-making enterprises, and the stances taken by their editors impact not just the content of what is published but how knowledge-making itself in a field is done. Consequently, as I argue, the selection of certain editors should not be chosen at whim or convenience. The choice of editorship—and the imperative to create an editorial pipeline—is vital to ensure that disciplinary knowledge-making is inclusive. Such inclusivity should not merely be tokenism but conscious of how disciplinary knowledge-making changes over time and inclusive of the people who do that scholarship.

In full disclosure, I am currently an editorial board member of the journal (2014–2017; 2019–present). In 2016, I edited a special issue of the journal. Also, it is important to note that this history, like all histories, is partial. Omission of detailed discussions regarding the contributions of certain editors is not reflective of political intent.

2.0 1967: Origins in Aim and Method

RTE was announced to the U.S. composition community in the 1966 issue of *College Composition and Communication. RTE* was billed as a journal "for people regularly conducting and reading research in the teaching of English" (p. 208). As Maureen Daly Goggin points out in *Authoring a Discipline: Scholarly Journals and the Post-World War II Emergence of Rhetoric and Composition*, the journal marked a departure from other journals in the field in

that it was designed for researchers, not teachers or administrators. The intended scope of the journal also made it clear that it was a knowledge-making enterprise, a point further underscored by the selection of Richard Braddock as the first editor and Nathan S. Blount as associate editor. Braddock was from the University of Iowa's Rhetoric program, and Blount was from the University of Wisconsin's Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning. Consulting editors included, among others, Samuel Johnson expert Gwin Kolb, educational psychologist Robert M. W. Travers, reading expert William R. Powell, and ETS researcher Fred I. Godshalk.

At the time, Braddock, along with Richard Lloyd-Jones and Lowell A. Schoer, had just completed the *Research in Written Composition* report (1963). In surveying research on writing since 1900,[1] Braddock and his colleagues found only five studies (out of thousands) within that time span that they deemed were not flawed. They lamented that research in writing "has not frequently been conducted with the knowledge and care that one associates with the physical sciences" (qtd. in Smagorinsky, 2006, p. 1). In invoking the standard of science, they referred to studies that did not follow the norms for scientific research as "alchemy," "laced with dreams, prejudices, and makeshift operations" (p. 5). By offering up five model studies, they made the case for how research should be conducted as well as recommendations for the kinds of research needed, including the objects to be studied and research questions to be pursued. Today, we would recognize these studies based on "controlled experimentation and textual analysis" as quasi-experimental studies (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, & Schoer, 1963, p. 1).

The Braddock report, as it came to be known, would have an enormous influence on research in the field of U.S. composition studies (Goggin, 2000, p. 77–78). That influence is clear in the early issues of *RTE*. For example, in the first issue of *RTE*, Braddock and Blount offer no editor's note. Instead, they offer two articles annotated with a brief note on their purpose—i.e., how to read research:

> [The first article entitled "Research Designs of Potential Value in Investigating Problems in English"] provides a context for the reading of research reports by defining "research" and its various categories. In [a] review of [that article's] study of unsuccessful research proposals, ["Flaws in Research Design"] offers many basic and practical suggestions for the improvement of research projects. (1967, p. 1)

Here, the editors demonstrated a pedagogical impetus. *RTE* readers were being taught how to read research. And if there was any question what research was, that question was addressed straight-on in the lead article in that inaugural issue. "Research," as defined by William C. Budd in the lead article, was either "descriptive" or "experimental":

> By descriptive research I shall mean that type of research which studies intact groups with little or no attempt at manipulation except insofar as observation

[1] Also, NCTE's first seminar on research in the teaching of English.

> requires it. By experimental research I shall mean that type of research in which groups are given "treatment" of some sort in keeping with a carefully designed plan for observing the effects of this treatment. (1967, p. 2)

Budd would go on to describe types of *descriptive research* —descriptive surveys, normative surveys, and correlational work—and types of *experimental research*—univariate design and multivariate designs. (He also described quasi-experimental approaches.) He would also offer a brief discussion of flaws in research, considerations of "instrumentation," and "limitations in observation" (Budd, 1967, p. 8–9). In advocating for the "scientific" approach to be applied to research on the teaching of writing, Budd observed the utility of statistics and the difficulty of having colleagues in literature understand their value:

> Describing natural phenomena through numbers often strikes persons trained in the humanities as characteristic only of a Philistine. In describing a beautiful girl, for example, they are accustomed to the delicately indelicate lines of a Robert Herrick. May I point out, however, that in contemporary fashion we could describe some of Herrick's imaginary playmates as 38-24-36, a numerical description which also conveys a great deal of meaning. (1967, p. 2)

In her companion piece to Budd's article, Doris Gunderson of the U.S. Office of Education wrote that "Research to the scientist is a careful and systematic inquiry, usually requiring considerable time and using the best developed techniques" (1967, p. 10). With the focus on reviewing the literature, hypothesis formation, suitable instrumentation, and use of statistics, Gunderson's discussion of design flaws in research proposals was very much rooted in the belief that there is an accepted scientific method and that which is to be understood through the scientific method must be made observable and verifiable (logical positivism and falsifiability). Research subjectivity—or the recognition of that subjectivity—is to be minimized, and differences among subjects are only to be acknowledged to the extent that they might lead to errors in data analysis or might yield interesting cases for the purposes of treatment. This methodological ethos of mid-twentieth century science was identified by Robert K. Merton. In *The Sociology of Science*, he wrote:

> The institutional goal of science is the extension of certified knowledge. The technical methods employed towards this end provide the relevant definition of knowledge: empirically confirmed and logically consistent statements of regularities (which are, in effect, predictions). (1973, p. 270)

How did this stance toward research translate into published articles? As Herrington (1989) described in her retrospective of *RTE* research: "Most of the research articles [in those early issues] investigated writing as texts, texts to be described linguistically/grammatically and to be evaluated. A number focused on syntactic and grammatical features of writing as they related to judgments of writing quality" (p. 119; see articles by Stiff and Potter in the 1967 issue as examples). There was also an emphasis on experimental research. What Herrington does not

note is that way writers themselves were constructed in those early articles. Differences in writers were formulated along normative lines, as evidenced in "Profile of the Poor Writer":

> . . . although the "poor" writer demonstrates many isolatable personal characteristics (low SCAT [School and College Ability Test] performance, predilection for non-literary subjects, lack of interest in reading and writing, personal unhappiness), much of the development in writing skill can be traced to environmental conditions (father's occupation, lack of reading materials in the home, sparsity of writing and reading experiences in high school). (Woodward & Phillips, 1967, p. 48)

In this article, "poor writers" were identified "as a student who received a 'D' or 'E' (failing) in writing for the semester previous to the study" (p. 42). Students across grade ranges were then given a 50-question "biological questionnaire" (p. 40). Of the surveys distributed, 927 were returned. Chi square and *t* tests were then conducted on the data to determine statistically significant trends. What is important here is that in describing their method, Woodward and Phillips were also articulating a way of identifying "poor writers," an approach that researchers today would find simplistic (and likely discriminatory) in its attempt to isolate a few environmental variables as the reason for failing writing course grades.

The imperative to show writing researchers what good research looks like and how to do it was reinforced though bibliographies. From the first issue of *RTE* published in 1967, the journal provided bibliographies of the past year's research outside of the journal that the editors deemed should be relevant to readers of the journal.[2] The journal, thus, would both provide examples of high-quality research and point readers to studies that were also judged to be appropriate to the *RTE* readership.

How are we to understand the grounding of *RTE* in "science"? First, in the mid-twentieth century when literary studies scholars turned to New Criticism (Smagorinsky, 2000, p. 2), the nascent field of composition studies needed a research identity that marked it as a legitimate academic enterprise. Certainly, the influence of scientific approaches to understanding writing had been present for decades, especially in discussions about assessment (see *The English Journal*). In choosing to align with a normative sense of the scientific enterprise and tie its identity to cognitive science, the editors chose to ignore the debates about scientific knowledge that circulated after WWII, including those of Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn. Distressingly, they also ignored standards for the use of human subjects that followed WWII. Second, while there was an awareness that college populations were quickly growing and the U.S. was undergoing vast social changes, the early editors of *RTE* chose not to grapple fully with what that would mean for research on the teaching of writing, nor what the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or any other number

[2] In 1967, the bibliography included entries for The English Teacher and the English Curriculum, Literature, Reading, English Skills, Composition and Rhetoric, Oral Language, Verbal Learning and Cognitive Development, Teacher Education, and Teaching English as a Second Language.

of social and legal challenges to discrimination, worker's rights, and access would mean for education. In choosing science, they ignored the social. It would be decontextualized, technological solutions offered by experts, not teachers, that would bring about change in the classroom.

Together, this combination of normative scientific philosophy and blindness to social changes was out-of-step with what was happening in classrooms at the time, advances in other areas of educational research, and would lead to a structural bias in research on writing that remains uncorrected today in some writing research, for example, in some writing assessment research. As a case in point: In a recent study that I conducted with Norbert Elliot on shifting views of fairness in writing assessment scholarship, we discovered widely varied stances toward definitions of fairness and methods to address it in assessment scholarship. Many researchers are using a model of bias that ignores socio-constructivist theories of learning that inform classroom-based practice and fail to report sub-group identities in meaningful ways (Poe & Elliot, 2019).

What was coming in the 1970s with open admissions, along with the wave of theories and research from Geneva Smitherman, Peter Elbow, Paulo Freire, Ira Shor, and others, would profoundly influence the teaching of writing and, ultimately, *RTE*. Foreshadowing of this change may be found in Janet Emig's call for research on student composing processes that included student perspectives and Roland Harris' pointer to the more socially-oriented research of James Britton and his colleagues in Britain, who had made quite the impact at the 1966 Dartmouth Seminar. Finally, in a rebuttal to the emphasis on experimental research applied through testing, Sister M. Philippa Coogan of Holy Angels Academy in Milwaukee advocated in a 1972 *RTE* roundtable discussion of *The Measurement of Writing Ability* for "means of preserving the identity of the individual student against the pressure of mass-produced, mass-assessed educational processes" (Mellon, Coogan, & Slotnik, p. 111).

3.0 1989: "A community constituting itself"

Twenty years after its establishment, "the founding [scientific] paradigm remain[ed] dominant" (Herrington, 1989, p. 117). Under Alan Purves' editorship from 1973–1978, however, things would begin to change—albeit slowly. Composing process research, for example, was published, and in his final issue of the journal, Purves (1978) noted there were more "reports of surveys, methodological research, and case studies." He continued:

> Whether this shift is to be applauded or not remains to be seen. I suspect that we shall have to return to the experimental approach to find out more about the effects of curriculum and teaching practice. In that way research can better assist practice. At the same time, I think researchers have become more sophisticated in their design and analysis of experiments, and certainly in their interpretations, so that pretest-posttest experimentation and short term treatments become simply inadequate. I wish I could remain in role as editor so that I could see not only the

> published articles but the manuscripts and comments of reviewers, which together form a drama as fascinating as a Shakespearean play.

I quote Purves at length because he is a historically complicated figure. On one hand, he was an ETS researcher who could not necessarily see the limitations of experimental research. On the other hand, Purves' belief in data made him come down on the side of contextualization. In a famous exchange with writing assessment researcher Edward M. White, Purves denounced White's continued support for the College Board's timed, impromptu testing of writing "as he attacks the chimera of multiple-choice grammar test" (1995, p. 549). Purves argued that "writing is domain and task specific" and he argued "against a concept like writing ability" in favor of "portfolios of students judged within the context of the situation in which the portfolios were created. There is no reason for persisting in a mode of assessment which is flawed when we know there are better" (pp. 549–550).

By the 1980s, under the editorship of Judith A. Langer and Arthur Applebee, *RTE* welcomed ethnographic studies and other forms of naturalistic research. The journal also became more friendly to women scholars, with nearly 60% of articles in the mid-1980s authored or co-authored by women (Herrington, 1989, p. 132). Under Langer and Applebee's editorship, *RTE* continued to publish quantitative research next to qualitative studies. Langer and Applebee commented on such pairings in their Musings column. In one column, Langer characterized the split as between the "cognitivists and the contextualists" (Langer, 1985, p. 327). Langer, who herself has been trained in psychology and linguistics, recognized that the cognitive revolution in research was relatively new and that the "contextualists" were reintroducing a notion that had previously been a part of the conversation on writing—i.e., what do we actually teach in writing classrooms? (1985). Langer was also concerned with keeping research meaningful to teachers—that research should matter. For Langer, methodological plurality was not about making all things equivalent; it was about changing a personal understanding of research:

> these changing emphases in research mark my own developing perspectives—though I find each of the emphases limiting in its own way . . .In short, I am a hybrid, and while all my intellectual ancestors were warring with one another, I found myself putting the parts together differently—agreeing with some and disagreeing with other proclamations from each camp. (p. 326)

The effect of this stance toward methodology would be that in rejecting a focus solely on experimental research or quantitative text analysis, *RTE* could be opened to, for example, studies of writing outside the academy. And that would change how writing researchers thought about conducting research as well as how writing and writers should be represented in the journal.

Despite this openness, methodological differences often remained false hierarchies—impassable barriers across research traditions—within the vey departments in which writing researchers worked. For example, outside the journal in the field of English studies, the

methodological split between the "cognitivists and the contextualists" was not seen at all because *all* empirical research—quantitative and qualitative—was often viewed with suspicion—a point Herrington (1989) reflected on in her review:

> Recalling Dwight Burton's "Troubled Dream" essay, we need also remember that in the larger community in which we participate there are some—to a greater and lesser degree—who feel that "abiding uneasiness" with empirical research. We can only ask of them what we ask of ourselves: an open mind so we have some chance of understanding the contributions each of us can make from our various standpoints, a willingness to participate in open deliberations over differences, and a recognition that we can share common interests in writing, learning, and teaching. (p. 133)

Herrington reminds us that disciplinary change is often unseen by other disciplinary traditions.

Nonetheless, within the pages of *RTE,* the important paradigmatic changes ushered in by Langer and Applebee would be furthered by Sandra Stotsky (1991–1997), Michael W. Smith and Peter Smagorinsky (1998–2002), and Melanie Sperling and Anne DiPardo (2003–2008). Under their editorships, *RTE* content would change to include studies on code-switching, community-based writing, and bilingual education. Such studies would reflect not just the sociocultural turn in the field of writing studies but also the ways that quantitative research would begin to recede.

4.0 2011: 100 Years

In 2011, RTE editors Mark Dressman, Sarah McCarthey, and Paul Prior (2008–2012) published a special issue on 100 years of research in the teaching of English. The special issue was accompanied by an edited collection entitled *Reading the Past, Writing the Future: A Century of American Literacy Education and the National Council of Teachers of English* (Lindeman, 2010). The *RTE* special issue coincided, they noted, with "NCTE's 100th anniversary as the Anglophone world's largest and oldest organization dedicated to the improvement of the teaching of English" (2011, p. 133). In their editors' introduction, Dressman, McCarthey, and Prior, too, looked back on the methodologies represented in the journal. They did not see so much methodological schism as methodological innovation.

As they observed, the three reviews offered in the special issue described these changes—what they called "progress":

> One area in which all three reviews imply progress has been made. . .is in the sophistication of methodologies; "stances" toward participants and contexts; and how problems, issues, and questions are defined in the period of their own work when compared to that of their predecessors. This progress is described as a consequence of the "social turn" in literacy research in general and NCTE publications in particular, from the early 1990s to the present. (Dressman, McCarthey, & Prior, 2011, p. 137)

As Dressman, McCarthey, and Prior noted, for contributors in the special issue, the "social turn" meant not just an epistemological shift—"from a search for universal principles and truths about how modalities of language function within general populations to particular individuals and contexts," it also meant a shift in how research was to be conducted (2011, p. 137). That shift meant "an ever-increasing degree of reflexivity and ethical sensitivity about researchers' cultural, gendered, and class-based stances vis-à-vis research contexts and participants" (p. 137). As a result, the goals of writing research and how writing researchers wrote about writers were also changing under this "New Research" paradigm:

> The intended goals of this New Research include equity and honesty about power relations, the role of research in policy and practice, and ever more valid and carefully parsed distinctions among the factors influencing language and literacy development across sociocultural groups. (Dressman, McCarthey, & Prior, 2011, pp. 137–138)

Analogies to alchemy and science no longer adequately characterized the research endeavors represented in the pages of *RTE*. Yet, Dressman, McCarthey, and Prior also noted that the openness to methodological and disciplinary diversity "did not often extend to cultural or ethnic diversity. As was the pattern throughout educational research until recently, authors and editors were almost exclusively white, and, in the early years, overwhelmingly male" (2011, p. 134). They hoped that a special issue published in 2010 would mark "the beginning of an important change in this pattern" (2011, p. 134). Indeed, in 2012, that change would come to the journal.

5.0 2012–2017: *RTE* as Global Enterprise

In their inaugural issue as *RTE* editors, Ellen Cushman and Mary Juzwik (2012–2017), presented research in the teaching of English "as a global enterprise" (2013, p. 5) and one based on "methodological plurality" (not schisms) (2013, p. 6). Notably, their view of research was not based on a model in which research from the center is disseminated outward. Instead, they acknowledged:

> The meanings and values of languages and literacies, moreover, differ widely in the many different settings where they are taught globally. While one community may associate the learning of English with social uplift, another may experience it as an imperialist tool for colonization. We seek to continue making *RTE* responsive to the tensions and complexities unfolding in classrooms and communities around the world that are engaged in the teaching and learning of English. (Cushman & Juzwik, 2013, p. 5)

As they explained, one of their primary goals for the journal was to "better position *RTE* globally by continuing to expand the diversity of contributors…" (Editorial Board Report, 2017). They recognized the research world beyond the U.S. or even the Anglophone world. In

fact, Cushman and Juzwik saw internationalization as a way to expand the methodological pluralism represented in the journal:

> Another pathway for continuing to build a diverse knowledge base in the field is through support of methodological pluralism and a widening diversity of scholarly and disciplinary perspectives. Large-scale statistical research, including experimental and quasi-experimental studies, helps the field identify broad trends and the impacts of policy, curricular, and community initiatives. More fine-grained interpretivist research, such as ethnographic case studies and archival work, can richly illuminate particular cases and generate new theory and research about little-understood phenomena. Methodological diversity should also be reflected in diverse rhetorics of research included in the journal, from traditional, APA manuscripts with strong grounding in psychological studies to manuscripts in interpretivist traditions that make use of narrative and other humanistic modes of reporting. (2013, p. 6–7)

Interestingly, as they explained, expanding methodological pluralism meant including experimental and quasi-experimental studies, which by 2013 had not been printed in the journal for decades, as well as newer survey-based research (Anderson, Anson, Gonyea, & Paine, 2015) and corpus-based research (see Brown & Aull, 2017; Donahue & Foster-Johnson, 2018). During their time as editors, Cushman and Juzwik also published researchers who were both more racially/ethnically and geographically diverse, and they published researchers who drew on theories not previously seen in *RTE*—for example, critical race theory (Shapiro, 2014) and disability studies (Walters, 2015). By 2017, under Cushman and Juzwik's editorship, *RTE* received manuscripts (articles and forums) from 27 different countries, including 91 manuscripts from outside the U.S. (46.7% of all manuscripts received). They also began publishing abstract translations in languages other than English, including Arabic, French, German, Hindi, Korean, Mandarin, Russian, and Spanish.

An analysis of research topics showed 16 types that were most common from 2012 to 2017, including literacy/literacies, language, pedagogies, and instructional methods, as well as diversity and advocacy/activism. Such influence was demonstrated not just in publication rates but also in recognition of impact in research through the Purves Award, which in 2017 was awarded to "Writing the Self: Black Queer Youth Challenge Heteronormative Ways of Being in an After-School Writing Club" by Latrise P. Johnson and "Translanguaging, Coloniality, and English Classrooms: An Exploration of Two Bicoastal Urban Classrooms" by Cati de los Rios & Kate Seltzer.

Under Cushman and Juzwik's editorship, even subjects that traditionally would have invited a normative approach took on more international concerns and represented more diverse authors and students. For example, in 2014, I was invited to guest-edit a special issue on diversity in international writing assessment. In the introduction to that special issue, I wrote:

> Writing assessment today is neither a narrow practice designed to sort writing samples neatly into categories nor the application of methods, even "best practice" methods, without regard to their effects. Today, writing assessment is best understood as (1) designing a series of strategies to increase our knowledge of a complex construct—that is, writing; (2) making meaningful decisions based on our measurement of that construct; and (3) understanding the effects of our practices on students and on ourselves. . . .
>
> Assessment should be transformative, and it should transform us—as researchers, teachers, and administrators—as much as it transforms our students' learning and writing. To accomplish this goal, a multidisciplinary, multicultural, and multilingual perspective is needed—that is, a perspective that brings together writing studies, educational measurement, and language assessment within a programmatic approach to research. (Poe, 2014, p. 271)

In the introduction, I was not merely reciting canonical validity theory, but gesturing to the sweeping changes that had occurred in educational measurement in the last decade following Kane's (2006, 2015) argument-based model of validity. Following several decades of debates in measurement that included prominent scholars in the field like former ETS Senior Researcher Samuel Messick, Kane's model has realized the necessity of attending to consequence of instruments, not just their design, and attention to precision in data interpretation.

In that introduction to the special issue I also offered—and Cushman and Juzwik supported—an aspirational vision for writing assessment. That vision was an interdisciplinary and transformative one. With articles from Canadian, Australian, American, and British researchers, the authors in the special issue embraced that vision as they grappled with questions about failure—what we mean by failure and whether failure is ever productive (Inoue, 2014), how teachers attempt to create "third spaces" in classroom contexts dominated by accountability demands (Ryan & Barton, 2014), and how to theorize validity within a consequential framework (Slomp, Corrigan, & Sugimoto, 2014). A commentary was provided by an international expert in writing assessment for second language writers (Hamp-Lyons, 2014).

It is likely that little in this special issue would be appreciated by the early editors of *RTE*, such as Richard Braddock. In fact, part of the impetus for the creation of the disciplinary sub-field of writing assessment has been to reshape the very approaches to assessment that early *RTE* scholars would have valued. We likely would have been labeled alchemist or, at best, cargo cult scientists (Feynman, 1974). Perhaps it is because of this legacy to assessment that Cushman wondered in her editor's introduction to the special issue how much the research in the special issue would actually change educational policy. In the almost 50 years after *RTE* published a discussion of Godshalk's *The Measurement of Writing Ability*, would alchemy be able to change policy and "testing regimes" (Juzwik & Cushman, 2014, p. 382)? That jury is still out as to how much social views on writing can influence the measurement community.

One thing that is clear is that Cushman and Juzwik opened *RTE* to more ways of studying the teaching of English by reconsidering "the imperialist legacies of the teaching and learning of English" (2016, p. 257). In their editor's introductions in 2016—the 50th anniversary of the journal, they wrote that such a stance led them "to seek out manuscripts that ask, explore, and work to decolonize knowledge; that place feeling, being, and valuing on par with knowing in studying the teaching and learning of Englishes" (Cushman, Juzwik, McKenzie, & Smith, 2016, p. 257). But they also understood the value of history, publishing a forum article by former editors Arthur N. Applebee and Langer. Applebee and Langer's review highlighted, as they noted, the "methodical narrowness" in some areas in the field, the enormous influence of policies such as the Common Core in influencing research, and over attention to college and job readiness that too often draws attention away from other possibilities for writing and writing research.

In their final issue published in 2018, *RTE* editors Cushman and Juzwik, along with editorial assistant Falconer, reflected that their time overseeing the journal "raised questions of where we are methodologically as a field, and where we are (or should be) going" (p. 353). While they reflected on the quality of research presented in the journal, they also acknowledged "the fact that such an analysis may not offer generalizable findings precisely because it is so context-bound" (2018, p. 354). They posited:

> We are eager to see literacy studies continue in this important trend of cross-disciplinary collaborative work to leverage various methodologies in efforts to produce relevant, timely, and generalizable findings—findings that can, and should, have implications for many audiences of practitioners, policy makers, and administrators. (Cushman, Falconer, & Juzwik, 2018, p. 354)

It is not enough to bring more people to the table or to recognize the value of the perspectives those people bring; it must be that there are multiple audiences for those perspectives.

In closing their editorship of *RTE,* thus, Cushman and Juzwik desired that the journal reach a wider audience than the original stated vision for the journal—"for people regularly conducting and reading research in the teaching of English" (*College Composition and Communication*, 1966, p. 208). One wonders if that vision is to come to fruition what that will mean for the ways we research the teaching of writing, including how data are collected and reported. Echoing Herrington's reflections on literary scholars' distrust of empirical research, how might the "abiding uneasiness" that some policy makers have today toward scientific research shape their reception of any research that looks "scientific"?

6.0 Conclusion

In their introduction to the first *RTE* issue under their guidance (August 2018), new editors Gerald Campano, Amy Stornaiuolo, and Ebony Elizabeth Thomas point to the "momentous and turbulent time in modern history" when *RTE* was first published:

> The period also ushered in some of the most significant legislation of the Civil Rights Era, such as the Fair Housing Act, the Bilingual Education Act, and the Architectural Barriers Act, which required wheelchair accessibility in structures receiving federal money, including some schools. (2018, p. 5)

In pointing to the social history against which *RTE* arose, Campano, Stornaiuolo, and Thomas offer a useful corrective to the ahistorical perspective of *RTE*'s first editors. In situating the journal within a social history, they draw attention to the ideological context in which journals arise. Disciplinary research traditions do not arise in a vacuum. Especially for those disciplines that rely on human subjects, social context shapes how we talk about people and how we explain their potential. It is through that lens that we see research—what we think is valuable to study, how we study it, and whom we study it with.

In addition to pointing to the social history of research, Campano, Stornaiuolo, and Thomas also make their commitment to plurality clear. They write that central to their vision for the journal is "a commitment to conceptual and methodological pluralism" (p. 7). Pluralism is, of course, an ideological position in regard to research and opens the future of *RTE* to new questions about what counts as research, who gets to conduct it, and how it is conducted. Undoubtedly, "epistemic horizons" related to "nondominant intellectual legacies" will broaden disciplinary understanding of what it means to do research on the teaching of writing (Campano, Stornaiuolo, & Thomas, p. 7). They also may raise pressing questions about how we do that research, especially if those horizons challenge current ethical standards for the use of human subjects.

In the end, the legacies of *RTE* editors, ranging from Braddock in 1967 to Campano, Stornaiuolo, and Thomas today, illustrate the power of journal editors to not merely shuttle batches of submissions through the review process but to shape disciplinary knowledge-making. And it is for this reason that the selection of journal editors—the crafting of an editorial pipeline—must be done with care, rather than with "dreams, prejudices, and makeshift operations." Research paradigms shift over time, not merely because researchers see particular ways of knowing as more meaningful at certain points in time, but because journal editors advance certain stances toward research. Research journals like *RTE* reflect these disciplinary movements and the humans that make them happen, for research is not defined by a single set of shoulders upon which to stand, but by the dreams, visions, and expertise of editors and authors who seek to forward knowledge about writing and the teaching of writing. For *The Journal of Writing Analytics*, the lessons of *RTE*'s history show how journal editors who are attentive to changes in disciplinary knowledge-making not only open a journal to methodological plurality but also open a journal to a more inclusive community of researchers.

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