From the Editors

For education among all kinds of men always has had, and always will have, an element of
danger and revolution, of dissatisfaction and discontent.

—W. E. B. Du Bois

A picture can tell a thousand words, but a few words can change its story.

—Sebastyne Young

Research is never innocent. The
most objective-seeming report is
generated by humans collecting
particular data in particular ways
in response to particular questions, and the
notion that any—much less all—of these compo-
nents are value-free is at best naive and at worst
dishonest. Whether intentionally or not, the story
told through research is constructed in relation
to social, cultural, and ideological boundaries;
therefore, the first step in engaging students in
research-oriented activities is to interrogate the
concept of research, itself.

History is filled with examples of research
meant to sustain existing power relations. The
perpetuation of the concept of eugenics (Rose;
Tucker), physical and psychological trials with
orphans (Cooter; LeVay), and the use of black and
brown bodies in medical experimentation (Skloot;
Washington) are a few of many examples of how
vulnerable populations may be injured, rather than
fortified, under the guise of research. Research can
never be innocent. Research is too powerful to be
innocent. Furthermore, it is not enough to sim-
ply raise awareness of the effects of research; such
an approach on its own can serve to reinforce a
sense of victimization (Tuck). Research must be
reconsidered and reclaimed so it can be re-rooted to
serve the aims of justice.

The term research is flexible. As a verb, it is an
action that is subject to the prepositions that might
follow it. Research can be done on, with, for, or in
various constituent groups. As a noun, research is
the product that emerges from the aforementioned
actions. Etymologically, it means to “look again.” In
this issue of EJ, we engage with authors who chal-
lenge us to look again at the presence and possibil-
ities of research in secondary English classrooms,
thinking about the shifts in the verb and the noun
forms of the term. In your hands, or on the screen
in front of you, is a series of diverse articles whose
common theme is youth-as-researchers. Authors in
this issue emphasize the importance of exploring the
contemporary world through the geographies we in-
habit by shining bright lights on the histories of our
communities. Articles investigate how photographs
can support visual literacy by positioning students
as witnesses, as well as how learners can be centered
in the research process, rather than as trespassers in
an academic world. This issue of EJ overflows with
practical ideas for engaging students in research that
originates, transpires, and ends with the lives of
learners, with the ultimate goal of interrogating the
word and the world to tell their stories.

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Works Cited


Julie Gorlewski’s most recent book is *Pedagogies of Kindness and Respect: On The Lives and Education of Children* (Peter Lang, 2014), coedited with P. L. Thomas, Paul Carr, and Brad Porfilio. **David Gorlewski** is chair and assistant professor of educational administration at the State University of New York at New Paltz. Both former English teachers, they are members of NCTE, Julie since 2004, and David since 2001.