

EDITORIAL
AN ARGUMENT FOR SUCCINCTNESS!

Watson and Crick's landmark research on DNA first appeared in Nature in 1953 in an article of 1078 words.

It has been more than 20 years since the first qualitative papers began popping up in our journals and professional meetings in science and mathematics education – the Stake and Easley case study of 1976 comes to mind as one of the earliest examples of this “new” research genre. Early proponents of qualitative methodologies argued that results from traditional experimental and quasi-experimental designs were simply too sterile and devoid of context and meaning – that researchers who focused discussions on means, correlations, *t*-tests and *F*-tests were not only missing what was important, they were often distorting the truth – much like a topographer who might describe the dramatic above and below sea level variations in and around Hawaii as having an average elevation of zero meters! These arguments against traditional statistics resonated with novice researchers just entering the field and even with some of the most traditional experimentalist – and the push for “thicker and richer” data was on! The result is that we now have a research literature filled with papers that consist of long stories that often lack clear and concise results.

In talking about clear and concise reporting, I am not arguing for any one kind of research method over another. We need research that seeks to expose the thick and rich nature of teaching and learning. But we also need research that seeks to establish connections and causes with “lean and mean” research designs. In his 1981 keynote speech to the annual meeting of the National Association for Research in Science Teaching, Doug Roberts (1982) argued that qualitative and quantitative research genres both have a purpose and should inform and “complement” each other. He stressed that it is the merit of the arguments made that count, not the form of the research design.

Thick and rich descriptions are attractive and useful for researchers and practitioners who want to delve deeply into classroom research. But not all researchers want or need all the detail in a thick and rich report and certainly policy makers won't take the time to read them. While it is true



that all research papers must tell some kind of story, as journal reviewers and editors, we must ask how much journal space can we afford for any one story? Like most of the other research journals, we have no official page limitations on submissions for IJSME. But there are practical limits. Journal space and a scholar's time are limited commodities; both must be used wisely if the field is to benefit and grow from the research that is reported. It is critical that we as editors and reviewers demand journal articles that lay out claims and arguments in the most succinct manner possible regardless of the research genre employed.

REFERENCE

Roberts, D. (1982). The place of qualitative research in science education. *The Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 19(4), 277–292.

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