

Foreword



The term “civic” is borrowed from Latin *cīvicus*—of or for a citizen. The etymology of the word includes a Latin-to-English translation referring to the Roman civic crown. The civic crown was awarded to the individual who saved the life of a fellow citizen in battle. The notion of research focused on citizens or for citizens has a long history in the United States and abroad. For example, the efforts of political arithmeticians to use numbers as a means to better understand the quantity and character of British subjects inspired vigorous debate. Political arithmetic was in part formed out of a desire to establish and promote sound state policy.



Many look to research as a vehicle to inform vital societal functions associated with human development and advancement. Today, there are significant research literatures focused on civic progress—health, housing, transportation, and education. We live in a society that demands continuous evaluation. As a result of ideological commitments to continuous societal evaluation and reform, our education research community has a tremendous civic responsibility to conduct rigorous and relevant scholarly inquiry. Our civic responsibility as scholars is to offer insights associated with challenging problems. Additionally, where appropriate, we seek to formulate promising interventions subject to further inquiry.

The 2008 Annual Meeting provides a forum for the AERA community to interact and debate matters of research and civic responsibility. A particular focus of our discussions should highlight the importance of research on schools, neighborhoods, and communities. You will find that the Presidential sessions and many Divisions and SIGs have organized symposia directly related to the geography of education opportunity in the United States and other regions of the world. Documenting and describing the nature and spread of opportunity, achievement, and attainment is a vital part of our civic responsibility. Recall that the mission of AERA is to “advance knowledge about education, to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education, and to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good.”

One-time New Yorker and renowned urbanist, the late Jane Jacobs, argued that the successful city neighborhood is a community that is keenly aware of its problems and this knowledge is sufficiently formulated that social decay is avoided. However, the social science literature suggests that civic problems are not self-defining. Our research provides historical, moral, and scientifically based arguments with the potential to inform the actions of responsible citizens and many public and private institutions dedicated to the public good. The 2008 Annual Meeting represents an opportunity to present, rethink, and revise these arguments.

We were very pleased to see the tremendous response to the call for submissions to the AERA 2008 Annual Meeting. The Association received a record-breaking number of submissions that required evaluation for program placement. There were 12,024 submissions by the close of the process on August 2. Additionally, the number of pre-registered participants suggests that the 2008 Annual Meeting will be one of the largest conferences in terms of documented participation since the Association’s founding in 1916. To accommodate this level of demand requires a significant investment of time by hundreds of Association members serving as program chairs and reviewers. Further, the Association’s leadership and staff have been exemplary during this period of growth. Please accept our sincere thanks for investing in this important function of our organization. A special thanks to the Divisional and SIG leadership. Your service is greatly appreciated.

We are delighted that so many colleagues are interested in joining us in New York City for the 2008 Annual Meeting. We trust you will find the meeting engaging, motivating, and informative. Enjoy metropolitan New York and your colleagues from around the globe.

William F. Tate IV
Washington University in St. Louis
AERA President

James D. Anderson
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Annual Meeting Program Chair