Episode 155: 3-year Anniversary Part 3

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**DLB:** Deborah Lowenberg Ball

**AV:** Avi Kaplin

**BM:** Bastian Minkenberg

**MBR:** M. Brook Robertshaw

**HC:** Heather Corwin

**GC:** Gail Crimmins

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**KL:** You’re listening to “Research in Action”: episode one hundred and fifty-five.

[Intro music]

# Segment 1:

**KL:** Welcome to “Research in Action,” a weekly podcast about topics and issues related to research in higher education featuring experts across a range of disciplines. I’m your host, Dr. Katie Linder, research director at Oregon State University Ecampus, a national leader in online education. Along with every episode, we post show notes with links to resources mentioned in the episode, a full transcript, and an instructor guide for incorporating the episode into your courses. Visit our website at ecampus.oregonstate.edu/podcast to find all of these resources.

Hi there, RIA listeners. This is our final three year anniversary celebration episode with even more clips from our past guests about the lessons that they've learned in the past year that they thought could help other researchers. I'm really excited to share this final set of clips with you and I hope you enjoy them. Let's dive in.

In this first clip, take a listen as Dr. Jesse Stommel, from episode 99 on founding a journal, shares the research lesson that he learned in the past year that he thought could most help other researchers.

**JS:** So the research lesson that I've learned is something that I learned many, many years ago, but I feel like it got reinforced in really important ways in the last year, and it is essentially for us to think about, and trouble, and push on the intersections between teaching, research, and service. I think that as I do faculty development work, I often talk to faculty who feel pressed for time. They feel like their time is being put into buckets and that each of those buckets can only contain a limited number of things. And so for me, what has been important when I work with those faculty is to talk about the ways that research serves teaching, teaching serves research, and of course service is both - both serves both of them and is also another endeavor worth investing in. And - so for example, I'm thinking about the ways that a peer-reviewed publication can be written and then can become the germ for a syllabus. I'm also thinking about the ways that a syllabus can be the germ for a peer-reviewed publication. So as we're writing the introductory paragraph to our syllabus or even a course description, thinking about how our words can be repurposed - sometimes literally cut and pasted if that's appropriate, if the audience is - is similar enough that that seems appropriate, but ways that we can use those kinds of exercises in order to start feeling through our thinking. The other thing that I'm thinking about is the way that our public scholarship - so for example, I was just telling someone today – someone asked me about my writing process and my response was that well - really these days my writing process has been that I Tweet a whole bunch, and then those Tweets become topic sentences for a research paper I end up working on. And - it gives me the opportunity to sort of test out, and experiment, and feel out the responses to my ideas before I start sitting down to have a formal writing - writing experience. They're all so small – um small snippets of thoughts sometimes threaded together. Usually - I mean, I put a lot of effort into them the same way that I put effort into research, but it's much smaller amount of effort that I had to put – that have to put in a given moment, and it serves as a kind of a public scholarship. So putting my ideas out there. And it also ensures that my research is not just me sitting and thinking in a room by myself, but that my room is actually in conversation - that my research is actually in conversation with the audience that it's meant to ultimately reach. The other thing I was thinking about is – as I was thinking about this question, I was also thinking about the time that I first sat down to write my dissertation. And my husband said to me at the time – he said, “You have to get writing on your dissertation” and he set a rule for me. And the rule was that I had to sit down first thing in the morning before I had even had coffee, which was pretty absurd in my mind, but you know, I took this as a creative constraint. I had to sit down before I even had coffee, and I had to write at least one sentence, and when I sat down I wrote that sentence. Sometimes I wrote five more, sometimes I wrote eight more, sometimes I wrote 10 more. Often I just wrote that sentence, and then I got up, made my coffee. It made the likelihood that I would sit back down and do that research, and do that writing much higher. And so in some ways if we can start to think about every conversation that we have with students, every word that we put in a syllabus, every word that we put out on Twitter - even every word I'm saying to, you know - saying to you all right now as I'm recording this - I can think about every single one of those things as being seeds - planting seeds for the work that I'm going to do the next time I sit down at the desk and start to write. And so in a sense it's finding ways so that our work is - Or in some ways mining our own work for writing - sort of snippets of writing.

I'll add one last thing, which is that I think having conversations with our students about our work is crucial. Having conversations with about - with students about our work both ties the research that we're doing to the stuff that we're doing in classrooms, but also allows our students voices to inflict and effect, even the research that we do and the writing that we do. The last thing that I'll add is that a lot of my roles recently have been as an administrator and I think that there are even ways to take the work that we do when we're sitting in the committee meeting when we are, you know - If we're at that level of administration where we are talking to the state government, if we can think about even our administrative roles as both fueled by our research and also fodder for our research. I think finding ways to have all of these things intersecting is the best lesson that I've learned and each new role that I have helps me figure it out more and more. Essentially because I've become more - more and more pressed for time, and so I have to find more and more creative and thoughtful ways in order to find the intersections between these.

**KL:** In this next clip you'll hear from Dr. Deborah Lowenberg Ball, from episode 104 on effective teacher education, about her lesson learned from the past year. Take a listen.

**DLB:** So one of the things I've been thinking about in the last year has to do with practices of research. Uh and the things I've been thinking about are how we cite other people's work in the field, that seems to be sort of like a skill you do this matter of fact, but I've been thinking a lot and learning more about how the practice of citation is both scholarly and political. It's not a neutral activity, so we think of it as giving credit to people for influences on our work or things we’re drawing from, but the lots of people that one can decide to cite, they’re many people doing work. And so the degree to which somebody like me cites the same white people all the time reproduces the same people being the people who are seen in the field, but the field actually has many scholars in it who don't necessarily seem so visible to others, so the active work of thinking about who is going to be made visible and whose work is going to be credited is really important.

Furthermore, a lot of the newer scholars in the field are the people making some of the best ideas that are needed to tackle problems that we’re all solving, and so it's not just a matter of representation and justice, it's also a matter of broadening the field to include voices that have often not been included. And so the practice of citations and what to do with that, particularly if you're a scholar who's relatively visible. and so I've been trying to think much more deliberately about my role in creating that path of whose work is known and how I can play a role in that, and that - I think extends to other things like what kind of work I value. So, you know, there's been a big trend in our field in education research and possibly in other fields to think about quantitative kinds of research, high-level kinds of statistical modeling and like which are important, but they're also kinds of research that don't fit neatly into the typical certain brands of research that the field has valued in the past. And so I'm also always on the lookout to think about where could I find compelling, but illuminates key aspects of problems that I'm solving and think about how to foreground that work, because I think I also have a role to play, as we all do, in broadening our field of scholarship about what we mean by disciplined inquiry and the kinds of things that we foreground. So all of this has to do with the role we play in - as we put forward research that we’re writing, or claims we’re making, or writing or speaking to be deliberate and conscious about the effect of the work that we use and how we make that visible to others. And one can change the field by being active about that or by being sort of ignorant of it and ignoring it, and not tending to it more deliberately. Very likely what happens is that we all contribute to reproducing the same forms of work, or same kinds of foci, and questions, and methods, and in particular the same people - and not only the same people, but the same communities of people. So that's not inside of research - It does seem to me to be really important for understanding - the role played by research. And one of the things I've been learning by reading work by, for example, Eve Tuck, who wrote about this, but others have written about it as well - about the importance of white scholars naming black, brown, and indigenous scholars. And I've been thinking a lot about the importance of that analysis - of the role that I and others ought to be playing and attending to these issues.

**KL:** In this next clip, take a listen to Dr. Avi Kaplan from episode 115 on methodological diversity. Here's his lesson from the last year.

**AK:** So one lesson that I learned in the past couple of years was to treat the administration of a study as a case study in and of itself. Collect data that will allow to generate a thick description story of the unfolding of that study. So inevitably finding - findings are going to be fraying by the context of the study, the politics, schedule, the people involved, the nature of the social interactions, as well as by unanticipated features and chance events. So whether they be some logical stance is positivist, or post positivist, or interpretivist are critical whether the design is experimental, or quasi-experimental, or correlational, or phenomenological, whether the data are collected through observations, or questionnaires or interviews, focus groups, physiological - physiological indices, or even your imaging methods - whether the participants are representative sample or a convenience sample over in a single subject participant. The findings are always produced within the confluence of the unique features of that particular study. So clearly if one is engaged in an ethnography, this is taken for granted. But if not, then collect data not only on the target processes, but also about what is going on otherwise around the study - observe and take notes on the research team, on the participants, on yourself. Document the context and the events along which the study unfolds. The thick description of a story of the study could provide critical insights about the internal and external validity of the study. It can enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, it might provide insights into unconsidered moderators of an effect or into the chance events due to which the null hypothesis was not rejected and results were not replicated. So observe, document, keep a research journal while you conduct the study, trying to generate such data post-hoc is extremely challenging and inevitably limited.

**KL:** In this next clip, take a listen as Dr. Bastion Minkenberg from episode 117 on genome editing shares his lesson that he's learned in the past year.

**BM:** Yes, so I interpreted the question as what is the most exciting paper I read recently, and actually from the Innovative Genomics Institute - this is the institute I'm working on. We just had a paper published in *Nature Nanotechnology* that is specifically working on plant transformation - how we do plant transformation right now is two methods. Either by bacterium or particle bombardment. However, bacterium is specific to the species, and not every species could be transformed. Bombardment could be applicable to many species, but since we use gold particular to literally bombard it on to the plant cell, there will be some damage. And one of our research teams try to find a third technology we can use now, that deals with both problems - the specificity for our material or the tissue damage for the bombardment. And they essentially used so-called high aspect ratio nanomaterials, which is the fancy tube for tiny particles that have the right size to enter the plant cell wall, and they use carbon nanotubes that are tiny tubes made from carbon fibers, and they are so small you can load them up with DNA that we can - that we want to bring it to the plant cell and they absorb the DNA, then you can just either way mix them with plant cells or you squirt them into the plant leaf so the mixture gets in the space between the plant cells. And it's almost just diffusion base, because they're so small that the barrier essentially is non-existent for them. It just go inside the plant cell and they show a very high activity for up to two weeks. And this is something that couldn't be achieved before that easily and they essentially can squirt the solution into almost any species, and now I have the opportunity to a lot of these analysis in species that want one, applicable to transformation before.

**KL:** I hope you're learning as much as I am from all of these lessons our past guests are sharing that they've learned about research in the last year. We're going to take a brief break, and when we come back, we'll hear some more of their lessons. Back in a moment.

The “Research in Action” Podcast is delivered to you by Oregon State University Ecampus, the university's top ranked online education provider. As our university celebrates 150 years of conducting world-leading research and providing the highest quality education for the people of Oregon and beyond, it's been humbling to reflect back to past forms of delivering education when our professors gave lectures on the caboose of a train across the state. Now we deliver more than 50 programs online to learners worldwide. Learn more about Oregon State Ecampus at ecampus.oregonstate.edu

# Segment 2:

**KL:** In this next clip, you'll hear from Dr. M. Brooke Robertshaw, from episode 133 with guest host Dr. Mary Ellen Dello Stritto on effect sizes. Here is Brooke’s lesson from the last year.

**MBR:** So one thing that I've learned this year or that has been reinforced this year is when you're working with people, stuff is going to happen. Like you may be the best of friends, you may think you're just, you know - but people have conflict, and so what I've learned is that you need to talk about that. So I got to work with an amazing research assistant this year, and the first thing I said to her is, “you and I might get along great, but we need to - but we're going to have conflict, because we're human beings.” And so we just sort of - we put - we put that out there, and this was like, “this is how I deal with conflict.” And so I think when you're working with people, you need to talk about - you need to talk about those things that people don't want to talk about, because they can split - I mean, they can split up a research group. They can destroy research if you don't just talk about it. And it's hard - and even people who are good at it find it really hard and unpleasant, but it I think it needs to be done, and I think it can save teams. If the first thing you do is not talk about the really cool research, but talk about what happens when we hit against difficulties with each other, or with the research, or when there's just unpleasantness in the - because we're people and that happens. So that's - uh that's one thing. That's the big thing that I have learned this year, and it’s really been reinforced because I've learned it in previous iterations of my life, but it's something that I'm going to commit to doing from now on. And then the other thing that I have learned that's been really reinforced to me over and over, is more of a quantitative methods thing - is this idea that quantitative methods really come from a white colonial patriarchal point of view, and - and that we've had - because white patriarchal colonial point of view is what we have defined as normal and in the west, it's now become natural. And so people who are working from this perspective never talked about, “Well, this is my perspective” because it's just assumed, unless you say “other.” And so we were - we are coming from this perspective need to say this in our quantitative methods. We need to actually follow what I've seen the best qualitative methodologist do which is, “this is my epistemology, this is my ontology, this is my positionality.” We need to be stating that so - that so that the people who - so that the work that is not coming from a white colonial patriarchal point of view, is no longer “other.” We like - people like to “other” people, and we need - and that needs to stop in my opinion. So just thinking about that and - and doing a bunch of reading about that has been - it's stuff that I knew, but it's giving me words for it, and it's giving me like things that I can do in articles, and I'm just starting to do it and I'm going to be doing it on a paper I'm working on with some folks over at the College of Ed, and I sort of put a position statement in a meta-analysis I recently did, but I think it's something that we - we all need to be very conscious of this other thing that we do in quantitative methods. So that's what I've got.

**KL:** In this next clip, you'll hear from Dr. Heather Corwin from episode 138 on embodied research. Here's her lesson from the last year.

**HC:** I think what I've really learned in this past year as a researcher is leaning on friends in other areas who also do research to soundboard my ideas, and also to discuss how I go about mining the data and finding ways into my questions that I otherwise wouldn't have investigated. So I have a dear friend who's an economist, and whenever I talk to her she sheds light on the psychological work and research that I'm doing on emotional intelligence on actors, and also gives me other things to think about that could be really interesting and help layer the work that I'm doing. So I really feel like there is resources all around us in people who are researchers who we know that we don't always take advantage of, and I would encourage people to branch out beyond their discipline and talk to other people, because they will get insights and inspirations that they otherwise might never have enjoyed.

**KL:** In this next clip, Dr. Gill Crimmins from episode 141 on Arts informed research shares the research lesson that she's learned in the past year. Take a listen.

**GC:** Okay, so I think it's beyond a year, although I'm reminded of it regularly in my weekly and daily practice as a research. But the biggest lesson I think I've learned as a researcher is to learn to break the rules, or to not be afraid to break the rules to have agency to own your research. The reason that you are engaging in research presumably is that you're curious about something - that you're interested in something, and that automatically places you in the research. So I think research should be and can be a personal subjective process, and that means that perhaps the simply tried and tested conventions of previous research methodologies, and processes, and practices maybe don't align with you or the area of interest that you are engaging in in your research. So I'd say - be promiscuous research wise. In other words, be eclectic. Don't be afraid to mix your methodologies or to merge preexisting methodologies. Be creative, and we know that creativity is often the juxtaposition of preexisting entities. So, you know, I merge narrative inquiry with arts informed research, or auto-ethnography with film and performance. You know, don't be afraid to mix those metaphors, mix those ways of working.

**KL:** In this final clip from one of our past guests, you'll hear Dr. Kay Shattuck from episode 144 on being a research director share her research lesson from the last year. Take a listen.

**KS:** The research lesson I've learned this year is not necessarily a new one, but it really it's - it jelled for me this year, that's because I can see that the term research is just being bantered around. You know, I read - read it in blogs, I read it in Tweets, I read it in news. Sometimes that news is in quotes. And it's - it's always been something that's bantered around, but seems to be more than I had picked up in the past - a generic term that means different things to different people. However, and in different situations - however, I still hear and can read, “Research says.” And - and that sometimes I think is - is thrown out as a conversation stopper, and to - to - try to say I have validity behind me - “Research says.” I mean, who going to question that, right? So I hear - I hear and read these things and they're not necessarily new dilemmas that we face, but I hear them and read them pretty often now, so no research is bad. You know, I mean, it can be searching for information about something that I want to consider, get a tip, something I can adapt, something I can experiment with. I mean, right now it happens to be dinner time, and I can Google and find a recipe for a couple of things that I happen to have in my refrigerator, and I don't have to know if it's a good recipe or not. I can guess. Uh - so that's research. You know, I can say, “I reach - researched how to make something” so I can tinker with it, but I'm still going to call it research. And then I can also, you know - I can explore, sort of seek information about a phenomenon. I just did this last night for something that that were working on a Quality Matters. You know, what are the numbers? What evidence do we have that something is being done, and who's doing it? And maybe even how they're doing it. And so I can call that research and it's helping me build a story - it's giving me chunks of information in which I can build a story, but I'm still going to call it research. So I made my recipe and - and now I'm going to, you know. Another kind of research is I can see his doing what, and how it's working so I can gather those chunks of information to build a story. And then I can also call it research, legitimately so. if I'm seeking information about my own work - I want to do a better job - I want to do a better job in my course, or I want to do a better job in in anything, I can - let's - let's stick to, since it's – we’re educators - I want to do a better job in my course. And I am going to take in information, I'm going to sort of in my mind thinking, “If I tinker with this, will that change? And I'm not necessarily going to make anything formal, I'm going to be a reflective practitioner, which we all need to do. We all want to gather information and sort of improve our own work, but I'm still going to call that research. And I'm going to call it research because it is, but it's another category I think of research. And then there is research that's at - at a broader level, in which I'm going to seek information to assess program development and implementation. I'm going to pretty strategically think about in our programs we did this and what's happening? You know, what's the experience? What are the numbers? And I'm doing that in program assessment with the eye on probably strategic improvements, you know, this is – its program development assessment, so I'm still going to call that research, because it is. And then finally, and these are just big buckets of course of research terms, I'm going to follow a very specific steps in the - in the scientific research process that we all learned probably an eighth grade. And I'm going to do that very deliberately, because I'm hoping to find some evidence that to some level can be generalized. And I know that's generalized in human behavior and education is something that is hard for us to do, but I want some evidence to improve education and include teaching and learning. I want to contribute to the academic field so we can move ahead. So there - that's the thing I learned the most this year, that the term ‘research’ is still out there, still being bantered around, and we need to - I need to stop and think when I say, “okay, I can research that for you.” what am I really saying?

**KL:** As we wrap up this three-part episode series on lessons learned from our past guests when it comes to their research lives, I just want to thank so much each of the guests who gave their time to come back and share a few minutes with us on the show. And I also want to thank each of you, our listeners, for hanging around for these episodes and also for listening to the show over all of these years. It has been such a pleasure to create these episodes for you. If you want to help us to celebrate the third year anniversary of Research in Action, head over to iTunes and leave us a rating or review. This helps other people define the show and we love to hear from you there. As always I'm Dr. Katie Linder, and thanks for listening. We'll be back next week with a new episode.

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