



LEAD THE CHANGE SERIES

Q & A with AERA 2023 Presenters: Engaging Educators in Equity-Focused Change

Note from the Editor:

Ramping up to AERA 2023, *Lead the Change* will feature the excellent presenters in the Educational Change SIG sessions. As a SIG, we are proud to present seven sessions which feature different contexts, perspectives, and methodological approaches to educational change. We asked presenters to reflect on their work and how to use our time at AERA to collectively approach the prickliest problems in education today. It was a pleasure to learn more about the exciting work happening across the globe, and I look forward to learning more at the conference. This issue features the presenters in the *Engaging Educators in Equity-Focused Change* session. See you in Chicago!

Best,
Alex Lamb, Series Editor

Educational Change SIG Sessions at AERA 2023

Thursday, April 13: 8:00am – 9:30am CDT

Critical Educational Change: Culturally Responsive Leadership and Research Trends in the Borderland Context and Beyond

Thursday, April 13: 11:40am – 1:10pm CDT

Networks in Educational Change: Contexts, Theories, and Practice

Saturday, April 15

8:00am – 9:30am CDT: *Engaging Educators in Equity-Focused Change*

11:40am – 1:10pm CDT: *System Change, Well-Being, and Affect: Voices From the Ground-Up*

2:50pm – 4:20pm CDT: *Conditions Conducive to Learning that Promote Educational Change*

Sunday, April 16: 11:40am – 1:10pm CDT

STEM and Sustainable Development Goals

Friday, May 5: 8:00am – 9:30am CDT (Virtual Session)

Transforming Education and Teacher Education: Technologies, Pedagogies, and Practices



Educational Change SIG adopts an interdisciplinary and international approach to understanding many aspects of educational change, including large-scale reform, school-initiated change, school improvement, and classroom-level change.

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ABOUT THE SERIES

Lead the Change series, featuring renowned educational change experts from around the globe, serves to highlight promising research and practice, to offer expert insight on small- and large-scale educational change, and to spark collaboration within our SIG.

Educational Change SIG Events at AERA 2023

All are welcome!

Friday, April 14 5: 11:40am – 1:10pm CDT

Educational Change SIG Business Meeting

Saturday, April 15 6:30pm – 8:30pm CDT

Educational Change SIG Reception

Contradictions, Niceness, and Accountability: A Content Analysis of an Urban District's Leaders' Perspectives on Racial Equity Transformation

Patricia M. Virella
Montclair State University

The 2023 AERA theme is Interrogating Consequential Education Research in Pursuit of Truth. How does your research respond to this call?

My research interrogates the reality of enacting equity leadership during a crisis and anti-racist district transformations. I think a lot about how equity is being used as a buzzword and is everywhere, but there are some stark realities that go with a transformation. For example, my work looks at the contradictions and tensions of a large urban school district shifting toward an anti-racist orientation. In this work, it is more than just challenging the hearts and minds of the leaders in the districts. It is about being honest about how leaders are stuck in a racist system and no matter their gender, race, or identity, they must actively make moves that counter the systemic oppression in which they operate.

This work comes with tensions such as, how do you look a colleague in the eye after they share their racial trauma? How do you work with someone who is distracting the conversation by playing oppression Olympics? So much of the work I have done recently with school districts is about confronting our own biases while combating a school system rooted in racism. It is a lot to process all at once and I think that when we (the field) present scholarship that lists highly effective practices, we have to acknowledge the tensions and contradictions that will inherently arise when we embark on this work. In my research, I try to bridge these gaps by expanding the scholarly conversation and showing that it's not so simple as just

changing the hearts and minds of people to get us to equitable, socially just, and anti-racist schools. As Bettina Love says, this work can be performative when you are just staying in the lane of changing mindsets (2019). Instead, I present research that shows how to marshal forward even as tensions and contradictions arise. I align this notion of tensions and contradictions to the AERA call for the truth. There are hard truths when enacting equity leadership during a crisis or when transforming districts. AERA's theme is presenting an opportunity to come together, discuss these hard truths and emerge with a pathway forward.

What are some of the ideas you hope the field of Educational Change and the audience at AERA can learn from your work related to practice, policy, and scholarship?

“Leaders must actively make moves that counter the systemic oppression in which they operate.”

I hope they can learn how change research isn't merely about uncovering problems and finding solutions. Instead, change requires uncomfortable conversations, vulnerability, and pushing through to the other side. I also hope that given the majority of scholars in the field of education research are White and cis gender, more take on the challenge of infusing equity-oriented practices. As a Black Puerto Rican woman, this work is critical to my own identity, but also, doing this can be demanding.

Additionally, if we want to have actual Educational Change, it's not going to come just from scholarly articles. It will come from working hand in hand with school districts, scholars being reflective about their own privilege and positionality, AND listening to what schools need. In my work, I see that there are great things happening in schools across the United States. Yet, there appears to be a “fix-it” mentality in scholarship without inquiring what schools need or are already doing. I hope that my scholarship lifts the veil

on change and shows the way it is happening in some school districts.

Another example of what I hope the field and audience can learn is how to position their work towards social justice. I deliberately draft my findings using Huffman and Tracy's (2018) work on writing findings using a social justice lens. There is so much scholarship that problematizes urban communities and how to fix them, when, in reality, the fix is to align yourself to White normative practices. I want my work to elevate narratives that show how dope urban communities are and how beautiful they are. When I read scholarship that perpetuates a negative view, it reminds me of Robin D.G. Kelley's book "Yo' Mama's Dysfunktional!" where he explains that researchers who went into urban areas to produce the nation at risk report already had their minds made up before they conducted their research. I see the same in scholarship. I love when there is a focus on joy, inclusive culture, and showing how we are not dysfunctional.

Last, I hope my works shows that one needs to be vulnerable to change anything in education. I do not know it all, none of us do. So, we have to show a level of vulnerability in this work. If you do not know, ask. Do not assume just because you read Derrick Bell or Gloria Ladson-Billings that you now know what the urban or Black or LatinX experience is. Instead, inquire. Ask.

What excites you about the direction of the field of Educational Change, and how might we share and develop those ideas at AERA 2023?

I am starting to see work that is expanding how we can engage in true change. I think works from Roman Liera, Blanca Vega, Terri Watson, Jack Schneider, and Melissa Martinez are examples of work that inspires me to think that change is coming.

I think also about how educational change requires shifts in mindset and lens that problematize urban education. Starting our research from an asset lens is essential.

Ladson-Billings (1999) wrote the literature describing how research presents students of color as "somehow defective and lacking" (p. 216). That was almost 25 years ago and yet, there is still this view of urban education and Black children as defective and lacking (as in the recent NAEP report) without acknowledgement that the system is deficient, lacking, and racist. My hope is that in the Educational Change sector we get to Angela Davis' notion of radicality - the system as the root of the problem - and make substantive changes.

References:

- Love, B. L. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom*. Beacon Press.
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- Ladson-Billings, G. J. (1999). Chapter 7: Preparing teachers for diverse student populations: A critical race theory perspective. *Review of research in education, 24*(1), 211-247.



Dr. Patricia M. Virella is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership. Dr. Virella's research focuses on implementing equity-oriented leadership through leader responses, programmatic interventions, and preparation. Dr. Virella also studies equity-oriented crisis leadership examining how school leaders can respond to crises without further harming marginalized communities.

Self-efficacy within Cultural Representation of Latino Teachers Moving into the Administrative Pipeline

LeAnne Salazar-Montoya, *University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

Kristin Kew, *New Mexico State University*

David Wade, *University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

The 2023 AERA theme is Interrogating Consequential Education Research in Pursuit of Truth. How does your research respond to this call?

We believe that the work we are doing is relevant to the AERA theme of “interrogating consequential education research in pursuit of truth” because of the unique nature of our research. Living and working in borderland states is distinctive and demands culturally relevant pedagogy, content, and curriculum. The work we do as educational leadership professors and as former K12 school leaders is relevant, practical, and relatable for our audience at AERA. We believe that promoting culturally reflective leadership is ethically responsible and can positively influence current and future leaders who can and may change the way we lead. Leaders who are aware and willing to meet students where they are and to support their social and emotional well-being as well as their cultural and societal needs establish trust (Anzaldúa, 2012; Salazar-Montoya & Kew, 2020). This in turn moves the needle closer to academic achievement goals that have locally been established.

In unpacking this Lead the Change question and the 2023 AERA theme of “Interrogating Consequential Education Research in Pursuit of Truth,” we view consequential education research, in this context, as any research that is important or significant with positive or

negative outcomes or consequences. To us, important and significant research is ethical in nature, and it champions social justice aims to begin rectifying injustices. This encompasses critical research that begins with our communities and local schools as our partners. Findings of small studies could be critically analyzed and potentially replicated. In turn, this could lead to scaling up of innovative and equity-based educational reform initiatives if it is done at the grass roots level and not top down enforced with standardized drivers of change that subjugate those at the helm of unfolding the reform. We believe that the call for this year’s AERA theme will encourage our audiences to engage in conversations about truth and creative modes of inquiry like

photovoice, the use of art, music, and poetry that highlight our borderland communities and other under-represented voices and stories.

What are some of the ideas you hope the field of Educational Change and the audience at AERA can learn from your work related to practice, policy, and scholarship?

“Promoting culturally reflective leadership is ethically responsible and can positively influence current and future leaders who can and may change the way we lead.”

It is our intent to share examples of potential problems of practice and offer suggested research-based approaches that can positively support practitioner strategies for leadership, influencing policies that will amplify the importance of inclusive and culturally relevant and responsive approaches in schools. We love the works of Solórzano and Yosso (2022) and Tara Yosso (2005) in that she focuses on community and cultural capitals from a Latina/o critical race theory stance and challenges traditional epistemologies that are white hegemonic in nature. We see the resistant capital of Yosso’s (2005) work in the form of resilience in our research on the border (Kew & Fellus, 2022). Historically, the practice, policy, and research in the field of educational change and with the Educational Change SIG has been

international in nature (Hargreaves et. al., 2016). We see the field engaging more and more in critical research and transformative resistance that questions traditional grammars of schooling such as the value of testing and test taking, teacher centered classrooms, and balkanization of subject matter and grades (Kew, 2018). Our work embraces educational change research from a critical perspective, and we feel that we are among scholars in this SIG who will move this agenda forward to ensure more equitable and inclusive schooling and educational leadership.

The Educational Change SIG founder, Andy Hargreaves, stated in one of his [TED Talks](#) (2016) in Canada that we should take off with the wind, not using the resistance of the wind as an obstacle but as an opportunity. We see the trajectory of the educational change field as one that moves us towards embracing community and cultural capitals of diverse groups, keeping some of the classic research in the field while rethinking or abandoning aspects of past literature that create inequitable social structures, practices, and discourses. One of our favorite authors on the borderland, Gloria Anzaldúa stated, “If we have been gagged and disempowered by theories, we can also be loosened and empowered by theories” (Anzaldúa, 1990, xxvi).

In our work we use a combination of critical race theory and feminist theories. In our AERA presentation, we will share some of the gender barriers, power differentials, the value that Latina Superintendents in New Mexico found in trusted networks and mentors, and how they maintain a sense of direction for themselves and their districts. Aligned with the AERA 2023 call for papers, our presentation shares not only the findings of our research study but also the value we gained as women researchers conducting portraiture.

What excites you about the direction of the field of Educational Change, and how might we share and develop those ideas at AERA 2023?

What excites us most about "Educational Change" is the awareness and willingness to

identify where we have both built success and fallen short in education as it relates to meeting student needs. We also want to learn more about how we can support and mentor women, particularly women of color at high levels of leadership in the field of education. We look for opportunities for growth and gaps in the literature for our own work and the work of our doctoral students to build a more equitable and inclusive educational system in the borderland regions of the United States.

“Educational change is about having discussions and doing research in what otherwise may be difficult conversations amongst educators.”

We believe that educational change is about having discussions and doing research in what otherwise may be difficult conversations amongst educators. We need to discuss the history of times of celebration, community and cultural wealth, and subjugation surrounding our borderland communities (Salazar-Montoya & Kew, 2020). Our research on Latina superintendents in New Mexico demonstrates the value of using critical and feminist frameworks and a portraiture mode of inquiry. We learned much about commitment to educational leadership and the role of the superintendency from the women in our study. We have built on older research (Salazar-Montoya & Kew, 2020) and learned more about the need for communication and mentorship as well as the challenges of gender politics and gender nonconformity. The concept of *marianismo* (Gil & Martinez, 1996) was brought up by the three women in the study in that they were pressured to conform to a system where married women were expected to stay home and raise children and to not hold high level positions in the workplace. The women still maintained a focus on family, raising children, and family and community traditions all while working and

leading in a patron system that values and often discredits Latinas obtaining high career levels. We look forward to sharing our work at AERA 2023 and further developing our ideas and research trajectories at SIG presentations and events.

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Dr. LeAnne Salazar-Montoya prepares and supports aspiring school leaders as they study and prepare to take on school leadership positions. She leverages her past experiences and networks to help students increase their organizational effectiveness and efficiency and ensure high performance and support for schools and districts.



Dr. Kristin Kew works with school leaders to provide culturally relevant, responsive, and affirming school environments for students, especially those with marginalized identities. Her teaching and scholarship place equity and inclusiveness at the center of educational leadership, change, and reform.



David Wade is a second year PhD student in Learning Sciences at UNLV with a focus on self-regulated learning within the educational and occupational settings. David is a first-generation immigrant to the U.S. and is a fierce advocate for social justice.