JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

Founded in 1875

Volume 193 • Number 1 • 2013

EARLY CAREER SCHOLARS

Letter from the Editor
Roselmina Indrisano

The Effects of Grammatical Complexity on Children's Comprehension, Recall, and Conception of Certain Semantic Relations (Reprint)
P. David Pearson

Revisiting the Role of Explicit Genre Instruction in the Classroom
Katherine K. Frankel

Reflections on Becoming a Researcher
Katherine K. Frankel and P. David Pearson

***"But They Won't Let You Read!":* A Case Study of an Urban Middle School Male's Response to School Reading**
Grace Enriquez

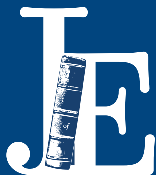
Fostering Social and Cultural Capital in Urban Youth: A Programmatic Approach to Promoting College Success
Amanda K. Sommerfeld and Paul Bowen

Math Coaching in a Rural School: Gaining Entry: A Vital First Step
Sara Hartman

ESSAY BOOK REVIEWS

Academic/Professional Text
Mary Elizabeth Matthews

Books for Young Readers
Michelle Carney and Storey Mecoli



Boston University School of Education

Reflections on Becoming a Researcher

KATHERINE K. FRANKEL AND P. DAVID PEARSON, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

INTRODUCTION

In this joint reflection two of the contributors to this issue of the *Journal of Education* consider the processes and practices that led to the publication of their respective pieces. Since one of the authors, Kate Frankel, was a doctoral advisee of the other, David Pearson, they also reflect on the mentoring practices they have shared over the last five years as Kate has completed her doctorate at Berkeley.

DAVID'S REFLECTION

The article reprinted here was published in *Reading Research Quarterly* in the journal's 1974–75 publication year. It was based on my dissertation, which was completed in 1969. By my calculations, that is a five-year gap between completion and publication. Why such long time lag? Was I just too lazy or too busy with new courses and the other duties of an assistant professor to pursue publication? Not really! While I might have been busy, I surely wasn't lazy when it came to trying to get the work published. In early 1970, I submitted it to the *Journal of Educational Psychology*, received a revise and resubmit recommendation; revised, resubmitted, and was rejected. That nearly two-year ordeal brought me to early 1972. After four months of wallowing in dejection and self-doubt, I summoned up the grit needed to revamp it and send it off to *RRQ*. Predictably, I received another revise and resubmit; revised, resubmitted, and yet another revise and resubmit. That cycle of revising and resubmitting, all the while in close interaction with the editors, Roger Farr and Sam Weintraub, went on for another 18 months until they were satisfied that the manuscript was not only technically sound but rhetorically effective. Even though Roger and Sam put me through the revision wringer, I am forever grateful for their focused and helpful feedback and their undying patience with a struggling young researcher. They could have easily "written me off" after the first round of reviews (reviewers wanted a lot of changes!), but they didn't. They stayed with me through what seemed like an endless stream of revisions. But in the end, there emerged a product in which both the author and the editors could take a modicum of pride.

I am both fond and proud of this article, but for different reasons. Fond of it because it embodies what I aspire to do in reporting research—establish a strong relationship between theory and research. I have always thought that the most important role for research was to provide an empirical database to evaluate which among two or more competing theories of a mental, social, or pedagogical process provides the best account of the evidence available. An index of the article's impact is that Robert Ruddell and his various co-editors of *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading* selected it to appear in multiple editions of their influential volume. Bob once told me that it was precisely the theory evaluation focus of the article that led to his decision. By the way, when you read this 39-year-old piece, think about it in light of all the emphasis we are placing on text complexity these days.

Proud of it because of the process that led to its publication. Even the rejections, the revisions, the resubmits, and the numerous requests by the editors to fine-tune the piece in its final stages were important to the process—for they taught me three important lessons. First, stamina, endurance, and belief in oneself are the pathway to scholarly success. Second, you can always use a little help from your friends—and your editors. I would never have published the piece without Roger and Sam's support and faith in me as an emerging scholar. Third—and this follows from the second—you can learn a lot more about your own writing once you learn how to examine it from the perspective of those who read it, even criticize it. So now, whenever I receive a negative review (and I still get them!), I allow myself a day to wallow in self-pity and accuse the reviewers of ignorance or mean-spiritedness. Then I shift gears and ask, "If I had been sitting where they were sitting and looking at this manuscript through their lens, might I have reached the same conclusion?" And if the answer to that question is, "Yes," or even "Maybe," then I have to ask myself an even more important question, "What do I have to learn from this review—and how can I use the feedback to make this an even better manuscript?" It might be the scholarly equivalent of "turning the other cheek" and learning from one's missteps. Those three lessons have served me well. I hope they can be of help to others!

KATE'S REFLECTION

In contrast to David's reprinted article, my article is appearing in print for the very first time in this issue. It is a fitting contribution to an issue of the *Journal of Education* devoted to the work of early career scholars because it represents one of my first—and ongoing—attempts to make sense of a large body of theoretical and empirical literature. I wrote the original version for a class during my first year of graduate school. With the encouragement of my advisors, David Pearson and Sarah Freedman, I somewhat cavalierly sent it out for review. The very extensive, thoughtful, and, at times, quite critical feedback I received from editors and reviewers alike encouraged me to revisit and rethink my approach in the paper numerous times. The version published here, therefore, represents

several years of reading and reflection that was all part of my effort to wrap my head around the field of genre research and practice while at the same time offering a new perspective on what, I was told numerous times, was an old debate.

In his reflection, David expresses his gratitude to the *RRQ* editors who guided and encouraged him through multiple revision processes, and it strikes me just how important journal editors are in the process of becoming a scholar. Over the past few months, Roselmina (Lee) Indrisano, the current editor of the *Journal of Education*, has worked with me to shape my article into something that I hope will be a useful resource for teachers and researchers alike. It's quite different from the original paper that I wrote as a first-year graduate student, but, at its core, I think it retains many of the features that intrigued me about genre theory and prompted me to seek publication in the first place. To me, this satisfactory ending to a long writing and thinking process is a reflection of the many different types of mentorship I received along the way to publication. The process began in consultation with my doctoral advisors and graduate student colleagues, was shaped by the feedback I received from outside editors and reviewers, and ended with Lee's subtle and insightful guidance. All of these different levels of feedback contributed to the crafting of the article that is published here.

As early career scholars, we are tasked with dual and, at times, contradictory objectives as we take those first steps toward publication and attempt to add our voices to the conversations about education that are happening around us. First and foremost, we must demonstrate to established scholars that we have a deep and theoretically sound understanding of the field. At the same time, our unique position as early career scholars affords opportunities to bring novel perspectives to "old" concerns and to make innovative contributions that push the field of education in new and exciting directions. This is both the challenge and the delight of our position. If we are lucky, as I have been, then we will have many mentors along the way to assist us in this endeavor.

OUR REFLECTION

We (David and Kate) have both acknowledged the important role that journal editors play in the academic lives of early career scholars. But we see this as just one type of mentorship that could and should be part of the early career experiences of new scholars. In our own work together as advisor and advisee, we have found other equally important mentorship opportunities.

Research Groups

UC Berkeley has had a long tradition of "research groups," going back at least several decades. A research group is a space where a professor, like David, and a group of his graduate students, like Kate, engage in collaborative practices geared toward enhancing one another's research and writing. Ours meets bimonthly, and students sign up to present their work to the group when they are ready or, sometimes, through the encouragement of other group members, even when they're not.

David's thoughts. The research group that I run is very learner-centered (others, by the way, are more topic- or project-centered, depending mostly on professorial preferences); I chose the learner-centered approach because I wanted to create a space in which students set the agenda and focus on their career milestones (what students often call hurdles), such as practicing for qualifying exams or conference presentations and getting feedback on written products, such as position papers (Berkeley requires three before the qualifying exam can occur), conference presentations, and in-progress articles. I wanted it to be a safe place for students to socialize one another (along with my input) into a community of scholars—to learn the norms, the discourses, and the practices of collegial critique and collaborative scholarship. I also insisted that the groups be intergenerational, from timid and deferential first years to confident (but sometimes weary) dissertation writers. A real virtue of an intergenerational approach is the student-to-student mentoring that occurs quite naturally.

Kate's thoughts. I joined David's research group in the fall of my first year of graduate school, and I don't remember saying much of anything during that entire year. But, I listened intently to those around me and learned a great deal about what it takes to be a scholar in education, as well as what milestones (and roadblocks) I could expect to encounter on the road to a Ph.D. In later years, I benefitted greatly from the feedback I received from David and my peers during these research group meetings and found that the conversations in which we engaged as a group pushed my thinking in new and sometimes unexpected directions. As I moved along in the program, our research group also became a conduit through which I could informally mentor my fellow graduate students who were new to academia.

Co-authoring

One of the hallmarks of David's mentoring approach is his willingness to co-author with his students. Over the past five years, we have co-authored two book chapters together in collaboration with other colleagues.

David's thoughts. Let me be clear about co-authoring: I co-author with colleagues, be they students or colleagues on campus or around the country, not because I am generous or want to do someone a favor but because my writing and thinking are better when I write with others. Co-authoring prevents me from making errors of logic or foisting rhetorical infelicities on the profession. My record confirms this conviction; in my 44 years as a professor, as of last count, I had co-authored articles with just over 200 different colleagues, students, and former students. And, it does have the serendipitous side effect of giving students access to opportunities they might not otherwise experience until a little later in their careers. More importantly, it exposes them at an early stage to that all-important editorial process we talked about earlier in this essay. By the way, co-authoring includes a lot of planning, a lot of independent work (each of us takes primary responsibility for a piece), a lot of reciprocal editing (I edit yours and you edit

mine), and sometimes sitting together at the computer literally sharing the keyboard as we try to write our way through a tough patch or out of a rhetorical *cul de sac*.

*Kate's thoughts***.** From my perspective, co-authoring gave me hands-on experience in what it means to do the work of a scholar. First, through our "foregrounding" conversations, David and I and our other writing colleagues Marnie Nair ("Reading Comprehension and Reading Disability," published in 2011) and Elizabeth Jaeger ("Embracing Complexity: Integrating Reading, Writing, and Learning in Intervention Settings, " published in 2013) talked through the big points we hoped to cover in the chapter and the arguments we planned to make along the way. Then, we each took one of those big points to write up on our own before coming back together for follow-up conversations in which we honed our arguments, discussed points of consensus and disagreement, and did a lot of editing. However, for me, the importance of these writing experiences extended beyond the writing itself to the deep thinking that underpinned it. Co-authoring with David, Marnie, and Elizabeth taught me how to think like a scholar.

Research Projects

When possible, David involves graduate students as research assistants (what Berkeley calls GSRs for "graduate student researchers") on funded (and sometimes unfunded) projects. These benefits are so obvious that they almost go without saying, but let's add a few words about them anyway.

David's thoughts. Just as co-authoring engages students in the stages and practices of the professional writing process, so research collaboration engages students as genuine apprentices in the stages and practices of research design and implementation in a hands-on, inquiry-embedded manner. It is all about the Zone of Proximal Development and the Gradual Release of Responsibility. And it is as authentic an experience as you get in the "real world" of conducting research. I wish we could offer funded apprenticeships for every doctoral student.

Kate's thoughts. As I write this, I realize that I've never worked with David on a traditional research project, probably because early in my graduate career I joined another research project that saw me through most of my years at Berkeley. But, I still had opportunities to engage in research-oriented endeavors with David. One that was particularly valuable was David's invitation to work with him and a few of his colleagues as they considered ways to define and operationalize text complexity as part of the then-early conversations about the *Common Core State Standards*. Working on this project with David involved me in an important and timely conversation in the field of education and gave me a sense for what scholarly conversations of this nature looked like on the ground.

Emergent Scholarship

Entailed in the concept of emergent literacy is the idea that there is no distinct starting point for literacy, no dividing line or boundary between pre-literacy and literacy. Instead, there is a level of analysis every pre-literate two-year-old engages in that can be construed as a literacy practice. So one's literacy development is always both emerging and emergent. At the other end of the growth continuum, there is no point at which literacy is so well developed that it cannot be enhanced. We are all emerging and emergent literacy learners. The emergent principle applies equally well to research. That means that both the brand new scholar about to embark on a trajectory of graduate study and the senior scholar on the verge of retirement are emergent scholars. One never knows so little that she doesn't have something to contribute to a scholarly project, nor so much that she doesn't have more to learn.

*David's thoughts***.** There are many traits I don't particularly like about myself (with my golf game and tendency to overindulge in gastronomic delights high on the list!), but my attitude toward new learning is not one of those. To the contrary, what I like best about myself as a scholar is my willingness to make myself vulnerable to new ideas, new methodologies, and new theoretical developments. I am not sure I have ever intentionally tried to do so, but I have ended up re-inventing myself as a literacy scholar at least three or four times—from a psycholinguistic researcher on text processes in the early 1970s, to a scholar of comprehension pedagogy in the late 1970s, to a student of assessment processes in the late 1980s, to a policy scholar in the late 1990s, and in the 2000s, to a sort of jack-of-all-trades who finds everything way too interesting for his own good. They say that in today's business world, the average professional will change careers four to six times on the way to retirement. I think that is also true in research. So much is happening so fast that to sequester oneself in an encapsulated conceptual space, away from the flow of new ideas and practices, is to miss all the new opportunities, excitement, and fun. So my advice is to work hard to develop your scholarly identity, and once you have it, be ready to change it as ideas and opportunities invite and compel you to re-invent yourself.

*Kate's thoughts***.** I wrote above that the unique position of an early career scholar affords opportunities to bring new perspectives to "old" concerns and to make innovative contributions to the field of education. I think this is true, but as I transition out of graduate school and into an academic career, and as I engage in this co-authoring endeavor with David, I wonder if the ability to see things in new ways is more a *stance* than a *phase*. As a "mature" scholar, David continues to challenge himself, his students, and the field of education as a whole to embrace new ideas, practices, and points of view. I am confident that I speak for all of his students when I say that we are thankful for his lifelong stance as an emergent scholar, with his accompanying and unwavering interest in us, in our ideas, and in our work.

References

Frankel, K. K., Jaeger, E. L., & Pearson, P. D. (2013). Embracing complexity: Integrating reading, writing, and learning in intervention settings. In E. Ortlieb & E. H. Cheek, Jr. (Eds.), *School-based interventions for struggling readers, K–8* (pp. 3–20). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group.

Frankel, K. K., Pearson, P. D., & Nair, M. (2011). Reading comprehension and reading disability. In A. McGill-Franzen & R. L. Allington (Eds.), *Handbook of reading disability research* (pp. 219–231). New York, NY: Routledge.

Katherine K. Frankel is a doctoral student in language, literacy, and culture in the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Berkeley. Ms. Frankel can be reached at kfrankel@berkeley.edu.

P. David Pearson is a professor of language, literacy, and culture in the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Berkeley. Professor Pearson can be reached at ppearson@berkeley.edu.