
OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESEARCH IN TESTING

Facilitator: Alice Brekke, *California State University*

A large and diverse group assembled to discuss opportunities for research in testing. Participants ranged from experienced researchers in settings with well-established testing programs to those just beginning testing programs, who were curious about what kinds of research are appropriate and possible.

Alice Brekke began the session by describing the large-scale California State testing program. She then discussed various kinds of research presently being carried out on data from the testing program: test analysis (i.e., item analysis; test reliability); evaluation procedures (i.e., rater reliability, hidden rater evaluation rubrics); student demographics (i.e., the effects of such variables as ESL background, ethnicity, high school background, attitudes, and major); and the effects of remedial programs (i.e., on retention; on career success). Several other participants then described their own experiences with testing programs and research activities associated with them.

The following concerns were among those discussed:

- What kinds of research studies can be appropriately based on placement testing?
- What opportunities do writing programs outside of English departments offer for research?
- What special constraints exist in such programs?
- How can equivalence of tasks be assured?
- To what extent can the traditional techniques of experimental research (such as tight control of variables, random assignment to treatment groups) be applied to research based on large-scale testing?
- What differences are there between political research aimed at institutional decision-making and scientific research aimed at discovering new knowledge?

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