



**SEEING OURSELVES inside
practices and theories of
educational leadership and
social justice:**

A Theory for Everyone, Everywhere

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Framing The Multi-Dimensional Problems in Leadership for Social Justice: Theory and Practice

My People and Beliefs and Others (Psycho-Social)

My Political Issue and Others (Politics)

My Social Class and Others (Economics)

My Understandings and Others (Culture)

At a recent AERA symposium on leadership for social justice, three discussants critiqued the five **presented** papers by saying that the theories they had just listened to were exclusive, not inclusive. That is, the theories did not speak to specifically African American/aka racial concerns. **The discussants did not SEE THEMSELVES INSIDE THE THEORIES.**

Fair or not, these sentiments were heartfelt and need to be addressed by all of us today going forward.

Our Topic: How might everyone, everywhere see themselves inside the theories and practices of educational leadership for social justice?

My Method: (following Theoharis) Critical Autoethnography (critically reflection on one's personal and professional experiences studying and doing leadership for social justice.

Not Seeing Ourselves: Inclusive of all of our colleagues: The Race and Culture Problem in the USA

- **Centering White Scholars:** “While many of these individuals are wonderfully brilliant, you miss some important critiques from scholars of color—many of whom raise similar issues/concerns....Scholars like Khalifa, Alston, Horsford, Aleman, Marsh, Irby, Fernandez, Paredes Scribner, etc., were painfully absent from your critique. Given center/margin power dynamics, placing white scholars at the center of the discourse— isn’t very ‘radical’ at all.”
- **Lacking Reflexivity:** Reflexivity is needed “when it comes to issues of power/oppression.” ...Oppression exists inside cultural/political/historical contexts.

Theoretical Assumptions

Educational leadership for social justice can be both (a) intimately personal (the “I” in identity) and also (b) a valid theory for everyone, everywhere (the “E” in essence)

We can all think of ourselves as unique, special and exceptional while, at the same time, relate to others and causes outside ourselves and our immediate professional contexts (of schools, of school leadership, of curriculum and instruction)

Stephen Kemmis (1995) Emancipatory Aspirations in a Postmodern Era, *Curriculum Studies*, 3:2, 133-167

Educational plans, policies and practices are always framed by contexts which stretch from the intimacy and immediacy of local circumstances to reach and intersect with broader social frames, nationally and internationally, communally and globally. They are the products of struggle, and **they give rise to still further struggles for better education for a better world (pp. 144-145).**

Research Questions:

Can our practices in doing social justice lead to more inclusive theories of social justice – over time and across space [USA and International contexts]?

Can specific beliefs in doing social justice lead – over time
- to alliances with others doing social justice differently?
(Going beyond the personal)

Social Justice is a matter of
connecting issues (past, present
and future) and using
intersectionality

Across 4 Dimensions in the current proposal

HOW WE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT TO THINK AND PRACTICE AS RESEARCHERS

FIND A Conceptual Framework for Studying Leadership for Social Justice (selecting one conceptual framework for a particular study: one dimension)

APPLY The Concepts to one Specific Educational Context (a deliberate/purposeful delimitation: one dimension)

DELIMIT Real (aka ignore, erase, delete) World Issues (staying inside educational organizations: one dimension)

AT ONE TIME, a snapshot verses looking across timeframes (again, only one dimension)

Empirical Research problems with Leadership for Social Justice research

Current Practices: Stifled By...

- Limited and Circumscribed Actions (e.g., hierarchies and communications within a chain of command)
- Prescriptive/Mandated Curricula
- Hyper-Structured Evaluation Criteria
- Bottom-line: Raising Test Scores on Standardized Tests defined as Student Achievement

Prevalent Research-Based Theories

- Based on Small, Often Convenient Samples
- Used Qualitative Methods Differentially
- Data that have been Self-Reported (i.e., Perceptions) versus Actions
- Non-Naturalistic Settings (e.g., communities as communities not as background)
- Reliance on single-framed, dominant ways of knowing

How have educators been defining social justice within traditional reviews of literature?

- **Borrow theories from philosophy and social sciences**

- World theologies
- Western and Eastern theories of virtues/ethics
- Mapping Social Theories of Justice (Gerwitz): from Rawls to Young to Fraser to Nussbaum to Sen (quality of life)...

- **Conflating social justice with related and relevant concepts in education**

- Equity
- Diversity
- Multi-culturalism
- Inclusion
- Resistance
- Combating deficit thinking
- Poverty: Free and reduced lunch

Can we map the MULTIPLE
DIMENSIONS of leadership for
social justice as an educational
construct?

Should we?

For Dewey: to teach the map by itself or in isolation leaves knowledge at
the level of abstractions.

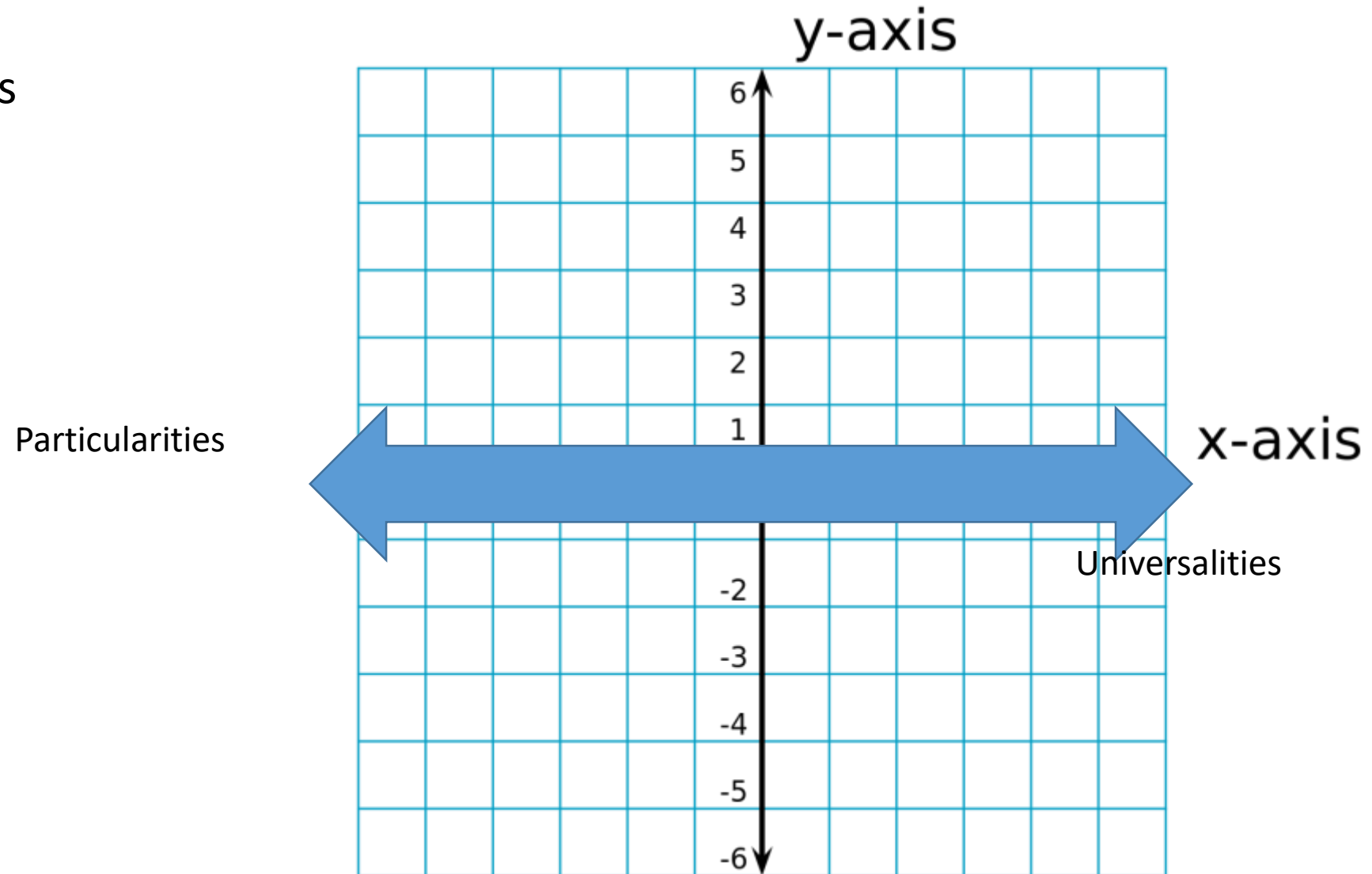
A map is like a menu: you can't taste the meal by reading the menu

What follows are four dimensions for studying social justice as an educational construct

I am using a graph with axes for visual purposes only

Choices of Conceptual Frameworks plotted along a horizontal (x) axis

- Individual Dispositions
- Psycho-Social
- Social
- Socio-Cultural
- Cultural
- Cultural Politics
- Politics
- Political Economy
- Economics
- Critical Theories
- Neo-Liberalism



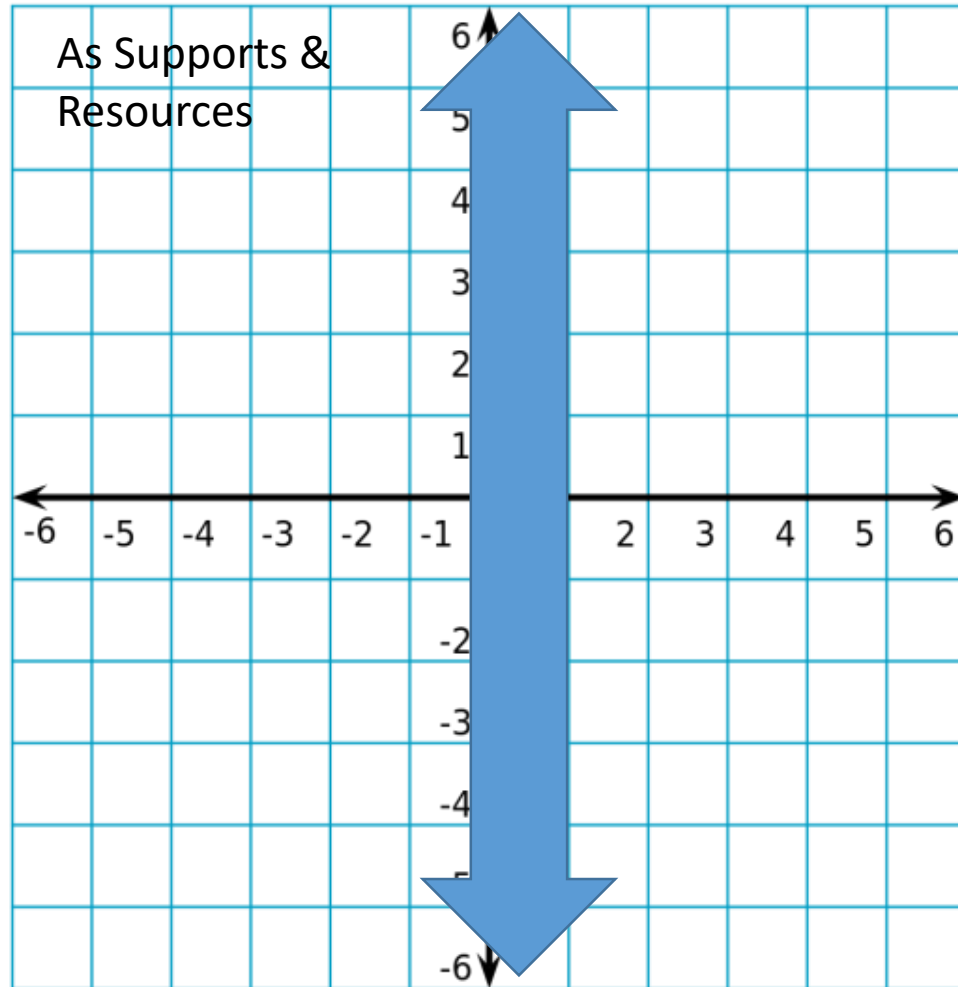
Which frameworks are best for your researching LSJ?

Just One? Are you open to considering other frameworks?

Depending on many factors, the choice of one framework may be viewed as a necessity; but is it a necessity for OTHERS?

Choices for Studying Educational Practices/Praxis along another axis (Y)

y-axis



- Curricular Inquiry: experiences and ends
- Pedagogies: experiences and means
- Assessments: imposed and naturalistic
- Staffing: meeting the needs of students
- Leadership Styles and Theories: pluralism and praxis

x-axis

- Management Functions: virtues of necessity
- Inclusive Education: A welcome sign for all
- Special Needs Education: Equity and Difference
- School-Community Relations: Beyond school practices

Which educational practices connect most closely to LSJ in your opinion?

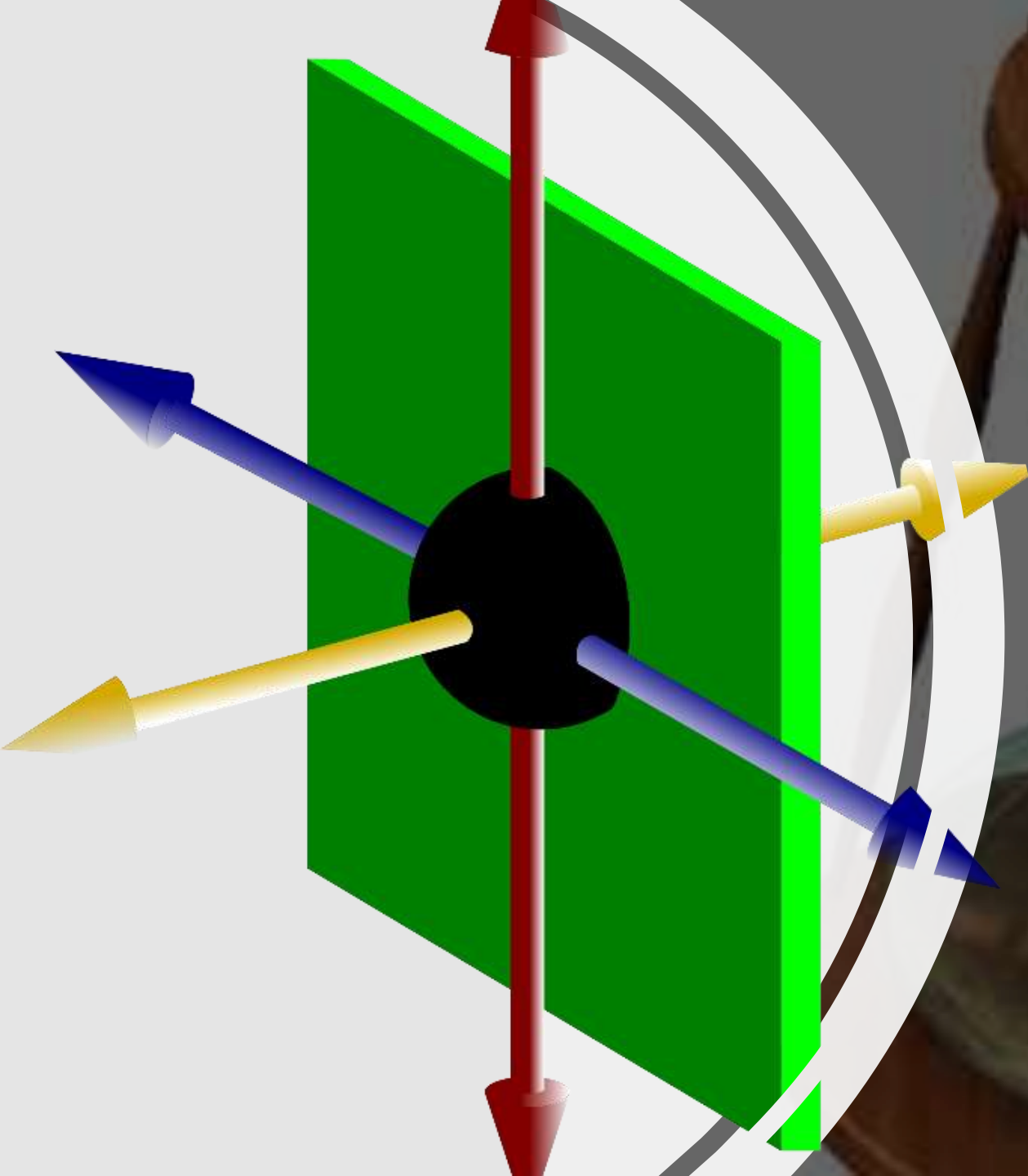
Just One? Are you open to studying more than one practice, level, issue?

In Curriculum Studies, there is a focus on classroom practices

In Educational Leadership, there is a focus on administrators and the
school as a whole

What's missing from our
research choices along these
two-dimensions?

Intersections of Real World Issues. plus
The Dimension of Time

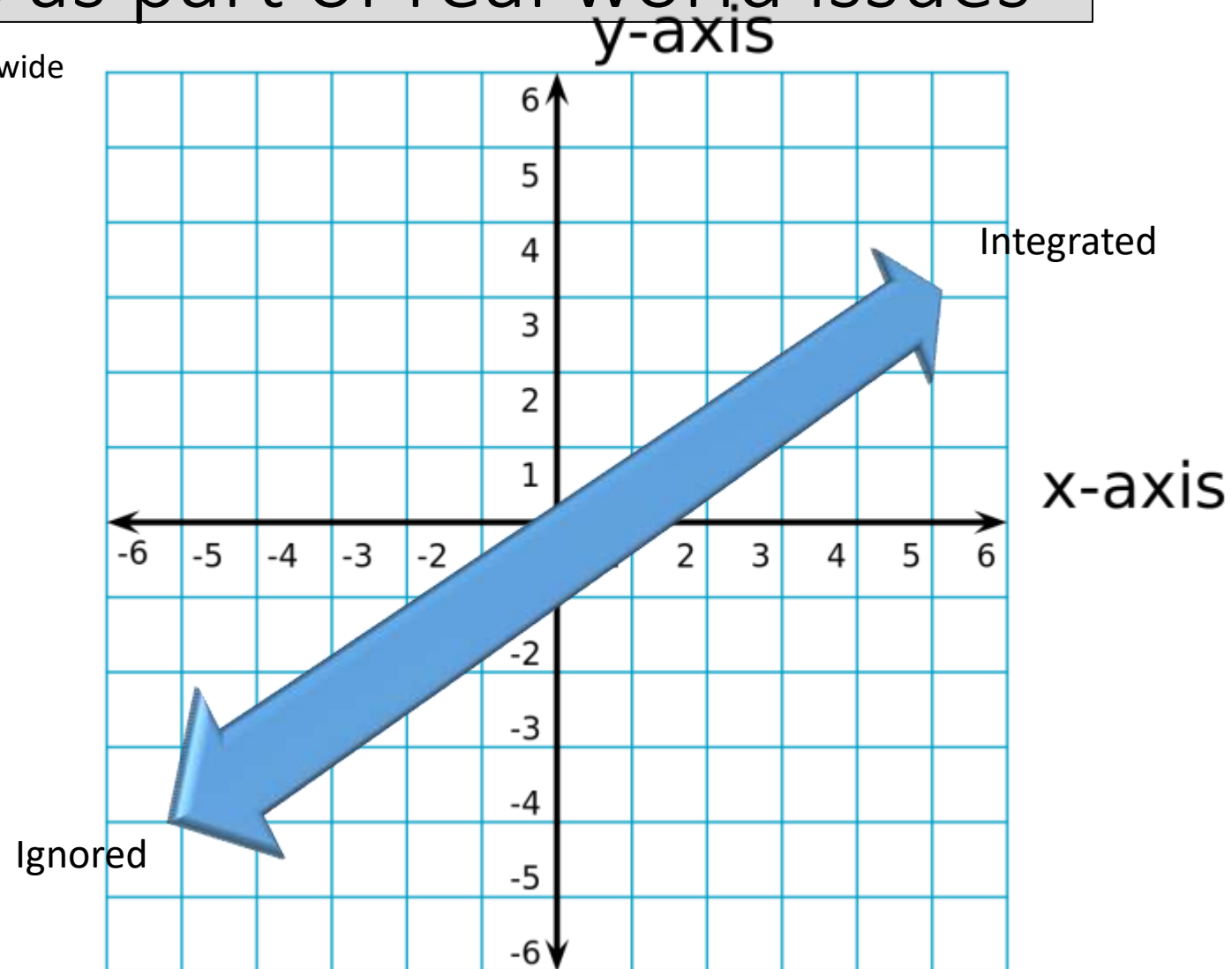


Leadership for Social Justice:

Building a four dimensional logic
model with embedded real world
social, political, historical and
economic injustices/struggles

Real World Struggles and Injustices: Looking at our conceptual frameworks and educational practices as part of real world issues

- Mal-Distribution of Resources and Opportunities Worldwide
- Cultural Reproduction, Power, Colonialism, and Deficit Models
- #BlackLivesMatter
- #MeToo and the Equal Rights Amendment
- Gun Violence in Schools: MSDSTRONG
- LGBTQ
- Immigration/Migration/Refugees/Asylum Seekers
- Privacy and Social Media
- Lack of Freedom and Democracy
- Climate Change
- Human Trafficking
- Abortion Rights



Which Real World Issue do you
see as YOUR starting point?

Are you open to aligning (collaborating) with other issues and people
towards a coalition, alliance, movement?

Which should we consider from among the following Real Word issues?

Domestic

Disparities in the Criminal Justice System
Inequalities in Wages and Income
Racial Inequality and inequity-US
Status of Undocumented Residents
Gender Inequality
Bullying and the Freedom of Safe Space
Marriage Equality-LGBTQIA
Labor Rights to Unionize
Poverty
Right to Privacy in the Age of Technology
Copy Right Issues and the Music Industry

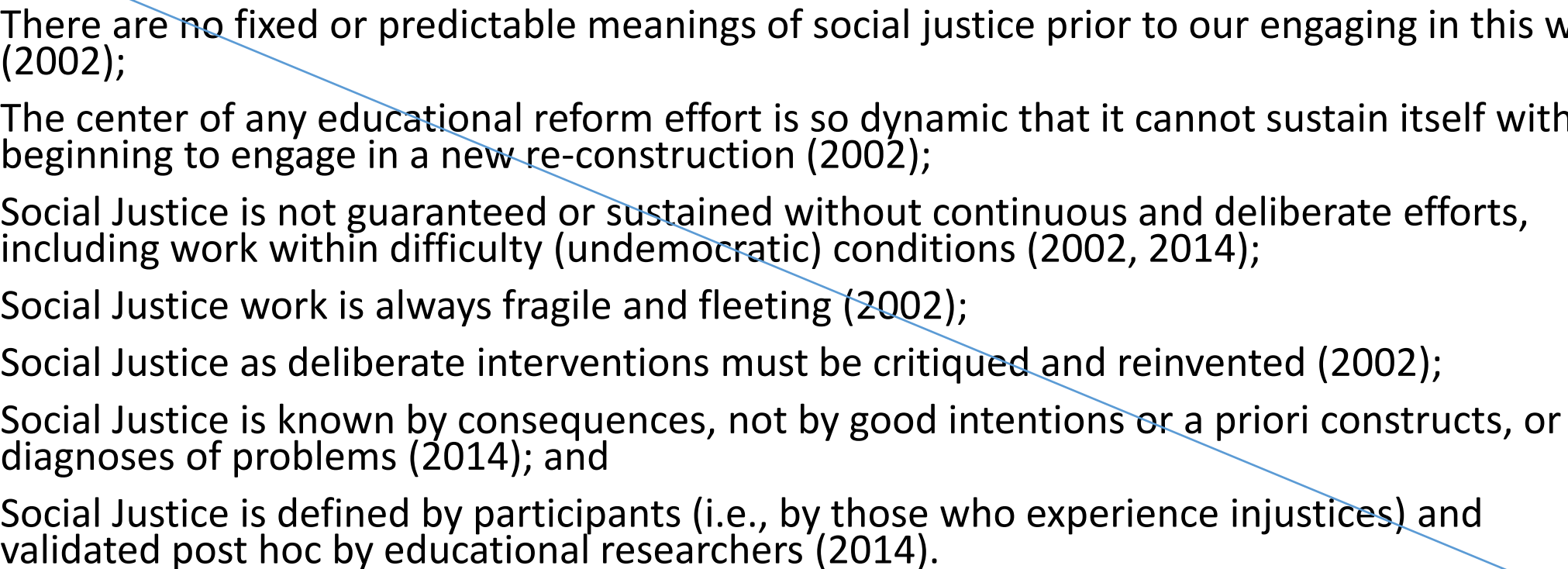
International

- Human Sex Trafficking
- Human Rights and Freedoms around the World
- Rights to Asylum/Immigration/Migration
- LGBTQIA internationally
- Gender Inequality
- Potable Water
- Diseases: Malaria, Ebola
- Climate
- Trade

Lastly, there is a 4th Dimension thanks to John Dewey

- Accounting for time (temporality) and space (within and beyond schools)
- New ideas as socially constructed
- Being participants rather than spectators: Educational Leaders (practitioners and researchers) engaging dominant discourses
- Assessing material consequences rather than intentionality
- Embracing diversity among children with cross-cultural values and habits
- Defining morality and intelligence by experiences and actions, not by *a priori* axioms or constructs

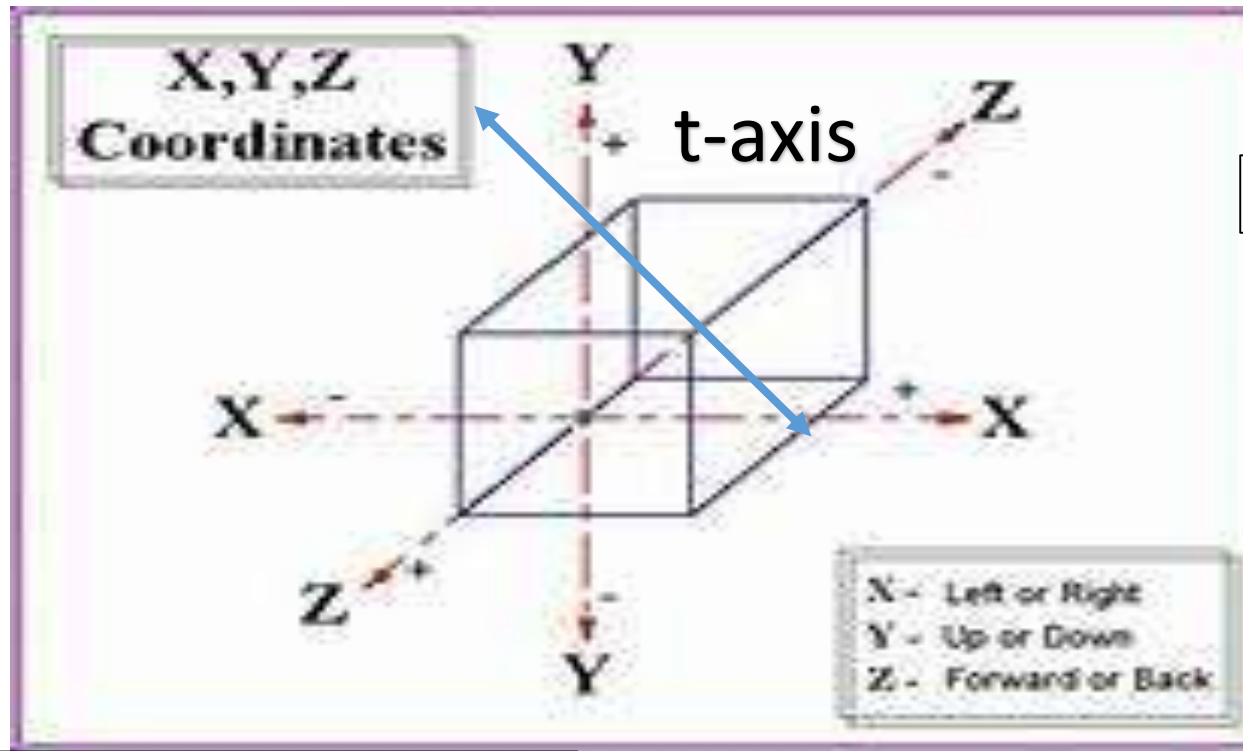
A time dimension (a postmodern paradigm?): My research agenda 2002-2014

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- There are no fixed or predictable meanings of social justice prior to our engaging in this work (2002);
 - The center of any educational reform effort is so dynamic that it cannot sustain itself without beginning to engage in a new re-construction (2002);
 - Social Justice is not guaranteed or sustained without continuous and deliberate efforts, including work within difficulty (undemocratic) conditions (2002, 2014);
 - Social Justice work is always fragile and fleeting (2002);
 - Social Justice as deliberate interventions must be critiqued and reinvented (2002);
 - Social Justice is known by consequences, not by good intentions or a priori constructs, or diagnoses of problems (2014); and
 - Social Justice is defined by participants (i.e., by those who experience injustices) and validated post hoc by educational researchers (2014).

Are you open to changes over
time and re-constructing?

Changing frameworks, changing practices, changing issues?

4-Dimensional Model of Social Justice as an Educational Construct: Plotting Your Theory(ies)



t axis = temporality and reconstruction

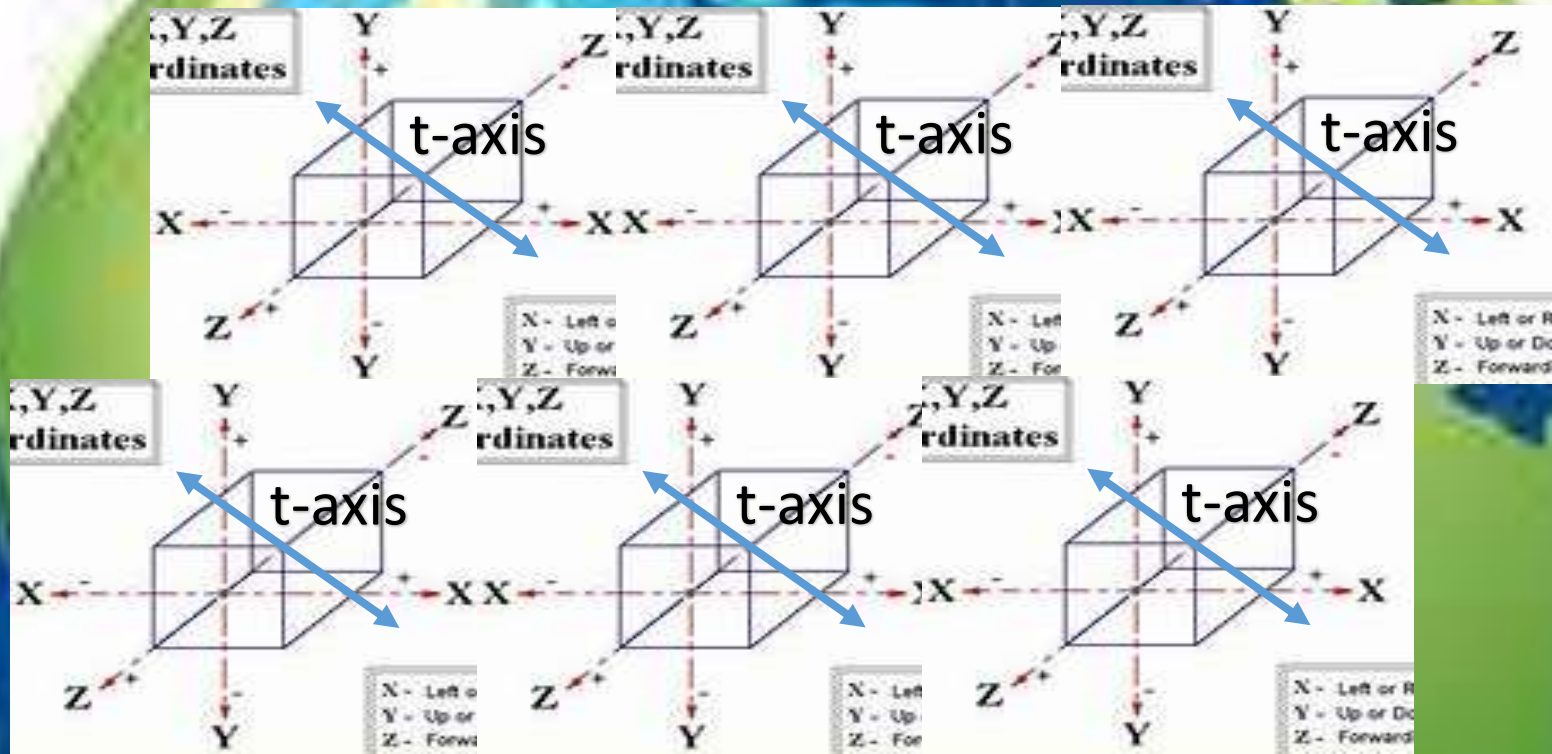
x axis=frameworks

z axis = real world struggles/injustices,

y axis=practices/praxis

Are you open to frameworks from around the world?

Where the political, economic, social and ethical conversations are
different?



Mapping/Graphing Social Justice as an Educational (Leadership) Construct

- X axis = influential frameworks across educational leadership and beyond
- Y axis = educational practices/praxis across educational leadership and beyond
- Z axis = real world struggles and injustices to be addressed by educational leaders (and teacher leaders, counselors, staff)
- t axis = temporal reforms across diverse contexts & cultures; thus, requiring the continuous work of educational leaders with others

As educational leaders, how do we integrate Educational Practices with Real World -Domestic and International Issues [alongside students who will do this with or without us]?

Educational Practices

- Curriculum
- Teaching
- Management
- Assessment

International Interventions

- Human Rights
- Newcomer Rights
- Migration and Asylum
- Climate Change

One Possible Matrix: Going from two to four dimensions in Leadership for Social Justice

| Curriculum | Pedagogy | Management | Assessment | Evidence |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| Dimension 1: Coherence | Prescribed and Normative | By the Book | School Improvement | Standardized |
| Dimension 2: Correspondence | Experiential & Empirical | Supportive, SEL | Service Learning: Fieldwork | Community bridge building |
| Dimension 3: Comprehensiveness | Liberatory | Systems' Thinking | Learning Organization | International and global Quality of Life Measures |
| Dimension 4: Cultural Relevance & Critical Theories | Radical Love based on Individual Needs, Cognitively and Emotionally | Responsive, Restorative, and Transformative | Multiple Cultural Literacies for the Whole Child | Cosmopolitanism and Happiness (not neo-liberalism and profits): The Ineffable |

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Thank You!

