

Task Force on the Role and Future of Minorities American Educational Research Association

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The Task Force on the Role and Future of Minorities of the American Educational Research Association is pleased to submit its final report to the AERA Council. The report consists of five sections:

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I. Introduction

In December 1995 Linda Darling-Hammond, then president of the American Educational Research Association, appointed the following members of the association to serve as members of a presidential Task Force on the Role and Future of Minorities in AERA: Beatriz Arias, David Berliner, Edmund W. Gordon, Chairperson, Grace Pung Guthrie, Vernon C. Polite, Richard Ruiz, and Christine Sleeter.

In her letter of appointment, President Darling-Hammond indicated that the Task Force on the Role and Future of Minorities should examine the ways in which scholars of color are currently

Involved in the life and operations of the association, its functions, and the educational research, development, and utilization profession as a whole; the extent to which full opportunity has been achieved in the various dimensions of scholarly activity, such as participation in research definition, conduct, interpretation, and publishing; and the obstacles and barriers to full participation that may continue to exist for some of our members. She expressed the hope that "the Task Force will provide recommendations to the AERA Council about ways in which the Association can further reduce barriers to full involvement, and can act affirmatively to increase participation and leadership among scholars of color in all of its major activities and functions."

The letter of appointment indicated that The impetus for this Task Force is twofold. The process of creating a fully inclusive profession is necessarily a continuous one that requires periodic assessment and recommitment to the goals and aspirations the Association holds. Given both the important steps AERA has taken and the need for continued progress in today's world, this is a useful time for stock taking and proactive assessment of where we are vis-à-vis where we want to be as an Association that represents the adults and children in the education community we serve. In addition, some recent events have resurfaced concerns about the historical underrepresentation of scholars of color as authors and editors in AERA publications as well as the limited presence of scholarship on issues of concern to communities of color in AERA journals. While the Publications Committee has addressed some specific concerns relating to the Committee's policies and practices, the roots of these concerns go far beyond the boundaries of any single Committee and deserve the attention of the entire AERA community.

In response to this charge, the members of the task force, beginning with their initial meeting, agreed that their work would have a dual focus on issues related to the integration of peoples from diverse back-

grounds in the association and on issues related to the increasing coexistence of diverse epistemologies and perspectives in an association where a traditional set of values relative to knowledge production has gained hegemony. Although there are several social divisions into which the members of the association can be assigned (age, ethnicity, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation, social class, as examples) the members of the task force have given primary attention to ethnic and language group identity in this report. However, because it is becoming clear that the problem that the association is having with the increased salience of ethnic and gender diversity in its membership may be a surrogate for deeper problems with diversity in the epistemologies and perspectives that inform knowledge production, development, and utilization, the task force has devoted considerable attention in this report to the implications of changing demographics, epistemologies, and perspectives. It is to be noted that while the report calls for greater inclusiveness with respect to these diverse ways of knowing and viewing the world, the task force members are not suggesting that established and traditional epistemologies and perspectives be discarded. Rather, in the interest of authenticity, fairness, representativeness, and validity, the task force members assert the critical importance of respect for the diverse peoples, perspectives, and epistemologies that are apart of the association and the society in which it operates.

The members of the Task Force on the Role and Future of Minorities have met (1) once to deliberate the issues and plan the work of the task force; (2) in two public hearings at the 1996 AERA annual meeting to receive testimony from AERA members; (3) once to review and interpret available information, to formulate initial recommendations, and to consider the

content of a progress report; (4) once to review the council's reaction to the progress report of the task force and to make appropriate revisions; and (5) once in joint session with the AERA Strategic Planning Committee to contribute to the discussion of the mission of the association.

II. Historical Context of Diversity Efforts in AERA

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the establishment of AERA, originally called the National Association of Directors of Education. It was a department of the National Education Association until 1967, when it became a separate non-profit corporation. Since early in its development, AERA has shown concern for issues of equity and inclusion. Beginning in 1972, its council has adopted resolutions that declare its commitment to diversity. The following is the first of these:

Be it resolved that all persons, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, religion, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, or any other characteristics not related to the person's qualifications have full opportunity to participate in the activities of AERA.

In August 1977, although divisional affirmative action committees and several special interest groups (SIGs) on minority issues had already been established, a group of members (LaMar P. Miller, Dolores Cross, John Egermeier, Edmund W. Gordon, Sylvia T. Johnson, and Fernie Baca-Moore) expressed concern in a letter to President James Popham about "the problem of poor utilization of potential available talent for solving educational problems and in increasing the credibility of research, especially in groups that are most under-represented in the education research community." They called for an ad-hoc committee to study the role and status of minorities in educational research. In December of that year, William J. Russell, executive officer, informed the group that the council had voted to establish such a committee with Romeria Tidwell as chair; the committee was to continue through the annual meeting of 1980. In January of 1980, the council designated it a standing committee of the organization.

The Standing Committee on the Role and Status of Minorities in Educational Research and Development (CRSMERD) was very active in formulating goals and objectives in its first few years. It facilitated communication about its activities through a newsletter, first published in 1982 when

Robert K. Murphy was chair. Its major goals involved improving general participation of minorities in the organization, increasing the number of minorities serving on AERA editorial boards, improving communication within the organization on minority issues by holding open meetings and coordinating the activities of minority SIGs, monitoring affirmative-action activities in the divisions, sponsoring professional development opportunities for minority researchers through fellowships and mentoring workshops, recognizing the achievements of minority members and others who study minority issues through annual awards and invited addresses, and working with research and development organizations, centers, and universities to increase the possibilities for minority employment.

More recently, in addition to continuing with these and other activities, CRSMERD has spear-headed the development of a directory and data bank of minority scholars that can be used by AERA presidents, editors, committee Chairs, and others with authority to choose reviewers and appoint editorial boards and committees. This was impelled by a sense of the CRSMERD that AERA journals tend not to publish minority topics and minority authors, at least in part because of a lack of sensitivity to the variety of interests and modes of knowledge production among the members of the organization. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, members of the committee conducted preliminary investigations on the numbers of minority scholars whose work had appeared in AERA publications. The study was in conclusive in part because of a lack of available data on submissions and in part because it was difficult to know what factors affected submissions. Until this point, there has not been a follow-up or refinement to this study.

The most recent developments in AERA on diversity and equity testify to the fact that, while various committees and officers have been actively involved in promoting minority concerns, there is still wide-spread concern that the organization still has great needs in these areas. At the 1992 annual meeting, Christine Sleeter and Olga Welch organized a panel discussion on issues of inclusion with Chairs of 12 SIGs and standing committees. That session generated a long list of concerns that once again demonstrated strong negative sentiment toward the organization. Especially salient was the feeling that minority issues and the SIGs and committees associated with them are peripheral in AERA.

Currently, there is a widespread perception that, in spite of all these important activities, very little real change has occurred. In 1993, in large part because of concerns expressed by several members of the CRSMERD that structural reform was needed to address these issues adequately, the council established a diversity officer for AERA. In 1995, the council established the Council of Affirmative Action Officers, which met at the annual meeting in New York in 1996 for the first time. Also in 1995 the council was confronted with a problem in connection with one of the association's publications that suggests that issues concerning the participation of minority members in AERA persists. The appointment of the present task force is further testimony to the association's continuing efforts to develop policies, practices, and structures in AERA that can reduce, if not eliminate, problems referable to the association's diverse membership.

As is suggested by this brief history of the association's concern for the diverse populations represented among its members, much of the focus has been placed on the social divisions by which humans tend to be classified, i.e., ethnic, gender, and language groups. Interestingly enough, concern for class divisions has not been prominent in these deliberations. However, it is the judgment of the members of the task force that as important as these cultural and political identities may be, it is also ideologies and epistemologies that are contributing to the tensions within the association. AERA, like the society of which it is a part, has experienced important changes in the composition of its membership at the same time that we have experienced significant changes in our conceptions of knowledge and the legitimacy of different perspectives with respect to specific knowledge domains. AERA and our society have begun to hear the voices of segments of the population that previously have been less visible and less audible in mainstream discourse. The fact that some of those new voices have been quite strident and that some of those perspectives have seemed to some to be counter-intuitive (if not just wrong) have led some who might otherwise be more sympathetic to become anxious about the integrity of the association and its standards.

It is to be remembered that the American Educational Research Association

traditionally has consisted of pedagogical scientists and scholars of educational theory and practice who, like other social and behavioral scientists, model their approach to knowledge production after natural and physical scientists. The standards that have been privileged in our association are grounded in the empiricism and positivism that is typical of these sciences. For some 25 years, AERA has been trying to accommodate the presence of contextualist, perspectivist, and other expressions of non-traditional thought and workers. Many AERA members who joined the association during this period may not represent this new epistemology, but they also are not as firmly identified with the traditional scientific methodologies. The association has made considerable progress in these efforts at accommodation and inclusion of diverse populations and, to a lesser extent, diverse Ways of knowing. We believe that the shifting ideological and epistemological ground is as much a part of the association's problem as are the changing demographics of our membership. The tensions we are experiencing around the cultural and ethnic identities of our members may be the symptoms of deeper concerns about the changing nature of the association and, more broadly, about the changing nature of the knowledge production enterprise. In the recommendations in this report, we have placed greater emphasis on the implications of these demographic changes, however, it is the judgment of the members of this task force that issues related to the role and future of our minority members will not be adequately addressed independently of attention being given to the implications of these accompanying changes in ideologies and epistemologies for the future of the organization.

III. Changing Demographics, Epistemologies, and Ideologies

Demographic Changes in Our Schools and Society

Like the population of our nation, the population of children in our schools continues to be predominantly of European American ancestry, but by constantly declining proportions. Our society and our schools are steadily becoming more diverse in the characteristics and identities of their peoples. The increasing diversity of America's children is a reality that has affected virtually every state and major city in the nation. During the decade spanning 1980-1990, the child population under five years of age rose 13.8%, the largest growth for that group since 1966. Of the

approximately 19.2 million children below five years of age, American Indian, Eskimo and Aleut, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Hispanic children were the fastest growing ethnic groups. As this cohort of children ages, it will bring increasing diversity to an already diverse group of school-age students (Statistical Record of Children 1990).

In 1980, the population of children age 5-13 was approximately 31.1 million (U.S. Bureau of Census, Current Population Reports, pp. 25-1095). By 1991, that population had increased to 32.5 million with growth reported for every racial/ethnic group except Whites. During this decade, there was a decline in the White population of approximately 683,000 children.

What the population reports show is that during this decade the growth of all racial/ethnic groups has increased with the exception of the White children. In 1980, there were approximately 47.5 million children ages 0-13. By 1991, that number had increased to 51.7 million. The increase of 4.2 million children is largely accounted for by an increase of racial and ethnic minority groups. The population of White children ages 0-13 actually declined during this decade. In 1980, White children comprised 73.6% of the total 47.5 million children ages 0-13. In 1991, the percentage of White children in this age cohort had declined to 68% with a corresponding increase in Black, Hispanic, American Indian, and Asian and Pacific Islander groups.

This increase in diversity has been accompanied by an increase in the isolation of Black and Hispanic students in our schools. A report by the Harvard Project on School Desegregation noted that the number of Black and Hispanic students attending predominately minority schools has been on the rise. Minority schools are defined as those with more than 50% of their enrolment composed of either of Black or Hispanic students or both. Out of the total five million Hispanic students in the country's public schools, 74.3% attended predominately minority schools in predominately minority communities in 1991-1992. The most segregated states for both Black and Hispanic students are New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania. Additionally, the most segregated states for Hispanics are Texas, California, Florida, and Indiana. The most segregated states for Blacks include Michigan, Tennessee, Alabama, Maryland, and Mississippi.

Compounding the increasing diversity and segregation of students since the 1980s was also an increase in the rate of child poverty. Children are two to three times more likely than any other age group

to be living in poverty. In 1987, nearly 21% of all children and more than 22% of pre-school children were living below the poverty line. Black and Hispanic children are two to three times more likely to be living in poverty than are White children. The poverty rate for children living in female-headed households continued to be more than twice that of children in general. Increases in poverty rates in the 1970s and 1980s corresponded with periods of recession in the national economy. However, during periods of economic growth, child poverty rates declined only slightly, and for Hispanic children, they did not decline at all (Statistical Record of Children, 1990; Center for the Study of Social Policy, Kids Count Data Book, 1993).

Who these disadvantaged and marginalized students are affects what issues related to education are most relevant. Not only have the demographics changed, but the ability of schools to serve all children well has not been greatly improved, and challenges are concentrated particularly in schools with historically underserved populations. Miller (1995) refers to the urgent need to improve schooling in urban areas. In his book *An American Imperative*, he argues forcefully that the future of the U.S. will depend on its ability to close gaps between racial groups. Working vigorously to improve schooling for children from racial minority and/or low-income backgrounds is obviously in the nation's best interest. This interest and the needs of these segments of the population have important implications for the mission and work of AERA.

Demographic Changes in AERA

The demographics of AERA are also changing, as Table 1 illustrates. However, AERA membership is by no means reflective of the changing demographic characteristics of students in our schools or of the population at large. This mismatch in characteristics between our members and the characteristics of our public schools' population could mean that AERA members are likely to frame education issues differently from the ways in which minority educators and professionals most directly connected with underserved populations in these schools are likely to

<p>Table 1 "Demographic Changes in AERA Membership--about here in original. See page 53.</p>

frame issues. These differences between the AERA membership and public school communities can also lead to gap between issues that tend to receive most attention within AERA and those that are of greatest concern to these schools and communities. Some measure of this difference is reflected in the titles of the works of minority scholars that have been published in AERA publications. More importantly, the demographic differences between members of the association and the demographic patterns extant in public schools alongside the modest representation of minority group persons in the membership of the association make it difficult for members of underrepresented groups to feel that AERA represents their interests.

These demographic changes in schools and within AERA connect with very fundamental challenges in the knowledge production process itself. AERA is experiencing internal conflicts not only because of these demographic changes, but also because historically its role as guardian of the traditional canons and methodologies of knowledge production related to education have sometimes resulted in maintenance of conditions and processes that often operate in ways that are exclusionary of some of the diversity that is characteristic of its members—and even more so of the society of which the association is a part. Because, historically professional organizations such as AERA have served as the primary arbiters for defining and determining what counts as knowledge in academic settings, those who are challenging AERA from culturally and racially different perspectives are challenging not only established traditions and processes in AERA but also the narrowness of existing canons and the process by which knowledge and technique within those canons are produced.

Changing Epistemologies and Perspectives

The dominant paradigms for educational research originated within European and European American experiences and realities and are thought by many to have the effect of colonizing as "others" those peoples who do not share that background, whether this effect is intended or not. Approaches to knowledge construction that are ethnically and culturally sensitive are often grounded in very different realities, sometimes using different rules for judging what knowledge is of most worth, how knowledge is to be generated, by who, and for what purposes. Discussions of profound cultural and political differences in knowledge construction are proliferating, leading to a healthy crisis within AERA regarding what

counts as knowledge, who validates, and based on what reference points (e.g., Banks, 1993; Eisner, 1993; E. W. Gordon, 1995; Gordon & Meroe, 1991; Heshusius, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Rosaldo, 1989; Scheurich & Young, in press; Stanfield, 1985).

Mainstream social science knowledge is grounded in the standards for knowledge production that have developed in the physical sciences (Keto, 1989), in which the main purpose of research is seen as seeking universal "truths," generalizations one can apply to all—"totalizing schemes" (Said, 1979; Young, 1990). These truths have been presumed to reflect "natural laws," and the role of the research scientist is to discover these natural and universal laws (Magee, 1973). As James Banks (1993) noted recently in *Education Researcher*

An important tenet within the main-stream academic paradigm is that there is a set of objective truths that can be verified through rigorous and objective research procedures that are uninfluenced by human interests, values, and perspectives. (p. 8)

The main purpose of the research is to enable the accumulation of and knowledge about human behavior. Donald Campbell and Julian Stanley (1963) explained, this rests on "an evolutionary perspective, in which applied practice and scientific know-ledge are seen as the resultant of an accumulation of selectively retained tentatives, remain from the hosts that have been weeded out by experience" (p. 4).

Campbell and Stanley (1963) situated the role of scientific research within the broad process of the accumulation of human wisdom. They argued that research serves "as means of sharpening the relevance of the testing, probing, selection process. . . It is . . . a refining process superimposed upon the probably valuable accumulations of wise practice" (p.4). In other words, through every day observation and application humans discover knowledge, but in rather imprecise ways. Knowledge that is produced through research is partially based on and connects with that informally accumulated knowledge, but is thought to be more reliable and valid and thus is usually judge to have more truth probability.

The research methods that have been taught most commonly in Ph.D.-granting institutions derive from this paradigm and are very familiar to the members of AERA. These methods commonly include

Choosing samples that represent some larger human "universe" so that findings are as "generalizable" as possible;

Using data-collection and data-analysis methods that are replicable;

Controlling for bias through various methods for validity and reliability;

Subjecting research to review processes within the academy that ensure that published findings adhere to the academy's rules for knowledge production, such as that the findings are objective, verifiable, generalizable, and have been controlled for bias.

Experimental research designs offer the most classic application of physical science re-search models to the social sciences. Campbell and Stanley (1963) explained that "good experimental design . . . is the art of achieving interpretable comparisons In all such cases, the interpretability of the results depends upon control over the factors we have been describing" (p. 22). The careful selection of samples, design of experimental and control conditions, and design of procedures for data collection and analysis represent attempts to control and manipulate variables to derive generalizable patterns in human behavior.

Some common social science research designs lack the controls of experimental research, but serve other related purposes in generating knowledge about human behavior. Survey research attempts to define patterns in the behavior of large groups. Correlational research attempts to identify variables in human behavior that likely have some relationship to each other. Case studies probe into one or a small number of cases to generate variables and relationships that may apply more broadly and that can be tested using experimental or quasi-experimental research design. In his critique of the knowledge production process, Rosaldo (1989) captured the main tenets of mainstream social science research as it has applied to anthropology. Once upon a time, the Lone Ethnographer rode off into the sunset in search of "his native." After undergoing a series of trials, he encountered the objects of his quest in a distant land. There he underwent his rite of passage by enduring the ultimate ordeal of "fieldwork." After collecting "the data," the Lone Ethnographer returned home and wrote a "true" account of "the culture." (p. 30)

What all these research designs have in common is the search for "truth" by an individual who is trained in a set of research methods claiming to maximize objectivity, who studies a sample of human beings to collect data about their behavior, analyzes and interprets that data and draws conclusions that purport to contribute to a body of accumulated knowledge about human behavior. And what Campbell and Stanley (1963) pointed out that often goes unstated is that this research is intimately

connected with the researcher's everyday suppositions and beliefs about what counts as "truth," what human nature is like, what different kinds of people are like, and so forth. In other words, this research process is not divorced from the everyday social context in which it emerges, but is a part of that context.

This knowledge production process is limited in its ability to self-critique, which deepens the crisis in which the Social sciences and AERA find themselves. Within the canons of mainstream knowledge are specific procedures for critique. However, those procedures tend not to critique canonized knowledge and technique. On what basis can we claim that knowledge is generalizable? On what basis can we claim that these procedures yield "truth"? On what basis can we claim that there is such a state as objectivity? Who has the power to define what counts as "truth"? Who benefits from knowledge claims? To what degree does the knowledge traditionally supported by AERA relate to the diverse communities attending public schools?

These epistemological questions have produced raging debates on a number of fronts. For example, Elliot Eisner (1993) questioned how we know what "meaning" means and why rationality as a way of knowing is so often privileged in the construction of meaning. He challenged researchers to think deeply about "how we think about mind, the enlargement of human understanding, and what counts as meaning" (p. 10). Lois Heshusius (1994) questioned the "objectivity-subjectivity dichotomy," which assumes that something exists "out there." She argues that in methodological debates about how to become more objective, the crucial questions facing schools and kids become lost, and our inability to think with and communicate to others flounders.

Racially and culturally sensitive paradigms, although perhaps new to AERA, are not new in social science scholarship (Banks, 1995). These paradigms challenge many of the assumptions that are foundational to some mainstream knowledge production processes that are described above (Banks, 1993; Collins, 1991; B. M. Gordon, 1990; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Rosaldo, 1989). The challenges are similar and related to those expressed by critics such as Eisner and Heshusius, but also derive partly from the marginalized experiences of communities of color. At issue is the too often unquestioned privileging of European and European American male experiences in which people other than those of European descent have become incorporated into research in ways that distort and colonize. Educators of color

have argued for years that mainstream research, despite claims to objectivity, is biased and almost always frames communities of color as "deficient." In his discussion of the construction of history in relations to the process of colonization in *White Mythologies*, Robert Young (1990) argues that "the construction of knowledges which all operate through forms of expropriation and incorporation of the other mimics, at a conceptual level, the geographical and economic absorption of the non-European by the West" (p. 3). By attempting to incorporate all people into its world view and conceptual universe—while at the same time incorporating non-Europeans into its geographic and economic universe of control—Europeans and European Americans developed a knowledge construction process that at its very core is colonizing. James Scheurich and Michelle Young (in press) refer to this as "civilization," which includes "our current range of epistemologies—positivism to post-modernism poststructuralism—[which] arise out of the civilization level of the social history and culture of the dominant race positivism to postmodernism—[which] arise out of the civilization level of the social history of the dominant race."

Critiques of mainstream research question not just the methodologies used, but also how the context in which a knower views the world shapes what he or she sees (e.g., Harding, 1991). Advocates of racially and culturally sensitive paradigms are not necessarily dismissing mainstream research conducted by, for, and on mainstream populations, but rather the mindless application of such research across cultural and racial boundaries.

Racially and culturally sensitive research challenges the claim of universality and political neutrality of knowledge. For example, Asante (1990) grounds his work in Afrocentrism on the premise that people of African descent should be their own subjects of their own history rather than someone else's object of study and that the place of people of African descent in the knowledge production process matters epistemologically. One raises the question of place and grounding specifically to orient one to the culture, history, and cosmological frame of reference one is using. As Asante points out, all research is historically situated, "there is no anti-place" (p. 5). Thus, it is important to explicate one's cultural and historical frame of reference and work to develop that frame of reference, rather than presuming to move beyond context and standpoint (Gordon, Miller, & Rollock, 1990). Research has many purposes, only one of which might be to search for generalizable "truths." A different purpose that has great relevance to racially and culturally sensitive research is to contribute to the improvement of people's lives. Patricia Hill Collins (1991) referred to this as an "Ethic of

carings," which to Gloria Ladson-Billings means "the articulation of a greater sense of commitment to what scholarship and/or pedagogy can mean in the lives of people" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 474). Indeed, much of the scholarship from the "margins" is oriented very explicitly toward the transformation of schools to benefit historically oppressed communities. In this way, knowledge has emancipatory power (B.M. Gordon, 1990) that explicitly challenges what some all the colonizing function of much mainstream knowledge and research.

Unlike most mainstream knowledge production, racially and culturally sensitive research often explicates its political purpose, which then leads to the charge by mainstream researchers that it is "biased" and "politicised." Neither mainstream research nor racially and culturally sensitive research is non-political. Both can and often are used for political purposes, despite the explicit intent of the investigator. It is argued that given the fact that the thinking and methods of research scientists are not independent of their life circumstances, it is impossible to engage in the production of knowledge without some degree of bias. Gordon, Miller and Rollock (1990) argue that "if we cannot be objective, we can at least be honest" (p. 19). At issue, then, is the degree to which a scholar explicates and interrogates the politics of her/his bias and work.

Racially and culturally sensitive research justifies knowledge claims on less narrow perspectives than does mainstream research. Rather than relying excessively on complex statistical procedures and validation by traditional "experts," Collins (1991) argues that concrete experience be used as a criterion of meaning, that dialogue be used in assessing knowledge claims, and that re-searchers adhere to an ethic of personal accountability—i.e., personal accountability to the subjects being studied, as well as to the knowledge production enterprise for the authenticity of one's data and their interpretation. Because mainstream research that has been conducted "on" oppressed communities has produced so many damaging distortions, the tenets of mainstream research are thought by some to have little value in judging knowledge claims. Paula Gunn Allen (1989), for example, in her discussion of Native American feminist scholarship, pointed out that her inner voice and her own experience have been much more reliable touchstones for judging truth than Eurocentric claims about Indian people.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) applied Collins' principles in her own research by generating designations of excellent teachers of African American children from African American communities, co-constructing knowledge about pedagogy with teachers, and reflecting on her own accountability to the community in her scholarly work. By grounding her research in the community context and listening to the voice of her own experience as an African American educator, she very self-consciously worked to produce knowledge that would improve the teaching of African American children. The African American community, then, becomes the final arbiter of her knowledge claims. These indigenous criteria for epistemological and methodological validity are by no means a guarantee of authenticity, but they do add important perspectives that often are more context sensitive than are some of the hegemonic criteria.

This final point brings us back to the significance of demographic changes in schools. Because of the historic inequities in education and the profound demographic shifts our schools and society are experiencing, the need for racially and culturally sensitive research is becoming more pronounced. A slowly growing pro-portion of the members of AERA is attempting to conduct this research. But working within a different set of assumptions, commitments, and principles from the mainstream, their work is both explicitly challenging the mainstream and putting forth very different principles for knowledge claims than those AERA has historically lauded. The epistemological crisis within AERA will not go away because it is so directly connected with the educational crisis in many schools and the social crisis of a society that is racially and culturally very diverse and structured very unequally.

This epistemological crisis also has the potential for healthy dialogue and growth within the profession as well as in the knowledge production process. Edmund Gordon (1995) notes that professionals need "culturally relevant and situated knowledge rather than [being limited to] decontextualized disciplines separated from the cultures in which they are embedded." He continues: "I do not want to suggest that psychology or sociology or anthropology for black folks is different from the psychology or sociology of white folks. But somehow the study of these disciplines must be approached with sensitivity to diverse cultural contexts" (p. 44). In the long run opening up AERA to a wider diversity ways of knowing, and to scholarship that connects with the very different realities of different segments of

American society has the potential to strengthen what all of us do by helping all of us become more cognizant of the contingent nature of our knowledge and the rich possibilities for understanding diverse human experiences.

IV. An Inventory of Concerns: Conceptualizing the Issues

In an effort to solicit testimony from the association's membership, the task force sponsored two open sessions during the annual meeting in New York. Association members were encouraged to bring forth recommendations for policy changes that would serve to strengthen the role and future participation of minorities within AERA. The process was not without criticism due, in part, to the following three issues:

1. The task force decided to host the open hearings after the official program was printed. Albeit an announcement was placed in the program addendum and widely disseminated via the Internet, members of the task force reasoned that many concerned members were likely either unaware of the open sessions or faced with the dilemma of conflicting commitments.
2. There was a conflict in room allocations that resulted in the time and location of the first session being changed from Wednesday to Thursday. Several persons remarked to various task force members that the change in day and location precluded their attendance.
3. Among the 80 persons who attended the two open hearings, not more than 10 were majority researchers. The members of the task force believe the issues that surfaced should be of the utmost importance to not only minority scholars but the entire association's membership.

Although there were problems in our efforts to inform the membership of the open hearings, the members of the task force were nonetheless struck by the number of persons who attended the two sessions two sessions--nearly 80 persons--their impassioned concern for issues affecting minorities in AERA, and the quality of their recommendations to the task force. The 80 persons who attended were African Americans, Latino Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, affirmative-action groups, and concerned researchers representing the majority, [both men and women]. Their concerns and recommendations were focused around issues of representation, research, communication, mentor-ship, and AERA's voice in the national debate on critical issues related to the education of minority school-age children and affirmative action.

Among the concerns brought before the task force during the two open hearings, none was more pervasive than the issue of representation. Nearly half of the comments made were related to some aspect of representation of minorities. The need for minority reviewers of manuscripts submitted for publication in AERA journals and proposals for AERA sessions was echoed several times during both sessions. One researcher remarked:

I conduct research on American Indian issues and other issues of race. . . When [my] manuscripts are rejected, it is often very clear that the reviewers, judging from their remarks, are so blatantly ignorant about Indian issues. How am I supposed to think about the quality of my work?

Another aspect of representation that emerged was the legitimacy of representation. Several members argued that a very small group of African Americans, Latino Americans, and Native Americans are sought out and celebrated as the "official voice" of those respective communities. It was argued that often such persons are either distanced from those affected communities or no longer, for any number of reasons, represent the needs of minority communities. One respondent recommended that persons who serve the association as representatives of minority communities as members of editorial boards, standing committees, and ad-hoc committees should be nominated by the various constituencies. A Puerto Rican researcher commented:

Yesterday, I chaired a session in which two of the papers were about Puerto Ricans, and I think that it was quite an accident that I was asked to chair I had to correct some false assumptions by presenters about Puerto Ricans Every time there is a minority representative, it's the same 10 people. . . I know that is true in the Latino community. There are many junior minority faculty who need to be in these [representative] positions for tenure and promotion.

A senior African American scholar made the following poignant statement regarding the adequacy of minority representation:

AERA has been satisfied with having a few Black faces in high places. By awarding a small number of Black people prizes and awards, by appointing a few to serve as editors, on editorial boards and to various committees, the Association

seems pleased that it has achieved some diversity. But diversity at the higher reaches of the Association merely represents symbolic representation. It is not a substitute for full inclusion. Moreover the problem with symbolic representation is that it presents the illusion that by having a Black person who looks like the rest of us, who shares our experiences at least in a certain context, that the group itself is empowered.

Although the message was clear that the association needs to take action on the notion of representation at all levels in the association, the attendees at the open sessions were adamant that the association should hold all reviewers accountable for their decisions regarding research on and by minorities. The association members who attended the open hearings were not naive in their thinking about representation and the pressure such representation will undoubtedly place on minority scholars, particularly those small minority scholarly communities. One member of the Publications Committee testified that his committee has considered establishing a registry of qualified reviewers to be shared with AERA journal editors.

A multiplicity of issues surfaced around the notion of what counts for quality research within the association. Paradigmatic concerns were clearly articulated. Several scholars expressed deep-seated apprehension that research by minorities is often devalued or simply misunderstood by majority reviewers in AERA, particularly the journal editors. A Native American woman's comments were rather instructive:

I submitted a proposal this year that I involved a critical analysis of the role of the media, highlighting the recent blatant example of the movie *Pocahontas*, as having a negative impact on the image of Native American people. The [reviewer's] comments were "I don't understand what the movie *Pocahontas* has to do with the image of Native Americans." The proposal was rejected!

Minorities researchers voiced a particular concern over the proliferation of research conducted by White researchers on minority populations and showcased at AERA meetings and in AERA journals. There was an outcry for ethical guidelines that will ensure that investigators who are conducting such work have adequate familiarity with the populations studied and that encourage collaborations between majority and minority researchers when research is conducted on minority populations.

Given its size, scope, and mission, AERA

was seen as favoring majority researchers who have access to the power structure structure of the academy through in formal networking among majority researchers and effective university mentorship between majority senior and junior scholars. Several minority researchers spoke to the need to demystify AERA, its organizational structure, processes, and procedures. Members of the task force culled a sense of disempowerment and critical lack of knowledge about the association. One member of the Publications Committee remarked that there have been sessions focused on demystifying the academic publication process for at least the past three or four years, but those sessions were either held as presessions or required that participants pay for attending. The sentiment was that those sessions are valuable but should be open to the membership without additional charge. Inadequate and minimal communication were seen as other contributing factors to many of the problems linked to notions of inclusion. One researcher argued that AERA editors make public the number of submissions, rejections, revisions, and resubmissions. Additionally, the editors, according to that same researcher, should maintain demographic information regarding the contributors and the content of the manuscripts submitted. It was felt that the association could do a better job of communicating with the various SIGs to preclude the likelihood that sessions important to minority members are not held concurrently. Scholars, particularly junior scholars, expressed a concern that the association should establish highly effective mentorship activities. Often minority researchers have not been fully prepared during their doctoral programs or attended graduate programs where they were the only minority graduate students in the doctoral program. Pairing minority junior scholars with consenting majority senior scholars would be mutually beneficial.

Finally, AERA was seen as having a paramount role in the national debate on issues of education and affirmative action. Members who attended the opening hearing expressed concern that the association has been reticent on many of the critical debates that affect minority school-age children, higher education, and academia. One research felt that AERA has an obligation to work collaborative with other educational, research and philanthropic organizations that produce research on and about minority populations in the U.S. Several researchers expressed concern that ERA pass an official resolution against the damaging wave of anti-immigration acts that are sweeping the nation. Another researcher called for an AERA stand on the English-only amendment that is currently facing Congress.

A senior scholar submitted a written statement to the task force regarding many of the aforementioned issues. Perhaps her closing statement best articulates the work ahead for the association:

I want to close this testimony with the words of Frederick Douglas who 130 years spoke about the processes of inclusion and change. He said that if there is no struggle there is no progress. He said that people who favor freedom (and I might add change) yet oppose agitation, want the crops but they don't want to plow up the ground. They want the ocean but not the roar of its many mighty waters. They want the rain but not the thunder and the lightning.

V. Recommendations for Action by the AERA Council

The recommendations of the Task Force on the Role and Future of Minorities are presented below in three categories. These categories are

- A. Support for Diverse Peoples, Epistemologies, and Perspectives;
- B. Support for Changes in the Programs and the Functioning of AERA to Ensure Opportunities for the Democratic Participation for All Members of Association; and
- C. Support for Changes in the Behavior of Members of AERA

The members of the task force respectfully submit the following recommendations for consideration by the council:

A. Support for Diverse Peoples, Epistemologies, and Perspectives

1. The task force recommends that the association adopt and promulgate a normative statement of its mission and commitment to support attention to and inclusion of diverse populations, epistemologies, and perspectives and the pursuit of social justice in its organization and its work.

The increasing importance of concern for global and diverse perspectives in human enterprises makes it essential that our association, which has as its mission the advancement of the quality of knowledge production, transformation, and utilization in education, make concerns for sensitivity to both common and diverse human characteristics and conditions and multiple epistemologies, perspectives, levels of analysis, and investigative methodologies central to the structure and functioning of the association. In the calculus by which these several values are served, ethical concern for

democratic participation, fairness, and social justice must be given privilege equal to that that the association, historically, has accorded to traditional standards of scholarly excellence. The association is also committed to the nurturance and development of the potential for leadership in individual members of the association. The same concerns for democratic participation, fairness, and social justice apply to the development of education research leaders as we apply to the production of knowledge and technique concerning education. As the nation's leading organization concerned with the production of knowledge related to education, AERA should exercise leadership in the development and dissemination of knowledge that supports and advances the education of all people, taking full account of the diverse histories, strengths, resources, and needs of those peoples and their communities. Thus the American Educational Research Association serves as a crucible for scholarly debate that draws upon diverse epistemologies and perspectives in the production, validation, and utilization of knowledge that advances education policy, practice, and theory.

2. The task force recommends that the association select and appoint a senior scholar as ombudsperson and advocate for the interests of underrepresented epistemologies, peoples, perspectives, and problems within the association. It is recommended that this scholar serve 40% to 60% time for a three years' , experimental term to be evaluated before the end of the sixth month of the third year of service.

AERA has no instrumentality through which a relatively high degree of priority can be given to the continuing need that the association be sensitive to the relationship between the diverse populations and perspectives within the association and the AERA commitment to inclusion and social justice. Although the executive director currently serves as the association's affirmative action officer, it is our judgment that the diversity and social justice concerns of the association require different and more attention than that officer can provide, given his other responsibilities. The task force therefore recommends that the association appoint an ombudsperson, for a three years' experimental period, to serve as advocate for the interests of underrepresented epistemologies, peoples, problems, and perspectives in the policy deliberations and functioning of the association. It is recommended that this position be created on a part time basis, perhaps 40% to 60% time of a relatively senior scholar who would not give up her/ his regular position, but would be partially

relieved of regular institutional responsibilities. The appointment should be made with the advice and consent of representatives of the several relevant SIGS. We recommend further that the work of this new officer be monitored by an appropriate committee appointed for that purpose and that the contribution of this initiative be evaluated as a basis for informing the decision to continue this position after the three years' experiment. It is recommended that this evaluation occur before the end of the sixth month before the end of the initial term. During the term of the ombudsperson, he/she should participate in the meetings of the council, ex officio.

B. Support for Changes in the Programs and the Functioning of AERA to Ensure Opportunities for the Democratic Participation for All Members of the Association.

1. The task force recommends that the association take several steps to improve communication and reduce the sense of alienation among some of its underrepresented members.

Within the ethnic minority membership of the association, there appears to be a high degree of alienation, frustration, hostility (even anger) felt toward the association and its leadership. Our feedback from this segment of membership points in part to problems in communication within the association and between the leadership of AERA and its ethnic minority members. To address this problem, several steps are suggested:

a. The association should provide clear criteria and guidelines concerning diversity and social justice issues for all AERA divisions, SIGS, committees, and, publications. All units of the association and members of AERA should be encouraged to use these criteria for the self-evaluation of relevant work. In an approach to the initiation of these practices, the council might designate 1997-1998 as a year of reflection on issues related to self-evaluation relative to diversity. During this year, all units of the association would be expected to examine its progress and work at inclusion and social justice. The task force hopes such formative self-evaluation will lead to increased representation of diverse perspectives and minority groups in all relevant aspects of the functioning of AERA.

b. AERA should promulgate its criteria as standards of ethics and excellence that are generic to the field of educational research and development and should share these criteria with universities, foundations, OERI, and discipline-based associations.

c. To better acquaint unfamiliar members with information concerning how the association works and how one accesses its resources, the association should consider producing an

instructional video or other materials on the structure and functioning of AERA, its committees, and the annual meetings. This material should be made available to all interested members and could be shown continuously at the annual meetings.

d. To ensure that all members are fully aware of the vision/mission of AERA and the need to promote diversity and social justice within AERA, the association should conduct diversity training/awareness sessions for all incoming division vice presidents, publications editors, program officers, members-at-large, and standing committee members.

2. The task force recommends that the association develop mechanisms of deliberate socialization for underrepresented groups within its membership.

Because socialization to membership in the association tends to occur through natural networks in which minorities are underrepresented, the association should develop mechanisms that facilitate the participation and socialization of members from these groups.

a. To encourage talented minority students to enter the field of educational research, the association should seek funding from foundations and elsewhere to provide training, workshops, and other initiatives designed to achieve this purpose.

b. To encourage that greater attention be given to issues and questions concerning ethnic minority groups, the annual meeting committee should provide incentives (such as additional session slots) to divisions that devote sessions to diversity and minority issues.

c. To give greater prominence to the association's concern for and commitment to diversity and social justice, invited distinguished lecturers who reflect the wide variety of perspectives and possible contributions to knowledge production, transformation, and utilization should be regularly included in the annual program.

3. The task force recommends that a program of mentoring for younger and underrepresented group members be developed and institutionalized within the association.

Some members of the association seem to benefit from naturally occurring opportunities to be mentored and have their career development encouraged, as a function of the networks that exists. Minority group members appear to be underrepresented in these networks. To ensure that all members have opportunities to become well socialized to the traditional and

changing standards that are implicit in the association, it is recommended that a program of mentoring for younger and underrepresented groups be created and institutionalized within the association.

C. Support for Changes in the Behavior of Members

1. The task force recommends that the following changes in the behavior of the members of AERA be encouraged.

While the above categories indicate actions that the association should take, we believe that all AERA members have the responsibility to avail themselves of all opportunities provided by the association. Because meaningful participation in the association in large measure depends on the availability of adequate numbers and qualities of members who produce strong research products, all members should assume greater responsibility for increasing the quality of their preparation and of their research and development products. To address this issue, appropriate members of the association should consider such initiatives as those that follow.

a. All AERA members should take advantage of various opportunities for gaining knowledge about and access into the governance structure of the association.

b. All AERA members should take advantage of all relevant opportunities, such as mentorships and institutes offered by AERA and members' home institutions, to hone investigative and reporting skills.

c. AERA members are responsible to actively educate one another and them-selves concerning the diverse cultures represented in the society and associated issues so that the association may better meet the challenges facing education and educational research in the present and in the future.

d. AERA scholars are responsible to ensure that they have appropriate and sufficient familiarity and competence to work with populations studied or to team with colleagues who have that competence and familiarity. Similarly, in the review of this work for publication, similar criteria should be met.

e. Underrepresented group members should confirm the accuracy of their perceptions of the association and its procedures, challenge those negative conditions that are confirmed, and be more assertive in the pursuit of opportunities that are sometimes mistakenly perceived to be unavailable.

These recommendations were revised and approved by task force members at the

meeting of the task force on November 16, 1996.

The names of members of the task force and its staff are listed below: Beatriz Arias, David Berliner,* Edmund W. Gordon, Chairperson, Grace Pung, Guthrie, Vernon C. Polite, Richard Ruiz Christine Sleeter. Staff: William Russell Carmen Arroyo, Charlotte Ramsey. These persons were not present for the November 16, 1996, meeting of the task force.

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Respectfully submitted,
Edmund W. Gordon, Chairperson
January 1997

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Table 1
Demographic Changes in AERA Membership AERA Membership

AERA membership	1980	1984-1985	1989-1990	1994-1995
African American	3%	4%	4%	5%
Asian or Pacific Islander	3%	3%	4%	5%
Native American	0.5%	0.4%	0.5%	0.5%
Latina/o	2%	3%	3%	3.5%
Caucasian	89%	86%	87%	82%