History and Background:
Framing Research Clusters

October 2023

Fiona Blaikie, AERI Chair

AERI was founded in 2012 by Drs. Kerry Freedman and Dónal O'Donoghue. The creation of AERI emerged from the work of the National Art Education Association (NAEA), Higher Education Division Research Steering Committee. Drs. Freedman and O'Donoghue co-chaired this committee from 2012 to 2014. In 2014, the NAEA Research Commission was established, and the NAEA Higher Education Division Research Steering Committee was dissolved.

The inaugural meeting of AERI was held at NIU in the fall of 2014. It was attended by most or all the initial 22 steering committee members. Those still serving on the AERI Steering Committee almost a decade later are Drs. Kerry Freedman, Dónal O'Donoghue, Jeff Broome, Fiona Blaikie, Amy Kraehe, and Karen Keifer-Boyd.

The inaugural co-chairs of AERI were Drs. Kerry Freedman and Dónal O'Donoghue.

Chairs of AERI:
Drs. Kerry Freedman and Dónal O'Donoghue (2012-2016)
Drs. Kerry Freedman and Laurie Hicks (2016-2017)
Drs. Kerry Freedman and Jeff Broome (2017-2018)
Drs. Jeff Broome and Amy Kraehe (2018-2019)
Drs. Amy Kraehe and Rachel Fendler (2019-2020)
Drs. Rachel Fendler and Fiona Blaikie (2020-2022)
Drs. Fiona Blaikie and Mira Kallio-Tavin (2022-2023)
Drs. Mira Kallio-Tavin and Ryan Shin (2023-2024)
Drs. Ryan Shin and Tyler Denmead (2024-2025)

Left to right: Elizabeth Garber, Paul Duncum, Juan Carlos Castro, Laurie Hicks, Dónal O'Donoghue, Richard Siegesmund, Kerry Freedman, Doug Boughton, Kryssi Staikidis, Laura Trafi-Prats, Ami Kantawala, and Jeff Broome.

Inaugural AERI research steering committee members were Drs. Elizabeth Garber, Paul Duncum, Juan Carlos Castro, Laurie Hicks, Dónal O'Donoghue, Richard Siegesmund, Kerry Freedman, Doug Boughton, Kryssi Staikidis, Laura Trafi-Prats, Ami Kantawala, Jeff Broome, Fiona Blaikie, and Karen Keifer-Boyd.

Key events at AERI Symposia continue to be executive and research steering committee meetings, opening and closing proceedings, Pecha Kucha sessions, presentations and panel presentations focused on specific topics, lunches, evening receptions. Symposium gatherings continue to build a sense of scholarly community in and across the field of art education, galvanizing us along common lines of scholarly interest. Book chat was added in 2021.

AERI Symposia: The first AERI Symposium was held in March 2016 at Northern Illinois University. Annual symposium programs can be found on the AERI website at: https://www.aerinstitute.org/

In Fall 2020, the symposium was scheduled to take place at Teachers' College, Columbia University. Due to the covid-19 pandemic, the symposium was cancelled.

In Fall 2020, the AERI executive team at the time, Drs. Amy Kraehe (chair), Rachel Fendler (co-chair) and Fiona Blaikie (program director), created an alternative to the Symposium in the form of Friday Dialogues, which took place over five consecutive Fridays in September 2020. Please see the full schedule here: https://www.aerinstitute.org/friday-dialogue-series

Friday Dialogues were a success as they galvanized the AERI community during the COVID-19 crisis. In Fall 2021, with COVID-19 continuing, the AERI Symposium took place online.

AERI's first face-to-face Symposium post covid-19 took place in Fall 2022 at the University of Georgia, with Dr. Mira Kallio-Tavin as Symposium Program Director, Dr. Rachel Fendler as AERI chair, and Dr Fiona Blaikie as co-chair.

The 2023 AERI Symposium at the University of Arizona is being organized by Dr. Ryan Shin as Symposium Program Director, with Dr. Fiona Blaikie as AERI chair, and Dr. Mira Kallio-Tavin as co-chair.

On August 28, 2023, an AERI subcommittee, comprised of the Executive Committee and Research Steering Committee members, met to set-up an infrastructure for the research clusters to develop. The research clusters emerged from community dissemination spaces such as position papers, panel presentations, Pecha Kucha sessions, and Friday Dialogues. We want to identify scholarly foci of common interest, create global communities of scholars in art education, and disseminate ideas via the AERI website and beyond. This work aligns with the vision and mission of AERI:

> *The Art Education Research Institute (AERI) is an autonomous, virtual institute comprised of higher educators who are actively involved in the production of research and scholarship in visual arts education. Founded in 2014, AERI aims to advance higher education research and scholarship opportunities and quality in visual arts education; enhance the capacity of emerging and practicing scholars and researchers to conduct and disseminate visual arts education inquiry and knowledge; promote diversity in research issues, questions, contexts, and methodologies; and encourage civil criticality and sustained engagement with research and scholarship in visual arts education.*
> *https://www.aerinstitute.org/*

Research Clusters

Creating research clusters aligns closely with the mission of AERI, including the policy document released in 2021, and AERI's work around equity and inclusion:

> *The Art Education Research Institute (AERI) supports critical, systematic, empirical, and theoretical research and scholarship, which addresses key intellectual and practical issues in the field of art education. AERI seeks to promote a broad range of rigorous research practices and methodologies drawn from the arts, humanities, and social sciences to improve inquiry related to teaching and learning in and through the visual art.*

> **Statement on equity and inclusion:** *The Art Education Research Institute (AERI), an autonomous, non-profit, and virtual institute comprised of higher educators actively involved in the production of research and scholarship in visual arts education that takes a position against racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and other systems of oppression. AERI is committed to examining and actively challenging the many socio-cultural, institutional, and interpersonal ways that discrimination occurs. Moreover, AERI is committed to continuous reflection on inclusive practices in the design, implementation,*

presentation of research, participation in programs, symposia or in the publication and distribution of materials associated with AERI's mission. https://www.aerinstitute.org/

Policy on Research Clusters

On August 28th, 2023, a group of interested members of the AERI Research Steering Committee members met to discuss the formal creation of research clusters, and the creation of a policy construct. Those present were Drs. Fiona Blaikie, Mira Kallio-Tavin, Karen Keifer-Boyd, Dónal O'Donoghue and Kryssi Staikidis.

This document is the first draft of a policy on research clusters encompassing expectations, dissemination, administrative infrastructure, and reporting. This draft policy will be discussed within our small group; at the AERI Research Steering Committee on October 19th, 2023, at the University of Arizona. A more formal version will be shared with the wider community at the end of the Symposium on October 21st, 2023.

Research Cluster Discussion

- AERI offers opportunities to set research agendas in art education.
- How do AERI Research Clusters differ from NAEA Research Commission Networks?
- How does AERI symposia held each Fall differ from NAEA research pre-conference meetings held online each Spring prior to NAEA?

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Purpose of Research Clusters

Research clusters identify key issues/topics in the field. Research clusters build scholarly capacity, and they create intimate spaces for collaboration, connection, and dissemination.

Research clusters are organic in nature, as scholars join/leave the group, and as topics shift.

Expectations

Scholarly Work
- Members of a research cluster will map out research strategies, data collection, methodology/ies, writing and dissemination plans.
- Members of a research cluster will identify curricular, pedagogical and scholarly possibilities, for example, synergies created for partnership work between emerging scholars who might be mentored by senior scholars, and possibilities for global partnerships.
- Members of a research cluster may apply for funding; write and disseminate publications within and beyond AERI; present at AERI and other meetings.
- Members of a research cluster may engage in and exhibit research-creation work, including virtually via the AERI website.

- Members of a research cluster are encouraged to plan Friday dialogues for Fall, Winter, or Spring[1]

Administrative Infrastructure

- Members of a research cluster will make a two-year commitment.
- A lead scholar (or co-leads) will be named by the cluster. They are responsible for internal communication, external communication with AERI leadership and beyond, management and reporting.
- Leader/s set and manage meetings. Bi-monthly meetings are expected as a minimal commitment.
- A month before the annual Fall symposium meeting, the research cluster lead(s) and members will provide an annual report to the current AERI chair on the work of the cluster, to be discussed at the Fall AERI steering committee meeting.

Background to research clusters: Position papers, AERI panels, Friday dialogues, and proposals for research clusters

We know that informal research clusters exist already within AERI, as ongoing work has taken and continues to take shape in the form of AERI position papers and articles, panel presentations, and Friday Dialogues.

AERI position papers
Titles are listed below, and papers can be downloaded at *https://www.aerinstitute.org/*

- How Can Research Inform Policy?
- Disability Justice: Thinking "Inclusion" in Arts Education Research
- Art Education in Crisis: A Critical Race Studies Response to Endemic Complacency
- Hyflex Pandemic Research: Living with Coronavirus
- Rethinking Together: Reflections on AERI Pecha Kucha Sessions

AERI panels and Friday dialogues: 2016 to 2023

2016 Northern Illinois University, Napierville, IL
- The Future of Art Education Research

2017 Northern Illinois University, Napierville, IL
- Disability Justice: Access, Ethics, and Equity Arts Education Research

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[1] Suggested organization of Friday Dialogues is that questions are posed to invited guests, and then opened to all participants. Break-out rooms may be used for further discussion.

- Race and Racism in 21st Century Art Education Part I
- New Quantitative Methods
- Art Education and the New Conservative Politics: Implications for Research

2018 Northern Illinois University, Napierville, IL
- Rendering Judgments in Arts-Based Research
- The Past is Present: Ignored Histories of Art Education
- On Activist Art and Implications for Art Education Research
- Race and Racism in 21st Century Art Education: Part II

2019 Teachers' College, Columbia University, New York, NY
- Where We Were and Where We Are Going: Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Research
- Concepts for Art Education Futures
- Visual Research Methods
- Historical Research in Art Education: Intercultural Narratives & Challenges

2020 Friday dialogues online
The AERI symposium was canceled due to the covid 19 pandemic. Instead, we ran virtual Friday dialogues Please see: https://www.aerinstitute.org/friday-dialogue-series

- Pecha Kucha
- Black lives matter: Anti racism research in art education
- The arts in healthcare
- Hyflex pandemic research: Living with coronavirus
- Mentoring for higher education graduates and early career academics in higher education

2022 Lamar Dodd School of Art, University of Georgia, Athens, GA
- Critical phenomenological research in art education
- Teaching and learning research.
- Disability Disclosure in Academia: The Risks and Benefits
- Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going? Rethinking research practices in art education (again)

2023 University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ
- Posthumanism, transhumanism, and AI: Situated and Shifting Materialities, Entanglements, Inquiries, and Making Practices in Art Education
- Imagining the Field (work) of Contemporary Early Childhood Research in Art Education Post covid-19
- Transformative Mother scholarship in Art: Public Pedagogies of Childhood
- Critical Phenomenological Research in Art Education
- Expanding Notions of the Perceptual, Relational, and Collective through a Phytological Art Education
- Disability: The Changing Relationships within the Arts and Education

Current proposed clusters (all centre around relationalities)

Studies in Intersectionality/ies (Ryan Shin, Karen Keifer-Boyd, Kim Powell, Mira Kallio-Tavin, Michelle Bae-Dimitriadis are interested)

   a. could include disability studies, Gender and Sexuality studies, CRT, BIPOC coalition, environmental racism, reproductive justice, [emotionally] situational and relational ways of knowing, (social and emotional learning done in the previous group)
   b. curricular and pedagogical aspects of intersectionalities
   c. decolonization and settler colonial critique for curricular and pedagogical orientations
   d. mapping research in the cluster (methodologies, meta-analysis, post-qualitative research)

Beyond Human Borders (Kim Powell, Kim Sheridan, Chris Schutz, Fiona Blaikie, Karen Kiefer-Boyd, Michelle Bae-Dimitriadis, and Ryan Shin are interested)

   a. could include critical geography, Posthumanism and NM, Eco-justice, sustainability and environmental studies, multispecies studies, Affect studies, Material culture studies, AI. This category can include the human, but it is always in relation to other matters. This category may overlap with #1 if some pursue critical dialogues about what constitutes the human or human qualities (e.g., Sylvia Winter, Sara Ahmed)
   b. Curricular and pedagogical aspects of beyond/post/more than human. Kim Sheridan adds "I am interested in understanding how humans understand/come to understand climate processes/impacts and role of arts/arts education in this process. Differing perspectives based on global/Western/Indigenous positionalities". Connect with environmental group at NAEA (Nicholas Leonard)
   c. mapping research in the cluster (methodologies, meta-analysis)

Civic Engagement (Rachel Fendler, Michelle Bae-Dimitriadis, Kim Powell are interested)

   a. could include public pedagogy and activism, how arts and artists do civic and activist work could include a focus on different sites: cultural institutions; historic neighborhoods, magnet schools
   b. Curricular and pedagogical aspects of the civic/activist, etc
   c. mapping research in the cluster (methodologies, meta-analysis)