

A number of features distinguish CCSR from other, more typical research organizations: our comprehensive data archive, a focus on one place—Chicago, our engagement with a diverse group of stakeholders, a wide range of methods and multiple investigators, and our commitment to sharing research findings with diverse publics.²

The ability to bring policy-relevant research to bear on local conditions has the potential to be transformative. Both CCUEP and CCSR consist of multiple investigators focused on understanding the ill-structured problem space called urban education. The scholarship produced by CCUEP provides insights into the intricacies of civic capacity in urban communities; CCSR, as a research enterprise, is part of the civic capacity in the city of Chicago. Both research efforts, supported by universities and foundations, contribute to civic capacity and responsibility. These efforts speak to the social roles that are vital to advancing democracy and political action. I am very pleased that some universities and local school districts are creating partnerships that include research as a foundational aspect of their interactions. We need more arrangements of this kind to ensure that policy-relevant information on local matters is readily available to all members of the community. I challenge local, regional, and national funding agencies and foundations, school districts, and institutions of higher education to respond to this important matter of civic capacity.

In 1991, the late Asa Hilliard III penned an article entitled “Do We Have the Will to Educate All Children?” Our colleague raised a vitally important question. If the answer to the question is yes, a logical follow-up question for education researchers is, How can research contribute to the improvement of civic capacity in the field of education? This question motivates me. I hope to see you in New York City.

William F. Tate IV
AERA President
2007–2008
wtate@wustl.edu

NOTES

¹For more information on the Urban Systemic Program, see <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2000/nsf0034/nsf0034.htm>.

²See <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/content/page.php?cat=1>.

REFERENCES

- Hilliard, A., III (1991). Do we have the will to educate all children? *Educational Leadership*, 49(1), 31–36.
- Stone, C. N. (2001). The Atlanta experience re-examined: The link between agenda and regime change. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 25(1), 20–34.

2008 AERA Annual Meeting Theme

Research on Schools, Neighborhoods, and Communities: Toward Civic Responsibility

New York City is considered by many to symbolize the gateway of opportunity in the United States. The history of immigrant families and communities in this metropolitan region is well documented and an important part of the American Dream. Yet the geography of opportunity has become a local, national, and global challenge. Cities and metropolitan regions are experiencing intensified city/suburban fiscal disparities. The trend toward increased class- and race-based geospatial polarization has implications for schools, neighborhoods, and related social institutions and groups. The resulting local, state, and federal government responses often create new problems. There has been an expansion of the policing functions of government, for example, while the demand for many key social services continues to grow (e.g., housing, schools, health, and transportation). Thus local, state, and federal funding remains an important policy consideration and research opportunity.

Funding is only one of the many challenges facing communities within and across social and spatial boundaries. Many scholars have found that metropolitan education does not share the level of civic capacity that is available for other local ventures (e.g., sport stadiums). The term “civic” refers to actions and strategic plans conceived to support the goal of advancing the well-being of the entire community. Some scholars have argued that “civic capacity” captures the extent to which multiple sectors of a region have constructed formal and informal structures to create common objectives and advance common goals (e.g., the Civic Capacity and Urban Education Project). Civic capacity requires communities to move beyond immediate relationships and specific occupational roles toward the acceptance of their interdependence and civic responsibility. Civic responsibility in education requires that multiple sectors of the community—individuals, governments, and nongovernment organizations—accept the charge of creating high-quality educational opportunities irrespective of neighborhood or other geospatial considerations.

This year’s Annual Meeting theme provides an intellectual space for scholarship focused on schools, neighborhoods, and communities. Examples of relevant research topics include, but are not limited to (1) higher education and community development, (2) education and social service partnerships, (3) community-based teacher education, (4) project-based learning in metropolitan settings, (5) juvenile justice and opportunity to learn, (6) fiscal policy and planning, and (7) educational role of the professions (e.g., health, law, and engineering).

While in New York City, the AERA community will have an opportunity to explore research, historical writings, and moral arguments. An overarching purpose is to define, frame, contextualize, explain, and debate solutions to the ongoing challenge of linking research on schools, neighborhoods, and communities to matters of civic responsibility and capacity-building opportunities. Please consider participating in this important intellectual endeavor.