EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

One of the axioms of sociocultural views of cognition is that people develop frameworks for thinking through their engagement with the worlds they inhabit. People construct their environments to suit their needs, and those environments in turn guide the development that takes place within them. When a community of people abides by a set of routines and practices, they achieve a sense of cohesion and congruence about the goals of their social life and the means of achieving them. These communities can be bound by a variety of ties, from sharing a physical location to sharing a set of beliefs.

Members of intellectual communities, like members of churches or citizens of nations, thus adhere to common sets of beliefs and engage in common sets of practices that become stable, though not static, over time. These stable beliefs, activities, and the forms they take have been called by a number of names: schools of thought, disciplinary traditions, communities of practice, discourse communities, paradigms. Kuhn (1962), for instance, has brought the notion of paradigms into the lexicon of the natural and social sciences to explain the ways in which competing and incommensurable "ways of seeing the world and of practicing science in it" (p. 4)have come to exist, if not always peacefully co-exist.

Professional discourse offers innumerable illustrations of conflicts between competing paradigms and the way those conflicts serve to reinforce barriers between epistemologies. But epistemological differences need not cause researchers to dismiss the work of those who operate from different assumptions and methods. We believe instead that the stability of practices, beliefs, and goals that sustains schools of thought has the capacity to enrich scholarship both by promoting depth of thought within a paradigm and by providing critical new perspectives across paradigms.

New paradigms give a field new ways of seeing, and they are embraced because of their promise of success in solving important problems in the field. But Kuhn (1962) stresses that paradigms offer only a promise of success. He introduces the notion of *normal science*, an idea that has received little attention in literacy studies, to account for how that promise is realized. Normal science proceeds with confidence in paradigmatic assumptions. It allows the investigation of "some part of nature in a

detail and depth that would otherwise be unimaginable" (p. 24), and it is "highly cumulative" (p. 52). Normal science both actualizes and further explores and articulates the central theory of a paradigm.

In this issue of *RTE*, we feature a set of articles that illustrates the ways in which research can be enriched by scholarship both within and across paradigms. Arthur Applebee provides the framework for this consideration in his reflection on his 30+ years of research across the spectrum of teaching and learning in the English/Language Arts. Applebee uses the construct of disciplinary *conversations* to account for trends in the development of the field of English teaching and in the research that investigates it. He points out how conversations can be energized when participants bring in different perspectives. He notes how American assumptions about the primacy of the text were challenged at the Anglo-American Conference at Dartmouth College in 1966. James Britton and his colleagues from the United Kingdom argued instead for the importance of a growth model that emphasizes the development of the learner. Most current process-based approaches to teaching writing, language, and literature in the U.S. received their impetus in the excitement generated at the Dartmouth Conference. To use Applebee's metaphor, the American conversation about the aims and methods of teaching the English/Language Arts was drastically altered by the voices from the U.K. that shifted attention from subject to student. At the same time his retrospective reveals the power of related work within that altered vision. Though he recognizes that challenges remain, he argues that much progress has been made in the profession since socio-cognitive and socio-cultural theories have achieved what he calls a "fairly widespread consensus." We see that progress in his own work, which is all the more powerful and influential because of the strong connections among the various strands of his career project.

The article by Anne Haas Dyson also demonstrates the power of conversation within and across communities of practice. She draws on a variety of Soviet theorists—Bakhtin, Volosinov, Vygotsky—in viewing children as participants in particular social worlds. Vygotsky and Bakhtin in particular are often cited in American scholarship because their focus on the social construction of knowledge has been useful in accounting for the different worldviews and social practices of different cultural groups, particularly when those groups historically have fared poorly in the social environments of schools. The Soviet theorists' attention to social contexts has become increasingly relevant as schools strive to provide equitable environments to promote student achievement. Dyson's research focuses on children who might stereotypically be viewed as at-risk in school because of their race, socio-economic status, and the urban location of their schools. Yet she focuses on their capabilities as afforded by their social worlds and suggests ways for schools to see those capabilities as resources. We think that Dyson's research enhances

the Russian theorists' work by extending their theories to contexts they could not have imagined. At the same time, her work demonstrates how pursuing a line of inquiry in closely related contexts using similar analytic tools, what Kuhn calls normal science, provides a depth and richness of detail that no single study could provide.

George Kamberelis's study of kindergartners', first-graders', and second-graders' knowledge of narrative, scientific, and poetic genres also engages in conversations within and across paradigms. Genre theory, as Kamberelis notes, varies by school of thought. While always concerned with the form and structure of discourse and how one's fluency and facility with discourse affect one's power, privilege, and stature, genre theories diverge in whether they attend to the conventional forms that discourse takes or to the conventional social practices that produce those forms. Kamberelis draws on work from a variety of international theorists, including Bakhtin, Bourdieu, Martin, Kress, Luke, Freedman, and Medway, and considers their work in light of North American genre theorists to inform his analysis of children's knowledge of poetic, narrative, and scientific writing. In his article he builds on his previous research while noting that his emphasis on texts rather than social practices is a significant departure from that work. His article, we think, makes a powerful argument that research approaches that are often seen as in conflict may in fact be complementary.

In light of our argument that research can be enriched by conversations within and across communities of practice, we are delighted to announce an addition to the editorial team of the Annotated Bibliography of Research in the Teaching of English, a feature of *RTE* since the very first volume of publication in 1966. With the bibliography in this issue, we are expanding the editorial team to include two international contributors. Gert Rijlaarsdam from the Netherlands and Wayne Martino from Australia have joined American-based editors Deborah Brown, Anne Stinson, and Melissa Whiting as compilers of the bibliography. We anticipate that their contributions will help alert readers to new work being conducted around the globe. The international theorists drawn on by Applebee, Kamberelis, and Dyson are well-known by now to most readers of *RTE*. We hope that the inclusion of current research from international scholars will bring to the attention of our readers new voices that will bring them into new theoretical conversations, not only in the teaching and learning of the English/Language Arts but in the related fields whose scholarship informs our work.

M. W. S. P. S.

Reference

Kuhn, T. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago.