

Erotic Errata in Research

OR

Sex and the Single Variable

Jack R. Frymier

EDUCATORS believe in sex. They think about it. They talk about it. They read books about it on the plane when they go away from home. Sometimes they try to write about the subject, but always in a scholarly vein, of course. On occasion they even discuss the possibility (but seldom the probability) of relating sex to curriculum somehow.

Research in education is an important topic, too. Educators believe in research. They think about it. They talk about it. They do not read books about it on the plane when they go away from home, but they do write about the subject sometimes, and always in a scholarly vein, of course. On occasion they even discuss the possibility of relating research to curriculum somehow.

Talking and writing about research is a hollow experience, however, but the talk goes on. And in the world of academe, perhaps it must. However, some people fool themselves that the talk and the act are of equal importance; or, worse yet, that they are actually the same. That is not so.

People who talk about research, for example, almost always use the phraseology set forth in books along that line. For instance, "identifying dependent variables," "formu-

lating hypotheses," "conceptualizing the problem," "randomizing the sample," and "analyzing the variance" are language patterns which those who talk about research employ. Such terminology may find its way into a final report, of course, but the working language of a researcher on the job almost never involves such stilted terms. He is too busy trying to tease meaning out of the data or attempting to play with the design which is involved. The act of collecting data and the business of talking about collecting data are almost unrelated, it seems. The heartaches, the excitements, the disappointments, the sweat and tears—these human feelings are never known by those whose contact with research comes through the spoken or written word.

Is there a lesson here that we can learn from the phenomenon of sex? Research, after all, is a creative human process, too. We know that talking about sex and doing it are not the same. The propositions, the approaches, the results—these are as different as different can be. The language, the process, the climax, even the problems and frustrations are as unique as night and day. That must say something to those of us who are concerned with research as a way of

understanding curriculum and coping with the multiplicity of factors which affect educational decisions.

Doing research and talking about research are not the same. ASCD has been committed to research as a process and as a tool for dealing with educational problems and curricular possibilities since the association was founded. The first research institutes were held almost twenty years ago, and the "Research Supplement" to this journal which Jim Raths initiated and Fred Rodgers has continued attests to the importance the organization attaches to research. It is a vital, focal aspect of our endeavors and our concerns. The nationwide study of school practices which ASCD is presently conducting—involving scores of school districts, hun-

dreds of ASCDers, and thousands of students—is further evidence of that same idea in action today.

Learning to be doers is more difficult than learning to be talkers, but we are moving more toward this action role with every passing year. If anyone gets the idea that talk will solve the more basic human problem, though, my hunch is that we are all through. Yet perhaps we ought to turn that hunch into a series of hypotheses to test. Don't count on me, however. I'm an action man. It's much more fun—doing research, I mean.

—JACK R. FRYMIER, *Professor and Chairman, Curriculum and Foundations Faculty, The Ohio State University, Columbus, and ASCD President.*

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