



2008 AERA Annual Meeting Highlights

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

As we prepare to journey to New York City and the 2008 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, I am reminded of a statement from a book titled *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. The author, Jane Jacobs (1961/1993), stated:

A successful city neighborhood is a place that keeps sufficiently abreast of its problems so it is not destroyed by them. An unsuccessful neighborhood is a place that is overwhelmed by its defects and problems and is progressively more helpless before them. Our cities contain all degrees of success and failure. But on the whole we Americans are poor at handling city neighborhoods as can be seen by the long accumulations of failures in our great gray belts on the one hand, and by the Turfs of rebuilt city on the other hand. (p. 112).

Jacobs argued that urban planning it is important to consider the nature and size of a community. She observed that towns, suburbs, and even small cities are different organisms from large cities. Moreover, attempts to understand big cities in terms of towns—real or imagined—can only lead to problematic planning and development.

For an education research community, I believe that there are lessons to be learned from Jacob's book.

First, to seek an understanding of the strengths and problems in our communities is an important civic function. This is true in big and small cities, towns, suburbs, and rural communities. As members of this research association, we have a civic responsibility to provide relevant and rigorous research that informs how we come to understand the social, cultural, and economic institutions and interactions in our communities linked to educational processes.

Second, education scholarship should recognize the importance of geography in the research process, where appropriate. The business and economic literature describe the role of industrial clusters and networks in communities. The sociology literature includes important discussions of social structures, including the spatial dimensions of opportunity in communities. The political science literature is attentive to community, city, state, and federal governance. The public health literature examines the geography of medical resources, risk factors, and disease. The psychology literature examines relationships in variety of contexts including the community setting.

Education and education research are linked to these traditions. Historically, education research has encompassed social context frameworks, including geographic factors. Jacob, who died in 2006, underscores the importance of geography when she argues that community size is important and that policy and research generalizations across geographic types are unwise.

At AERA's upcoming 89th Annual Meeting we will take seriously the need to discuss emerging understandings about education, neighborhoods, and communities. This year's Annual Meeting theme and call for papers generated a significant response, and scholarly debates related to research and civic responsibility should prove informative for all who attend. As would be expected, my Presidential Address will be theme related: "Science and the City: Research and Civic Responsibility." Even the major invited lectures, however, are connected to the research issues and challenges that motivate the theme:

- Wallace Foundation Distinguished Lecture. *Carol D. Lee, Northwestern University*. The Centrality of Culture to the Scientific Study of Learning and Development: How an Ecological Framework in Educational Research Facilitates Education's Civic Responsibility.
- AERA Distinguished Lecture. *Henry Levin, Teachers College, Columbia University*. The Economic Payoff to Educational Justice.
- Decade of Behavior Distinguished Lecture. *Roxane Cohen Silver, University of California, Irvine*. Coping With Traumatic Life Events.
- W. E. B. Du Bois Distinguished Lecture/AERA Presidential Session. *Derrick Bell, New York University*. Dr. Du Bois' Educational Prophecy: An Unfulfilled Legacy.

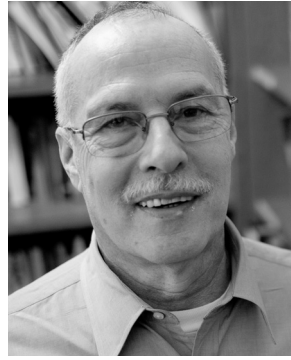
The Presidential symposia, in particular, provide an opportunity to explore the theme and larger challenges related to schools, neighborhoods, and communities:

- Building Civic Capacity Through Deliberative Public Engagement: How Well Does It Work? *Lorraine M. McDonnell, Chair; Julie A. Marsh; Brenda J. Turnbull; Will Friedman*.
- Neighborhoods, Schools, and Social (In)equality: Toward Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility. *Carol Camp-Yeakey, Chair; Ingrid Gould Ellen and Katherine O'Regan; Roslyn Mickelson, Linwood H. Cousins, and Brian A. Williams; Gail Emily Wolfe; David L. Shepard*.

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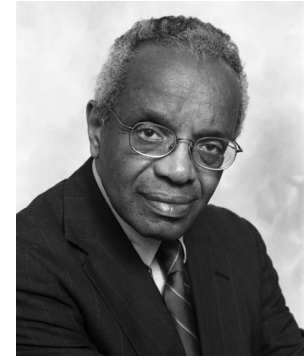
Carol D. Lee



Henry Levin



Roxane Cohen Silver



Derrick Bell

- Are We There Yet? An Examination of Educational Equity in the Era of School Reform and Accountability. *Donna Marie Harris, Chair; John B. Diamond; Rodney T. Ogawa and Betty Achinstein; James Spillane, Discussant.*
- Impacts of Community Organizing on Education Reform. *Warren Simmons, Chair; Kavitha Mediratta; Seema Shah; Jeannie Oakes; Christine Dolby; Charles M. Payne, Discussant.*
- The Price We Pay: Economic and Social Consequences of Inadequate Education. *Jeffrey R. Henig, Chair and Discussant; Clive Belfield; Henry Levin; Cecilia Elena Rouse.*
- Civic Capacity and Urban Education: Looking Back, Looking Forward. *Jeffrey R. Henig, Chair and Discussant; John H. Portz and Lana Stein; Rodney Hero and Mara Sydney; Maia B. Cucchiara, Eva Gold, Elaine Simon, Morgan Riffer, and Cecily Mitchell.*
- Can Research Influence Policy? Culture and Politics in the Evidence Movement. *Michael J. Feuer, Chair; Ken Prewitt; Catherine E. Freeman; Tony Munton; Avital Darmon; Craig Calhoun, Discussant.*
- Making a Difference in Policy and Practice: Communication, Education Research, and Civic Responsibility. *William F. Tate, Chair; Susan Fuhrman; Alex J. Molnar; Diane Ravitch.*
- The Future of Learning: New Paradigms for the 21st Century. *Constance Yowell, Chair; Mizuko Ito; Marshall S. Smith; Daniel Atkins; John Seely Brown, Discussant.*
- The Changing Nature of Suburbia and What It Means for Public Education: Rethinking Stereotypes of “Urban” and “Suburban” Spaces and Schools. *Roslyn Mickelson, Chair; John R. Logan; Sean F. Reardon and John T. Yun; Amy Stewart Wells, Jacquelyn Nely Duran, and Terrenda Corisa White; Carol A. Burris; M. Beatriz Arias and William T. Trent, Discussants.*
- Learning in Schools, Neighborhoods, and Communities in Diverse Environments: Life-Long, Life-Wide, and Life-Deep. *James A. Banks and Cherry A. Banks, Co-Chairs; John D. Bransford, Shirley Brice Heath; Carol D. Lee; Guadalupe Valdes; Philip L. Bell; Linda Darling-Hammond, Discussant.*
- Kenneth and Mamie Clark Revisited: Unfinished Business of 21st-Century Disparities and Policy Inadequacies. *Margaret Beale Spencer, Chair; Malik Edwards; Vinay Harpalani; Bruce Anthony Jones; Carla D. O’Connor; Tirzah R. Spencer.*

- The Educational Pipeline and Its Consequences for Students: Realizing *Bakke’s* Legacy. *Patricia Marin, Chair; John T. Yun and Chungmei Lee; Donald E. Heller; Michael Kurlaender and Erika Felts; Catherine L. Horn and John T. Yun; John Payton and Gary A. Orfield, Discussants.*
- National Math Panel Report: Implications, Issues and Research Directions. *William F. Tate, Chair; Camilla P. Benbow; Deborah Loewenberg Ball; Francis (Skip) M. Fennell; Frank K. Lester and Herbert P. Ginsburg, Discussants.*

Central to the theme is the need to situate education research in historical and social contexts. I am so pleased that this year the AERA Annual Meeting precedes the Annual Meeting of the Organization of American Historians (OAH). AERA and OAH are cosponsoring two Friday sessions that illustrate the vital link between past and future:

- Cultural Capital and Black Education: New Historical Perspectives. *Linda M. Perkins, Chair; Christopher M. Span; Patrice Preston-Grimes; Mary S. Hoffschwelle; V. P. Franklin.*
- Education History and Policy: An Important Relationship. *Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, Chair; James D. Anderson; Carl F. Kaestle; Kate B. Rousmaniere; John L. Rury; Andrea Walton.* This session is jointly planned by AERA and the Organization of American Historians.

These are only some of the special Presidential Sessions that I urge you to attend. Other highlights are featured in the pages that follow. See you in New York.

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REFERENCE

Jacobs, J. (1993). *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Modern Library Series). New York: Random House. (Original work published 1961)

