The Synergistic Leadership Theory
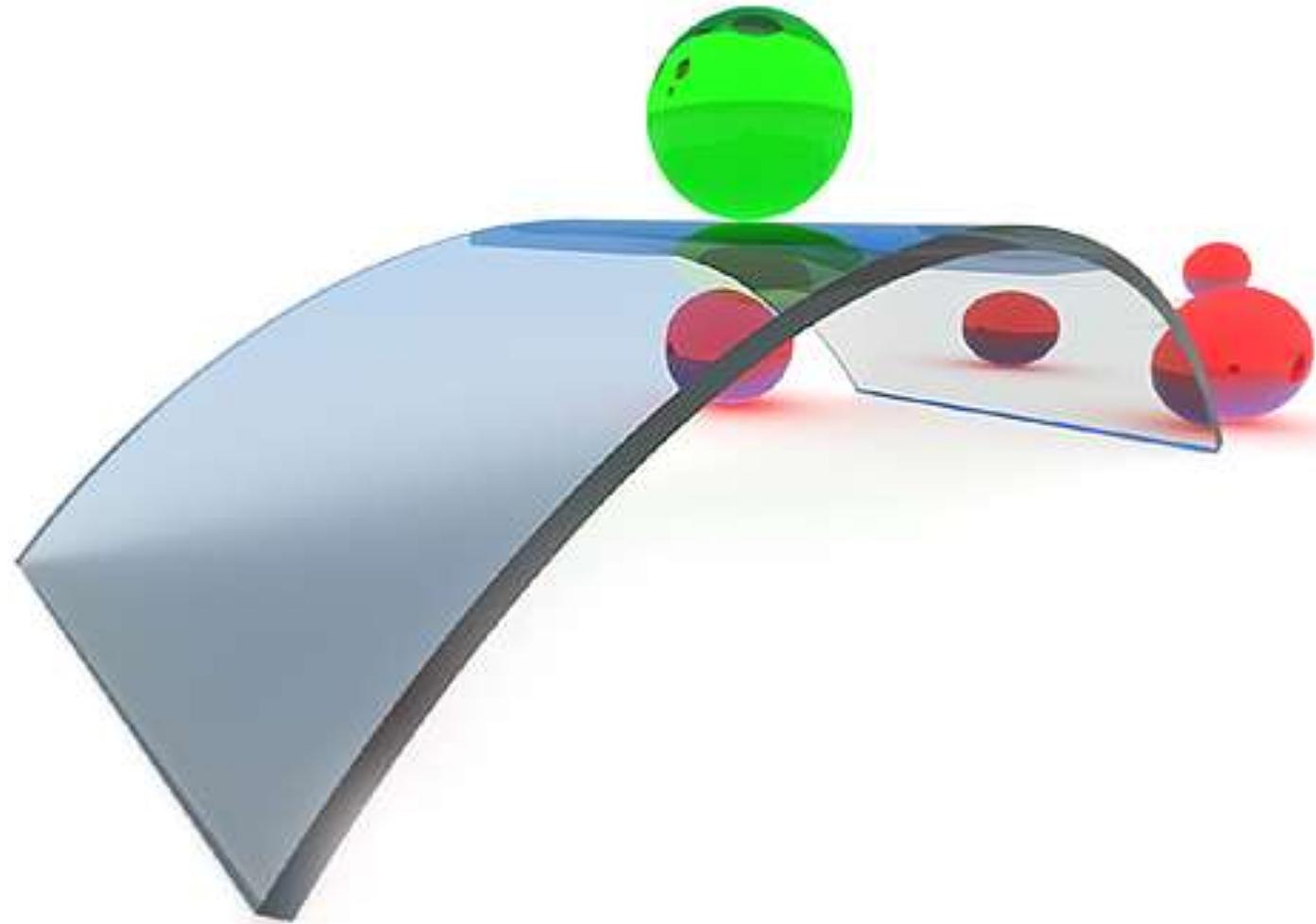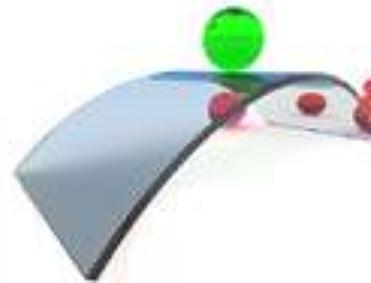
The Synergistic Leadership Theory:

- Socially Just
- Gender inclusive
- Relevant to both male and female leaders

Willystine Goodsell advocated for Social Justice in the early 1900's.

- During an era when many sociologists (both males and females) were writing favorably about eugenics, Goodsell, a sociologist, challenged their position and the commonly-accepted political and public belief that a woman's place was in the home.

- Promoting equity for women, she insisted that girls needed to be prepared for wage-earning occupations (Goodsell, 1924).

She also indicated:

- that "… girls and women… be given as thorough and allround preparation for work as is given to their brothers" (Goodsell, 1924, p. 213).

In the ensuing 100 years,

- Women now sit in the same classrooms with the same curriculum as do their "brothers." So, in this sense, Goodsell's desire for a challenging curriculum for women has, for the most part, been achieved. However, today, almost 100 years later, there are challenges related to the curriculum.

Perhaps Goodsell would be pleased to note:

that women comprise at least 50% of students in educational leadership programs (Grogan & Brunner, 2005), and

that according to Shen, Wegenke, and Cooley (2003) between 1987-1988 and 1999-2000, the percentage of female secondary principals doubled---from approximately 12% in 1987-1988 to 23% in 1999-2000.
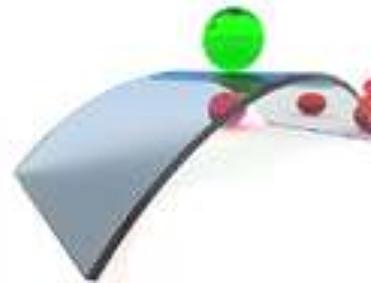
However

There is a concern with the curriculum in educational leadership programs, particularly related to leadership theory and its relevance for women.
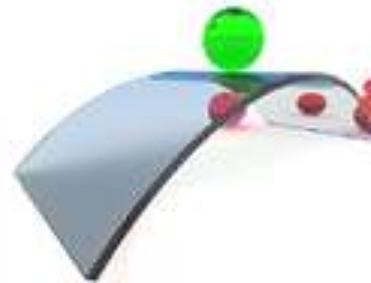
A National Organization and Theory

Though concern about theory in educational administration began as early as 1954, emerging from annual meetings of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (Knezevich, 1975), social justice issues were not at the forefront of those discussions.
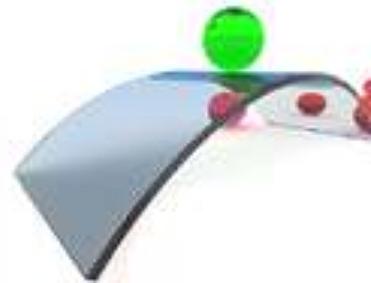
Continued Challenges to Leadership Theory

For two decades theories in leadership and management have been challenged for failure to include the female presence and voice in theory development (Brown & Irby, 1994; Shakeshaft & Nowell, 1984).

These same leadership theories did not particularly include other minorities. Thus, such theories are not socially just.

Social Justice Defined

Social justice is defined not only by what it is but also by what it is not, namely injustice. By seeking justice, we anticipate the ideal. By questioning injustice we approach it. Integrating both, we achieve it. It is one thing to agree that discrimination is wrong. That is the easy part. It is another to make a conscious choice to confront the discrimination that emerges from everyday interactions in organizations and communities.

That brings out another element of social justice– the necessity of courage. And so, it seems that social justice requires interactions among a well-developed theoretical /historical viewpoint, a penchant for activism, the choice to meld the two and the courage to do it (McKerrow & Shockley-Lee, 2005). From Advancing Women in Leadership Journal

Social Justice

In the field of education, social justice promotes:

- democracy in schooling
- equitable practices in schools
- equal treatment in social, economic, and political arenas
- removal of racial, linguistic, gender, and class-based barriers
- academic excellence for all children
- elimination of hostile environments
- equal power relationships
- opportunities and resources for career advancement
- voice to the marginalized or the oppressed
- changes in attitudes, thoughts, and action (Brown, Irby & Lara-Alecio, 2004)

Universities Espouse the Importance of Social Justice

Katz and Ryan (2005) emphasized that social justice should be embedded in institutional practices so that all members of the university community demonstrate actions that distribute justice.

- Achieving the 21st Century demands for social justice in educational leadership requires that equity in leadership theory be addressed.

- Equitable leadership theory acknowledges experiences of both genders and a variety of ethnicities and cultures.
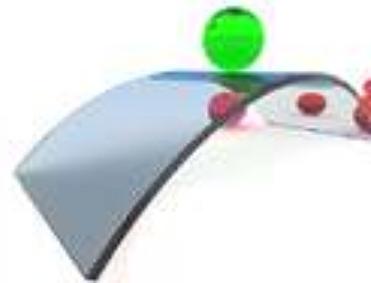
Gender in Leadership Programs

In general university leadership programs are doing little to address the needs of women leaders, "the historically andocentric paradigm is still present in UCEA educational programs" (Logan, 1999).
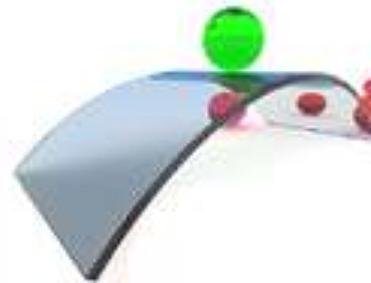
Curriculum Relevancy in Leadership Programs

- 1985: Shakeshaft suggested that female students were not being prepared as well as their male counterparts. (Shakeshaft, 1985).

- 2000: Programs have been criticized for the knowledge base being biased, not including experiences of women administrators (Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000).

- 2001: Female superintendents expressed they find their preparation programs less relevant than their male counterparts (Iselt, Brown, & Irby, 2001).

- Significant to the analysis of the theory taught in leadership programs is the fact that 75% of the pool from which entry level administrators will be drawn over the next decade are female (Hoxby & Leigh, 2005); therefore, it is important to ensure that the theory taught that should be a basis for guiding leadership actions be socially just.

- Equitable leadership theory acknowledges experiences of both genders and a variety of ethnicities and cultures, as stated earlier.
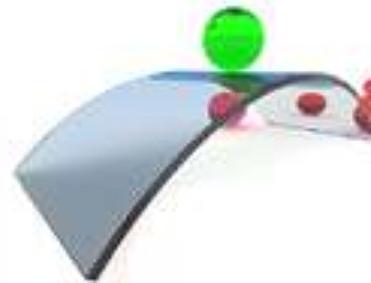
Historically, theories in leadership and management did not embrace the concept of social justice in that they failed to include the female presence or voice. Additionally, those theories would not have been able to address the current realities of our schools and society.

Problems with Leadership Theories

- Theories run counter to goals of social justice.
- Theories traditionally included samples limited to males in corporate and military environments.
- Theories do not reflect currently advocated leadership practices or organizational paradigms.
- Theories are not relevant for all leaders.
- Theories perpetuate barriers that women and minority leaders encounter.
- Theories promote stereotypical norms for organizations.
- Theories fail to give voice to women and minorities; they do not consider the voice of diversity.

In an early analysis of leadership theories, Shakeshaft (1989) found gender-biased language and the absence of females in related research studies.
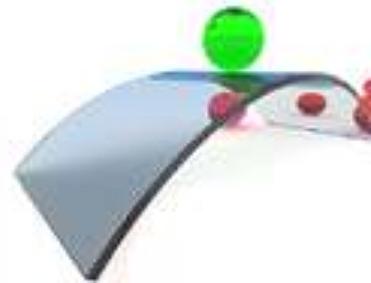
Irby, Brown, and Trautman (1999) examined 24 familiar leadership theories and reaffirmed the allegation that the conceptualization of leadership theory was formulated through "a male lens" and was "subsequently applied to both males and females." These theories were examined for:

(a) the inclusion of the female experience or attitudes;

(b) gender as a significant variable in development of the theory;

(c) females in the sample population;

(d) use of non-sexist language, and

(e) generalizability.

Expanding Current Leadership Theory

"Exposing our students solely to traditional leadership literature (including to leadership theories) essentially legitimizes traditionally male perspectives and delegitimizes the behavior and perspectives of women" (Young & McLeod, 2001).
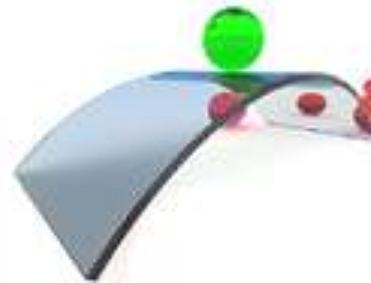
Expanding Current Leadership Theory

"It is reasonable that because women's lived experiences as leaders differ from men's, new theoretical understanding of a leadership that is premised on social justice might emerge" (Grogan, 1998).

Expanding the Curriculum to Include Socially Just Theory

Expanding the curriculum to include female-inclusive theory will assist us to:

(a) promote social justice

(b) reflect currently advocated leadership practice;

(c) address the concerns, needs, and realities of women;

(d) reduce the barriers women encounter;

(e) and prepare women and men to create and work effectively in inclusive systems.

Theory in the Past 20 Years

- Over the past 20 years, several leadership concepts or theories which move toward social justice have emerged. Some have consciously included the experiences and perspectives of female leaders while some have not.
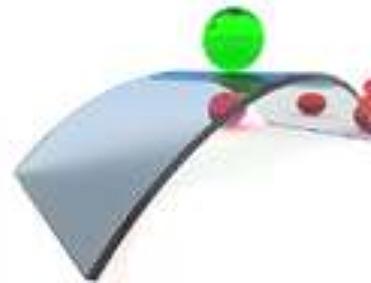
Leadership/Organizational Concepts or Styles

- Authentic Leadership (Leadership Style—interactive leadership and the nature of the leader's impact) (Terry, 1993)

- Caring Leadership (Leadership Style– collectively achieve the organization's goals through forming connections and enhancing relationships) (Gilligan, 1982; Grogan, 1998; Noddings, 1984)

- Ethical Leadership (Leadership Style--honors personal integrity and responds to the needs of others in promoting justice) (Starrett, 2004)
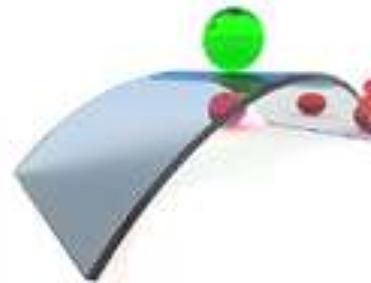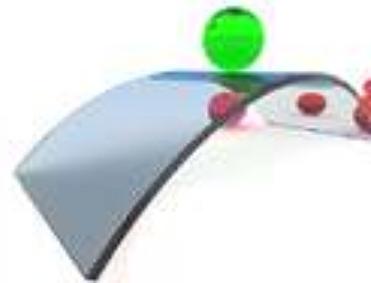
- Feminist Leadership/Organizations (Leadership Style and Organizational Concept– participatory leadership in shaping rules, goals, and practices) (Tong, 1989; McCall, 1995; Morgan, 1994)

- Interactive Leadership (Leadership Style– effective in flexible, non hierarchical organizations; preferred by women) (Rosener, 1990)

- Learning-focused Leadership (Leadership Style—focus on teaching and learning) (Beck & Murphy, 1996)
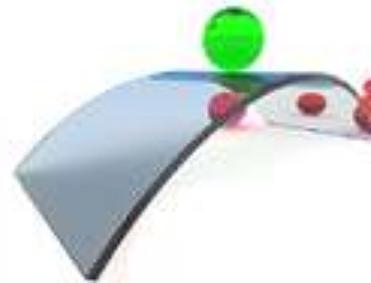
- Power to and power with (Leadership Style—democratic and collaborative leaders view power as a property of the group; consider power as a collective action and the ability to get things done with others) (Brunner, 1999; Brunner & Duncan, 1998)

- Relational Leadership (Leadership Style—five attributes of leadership are collaboration, caring, courage, intuition, and vision) (Regan, 1990; Regan & Brooks, 1995)
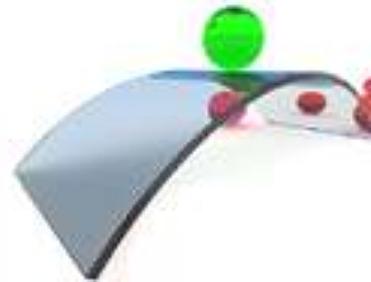
- Servant Leadership (Leadership Style–places good of others over self) (Greenleaf, 1977; Sergiovanni, 1992; Schlosberg, 2003)

- Value-added Leadership (Leadership Style–substitutes moral authority for bureaucratic leadership) (Covey, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1994)

- Visionary Leadership (Leadership Style–visioning for anticipation for change) (Nanus, 1992)

Theories/Concepts/ Models

- Constructivist Leadership (Leadership Concept– embraces some female leadership behaviors, but not developed specifically to include female leadership perspectives) (Lambert, 1995)

- Organizational Framework (Organizational Model– embraces some feminist organizational characteristics, but was not developed specifically as a feminist organizational theory) (Bolman & Deal, 1991)

- Systems Theory (Organizational Theory– no specific mention of females, but schools are viewed as learning community) (Senge, 1990)
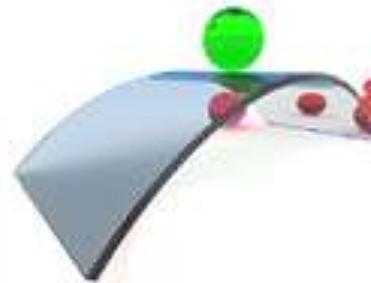
Theory of Social Justice Leadership

- Focuses on commonalities among principals who have attained social justice on their campuses through their actions

- Stresses the need for leaders to "…both enact and develop resistance in service of advancing social justice and educating marginalized / all students." (Theoharis, 2004) p. 60

- Does not address particularly the need for a leadership theory that is socially just
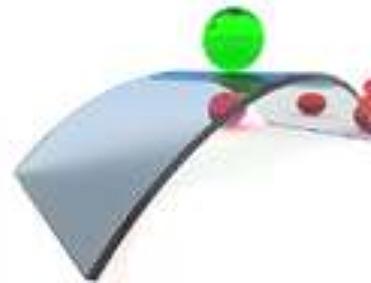
- The Synergistic Leadership Theory (Leadership Theory– developed purposefully as a systems and postmodern theory to include the female voice and experience) (Irby, Brown, Duffy, & Trautman, 2002)
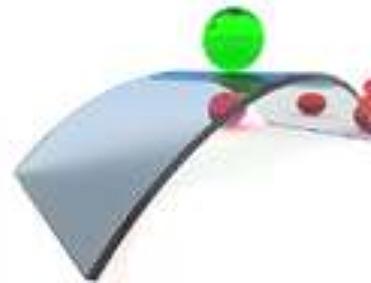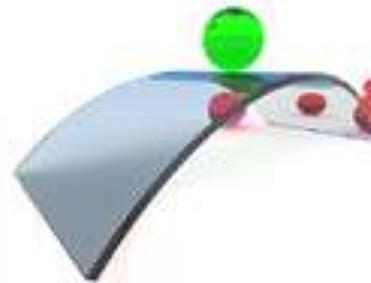
The Synergistic Leadership Theory:

- Socially Just
- Gender inclusive
- Relevant to both male and female leaders

The Synergistic Leadership Theory

- The theory is based on four equal factors:
  -Attitudes, beliefs, and values
  -Leadership behavior
  -External forces
  -Organizational structure

- The theory is modeled by a tetrahedron with six interactive pairs. Each factor is equal; no structural hierarchy exists, and each factor interacts with the others.

Rotating Tetrahedrong- multiple vantage points

- http://www.math.ubc.ca/~morey/java/rotator/trot.html
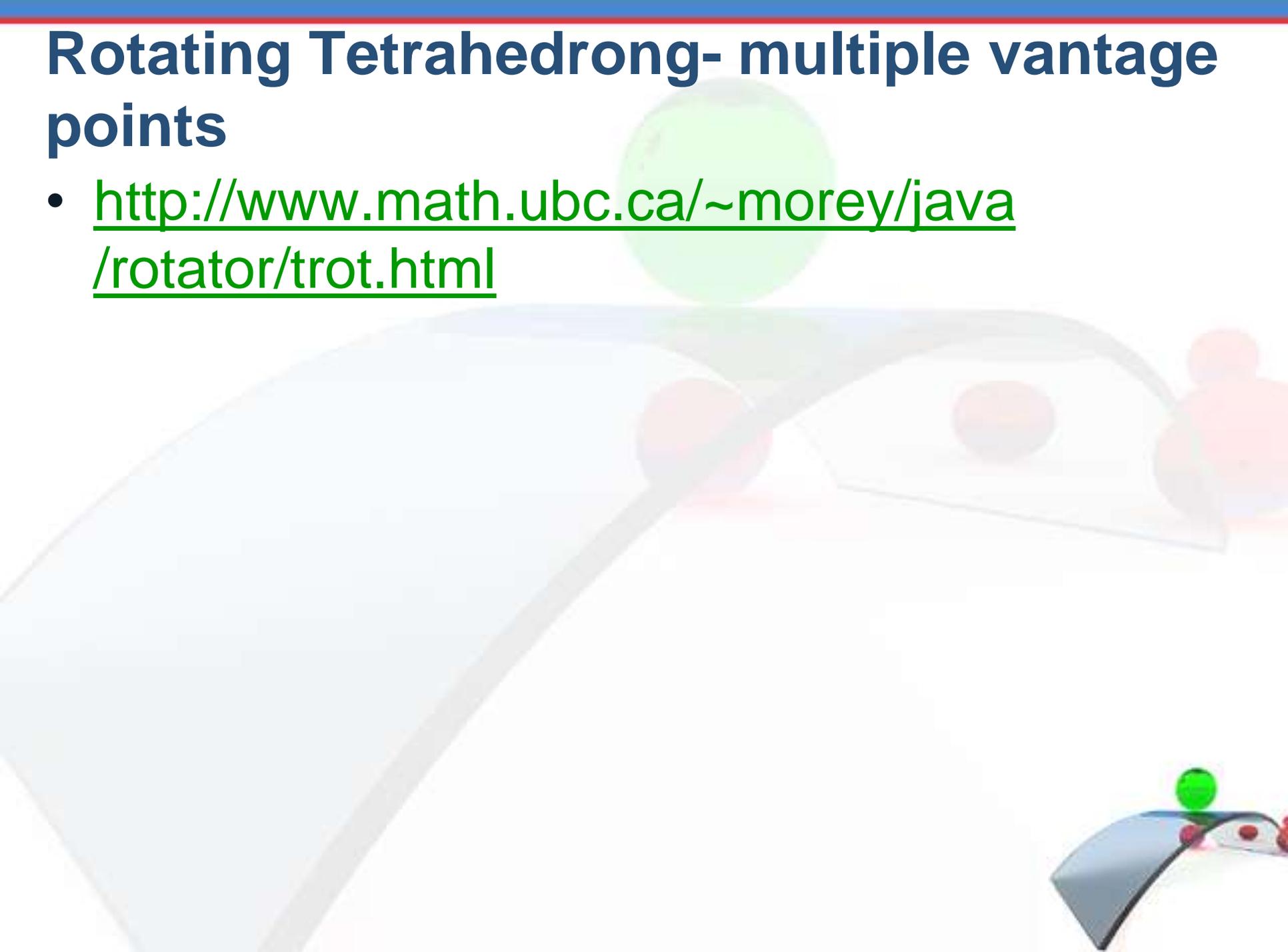
Multiple Vantage Points

- Takes a macro perspective of the interactions among beliefs, external forces, people, behaviors, and organizations.

- Critical to creating complete picture of realities.

- Michelangelo focused on many vantage points to create a masterpiece.

The Tetrahedral Model

Organizational Structure

External Forces

Leadership Behaviors

Beliefs, Attitudes, Values
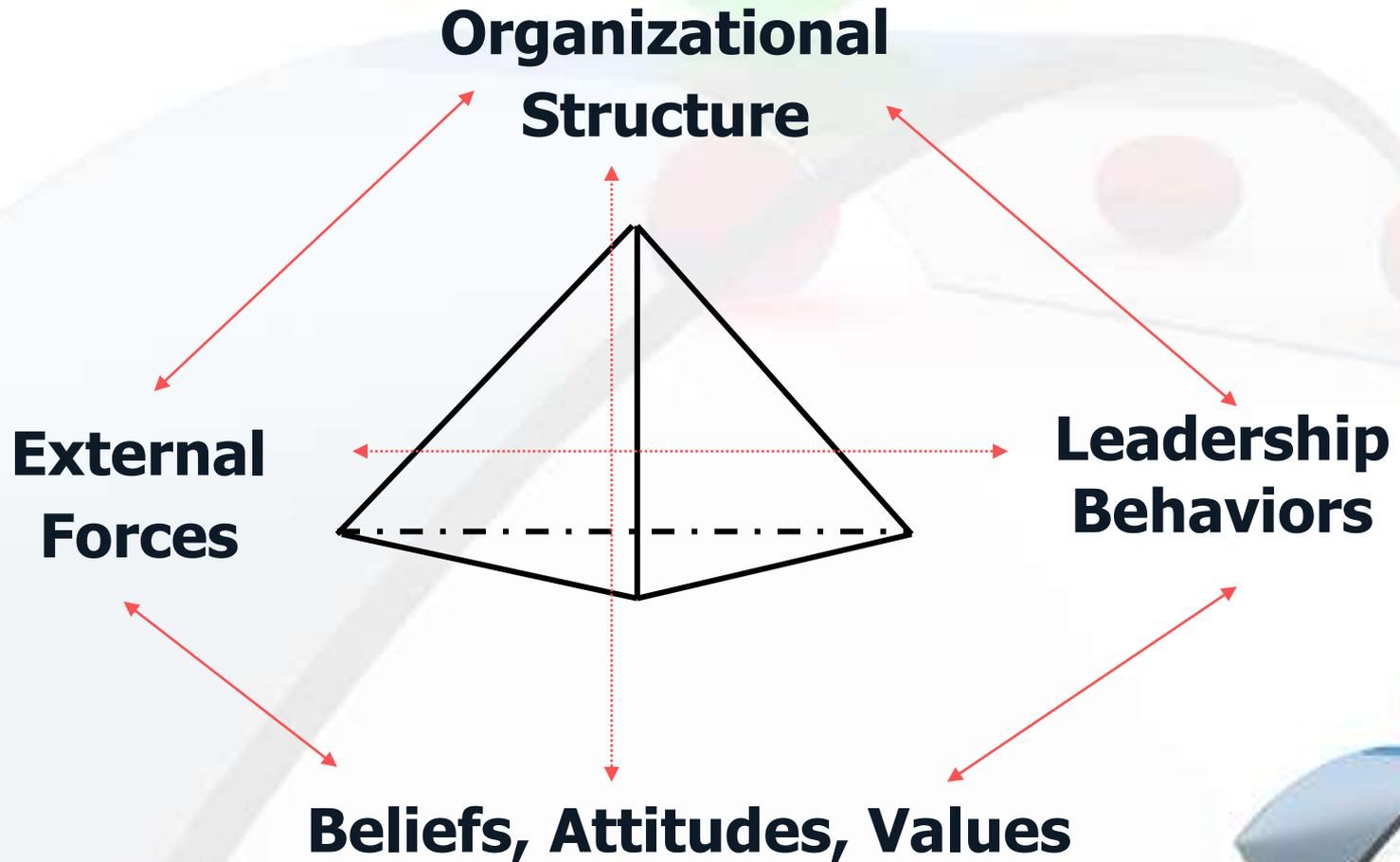
Organizational Structure

Rotates Leadership
Uses expertise of members, not rank
Has consensually derived goals
Values members
Rewards professional development
Relies on informal communication
Disperses power
Promotes community
Promotes nurturing and caring
Promotes empowerment
Has many rules
Has separate tasks and roles
Maintains a tall hierarchy
Initiates few changes

External Forces

Perception/Expectations of
  Supervisor/Colleagues
Perceptions/Expectations of
  Community
Local, state, and national
  Regulations, Resources, and
  Location
Culture of Community
Socio-economic status
Language/Ethnic Groups
Political/Special Interest Groups

Leadership Behaviors

Autocratic
Delegator
Collaborator
Communicator
Task-oriented
Risk-taker
Relational
Nurturer
Controller
Stabilizer
Intuitive

Beliefs, Attitudes, Values

Importance of professional
  growth
Openness to change/diversity
Adherence to tradition
Collegial trust/support
Importance of character, ethics,
  integrity
Importance of programs for at-
  risk/gifted students
Role of teachers/learners
Purpose of school
Role of teachers/administrators
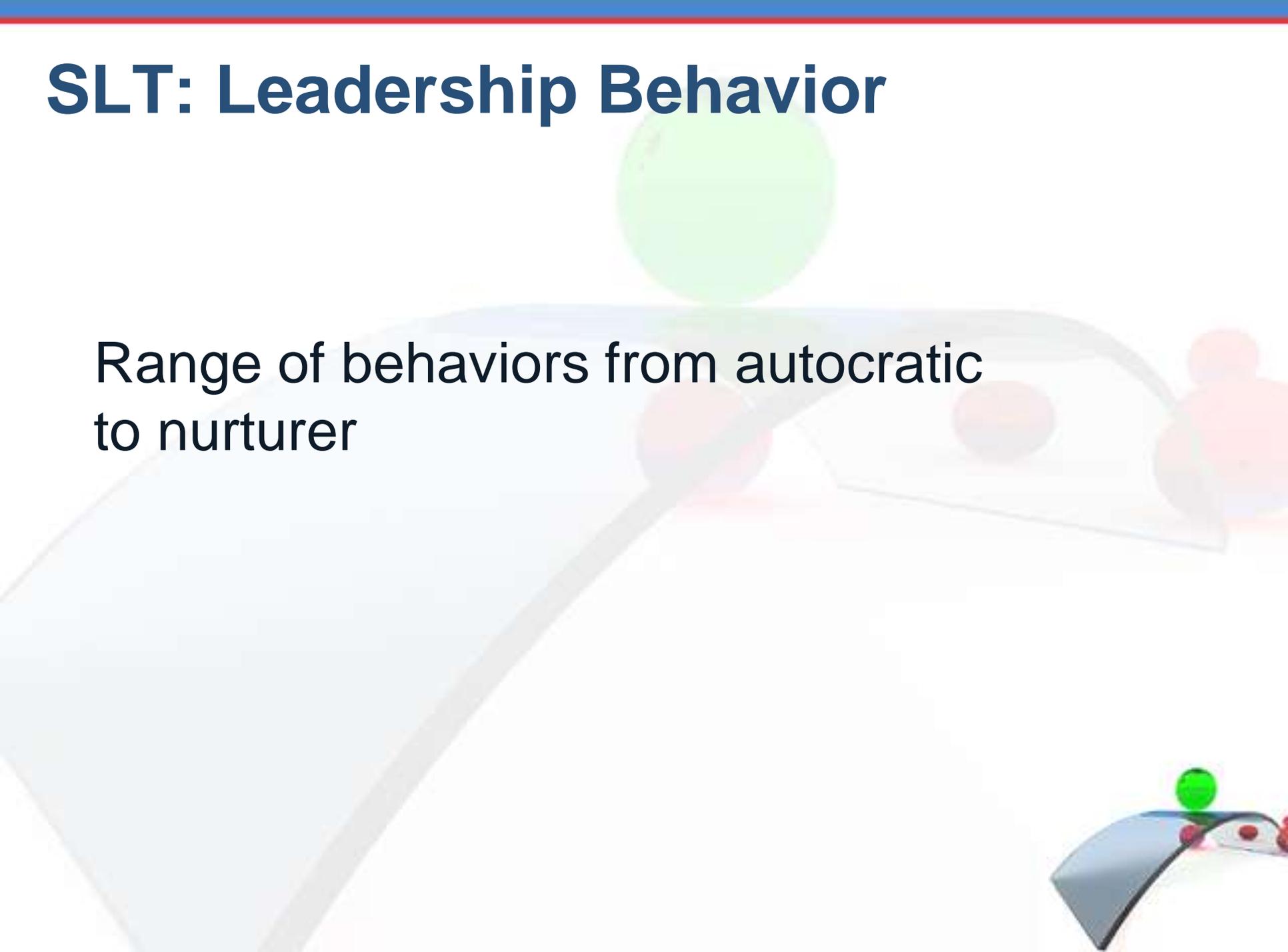Importance of employee well-
  being
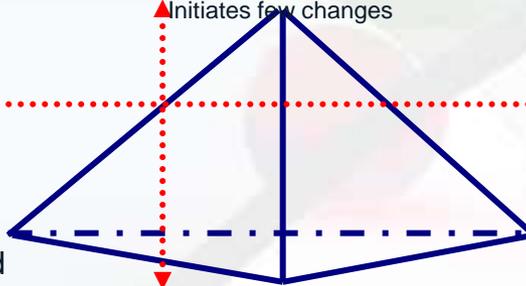
SLT: Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values

- foundation for guiding principals that "apply at all times in all places"
- values, ideas, norms, and teachings that are manifested in actions
  - Examples
    - values professional growth
    - open to change
    - values diversity
    - values integrity
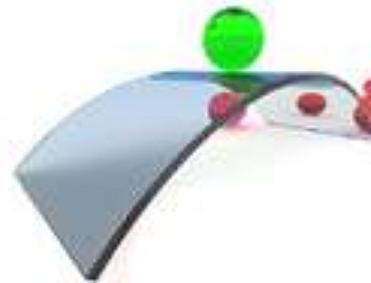
SLT: Leadership Behavior

Range of behaviors from autocratic to nurturer

SLT: External Forces

Influencers outside the control of the organization or the leader that interact with the organization and the leader and that inherently embody a set of values, attitudes and beliefs:

- local, national, and international community and conditions
- governmental regulations, laws
- demographics
- cultural and political climate
- technological advances
- economic situations
- policy-making board decisions

SLT: Organizational Structure

The characteristics of organizations and how they operate:

-<u>Bureaucratic organizations</u>: division of labor, rules, hierarchy of authority, impersonality, and competence

-<u>Feminist organizations-</u> participative decision making, systems of rotating leadership, promotion of community and cooperation, power sharing
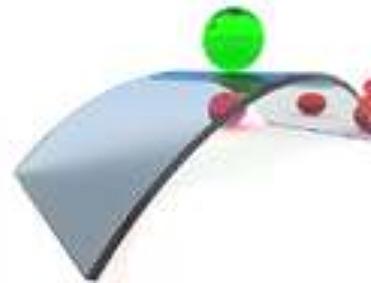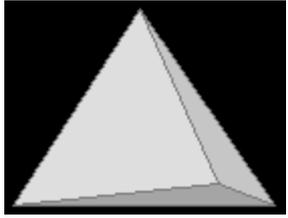
The SLT

- creates a framework for describing interactions and dynamic tensions among leadership behaviors, organizational structures, external forces, and attitudes and beliefs

- focuses on the interconnected behaviors, beliefs, values, structures, and forces that impact the leader, the people within the organization, and the structure of the organization. Tension between even two of the factors can negatively impact the effectiveness of the leader or organization

- is descriptive of the holistic environment of leading and those who lead in the organization
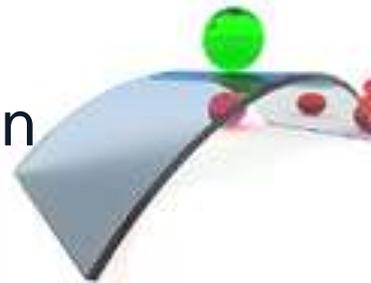
Aspects Particular to the SLT

- female leaders were included in development

- the theory acknowledges a range of behaviors and organizational structures inclusive of those considered "feminine"

- female leaders may be impacted by external forces, organizational structures, and beliefs, attitudes and values in ways male leaders are not

- female leadership behaviors may interact with the factors in ways unlike the leadership behavior of males

- leaders at various positions or levels may be impacted by the factors of the theory in different ways

The SLT:

- assists leaders in understanding the political and cultural environment and in decision making

- is beneficial in determining why (or why not) a leader is perceived as successful

- assists in determining a candidate's congruence with a particular organization and cultural and political environment

- fosters reflective practice as individuals engage in self-assessment based on factors
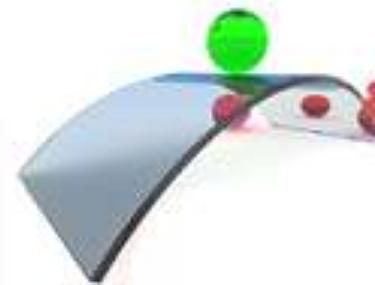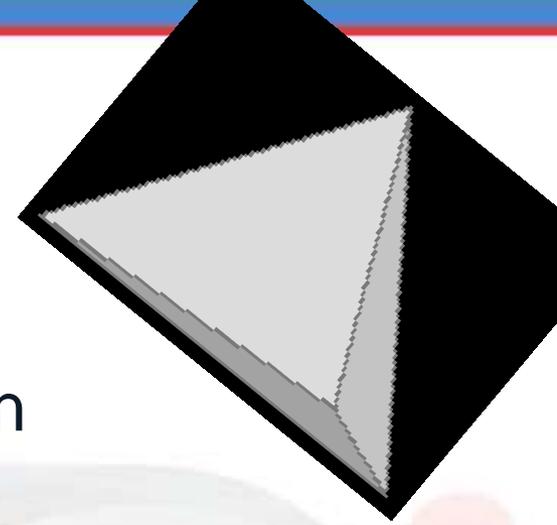
"Applying the SLT, leaders construct or reconstruct themselves and their professional worlds.

Through the analysis of the interactions of the four factors, leaders learn much about themselves, their constituents, and their organizations.

Specifically they are able to analyze or consider their leadership behavior, the organizational structure, the beliefs, attitudes, and values, and the external forces as they impact **social justice**" (Brown, Irby & Lara, 2004).
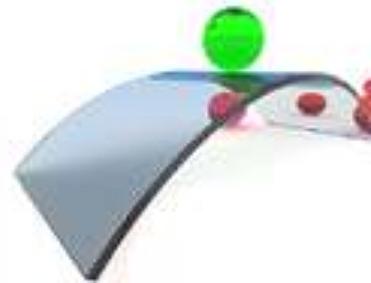
Validation Studies

The SLT has been validated across American ethnic cultures and geographic locations as well as internationally and with males and females (Bamburg, 2004; Hernandez, 2004; Holtkamp, 2001; Trautman, 2000; Truslow, 2004; Schlosberg, 2003).

Validation Studies

Research indicates that the SLT:

- possesses explanatory power across a range of positions and by gender (generalizability) (Trautman, 2000)

- is practical and useful in understanding interactive systems (Trautman, 2000)

- is parsimonious (simply integrates a large number of variables) (Holtkamp, 2001)

- promotes dialogue around a model that is cognizant of female, as well as male, realities (Trautman, 2000; Truslow, 2001)

- is a viable theory with implications for practicing and future leaders (Bamburg, 2004)
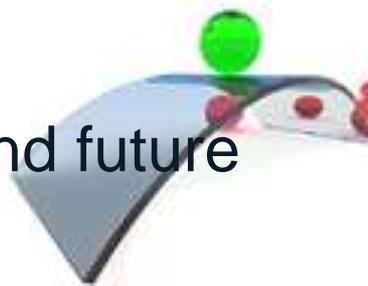
- exemplifies contemporary leadership theories. It is systemic, contextual, relational and contingent (Schlosberg, 2003)

- is a useful tool for understanding leadership practices and educational organizations in another culture (Schlosberg, 2003)

- is a gender-inclusive theory that is applicable to female and male leaders (Hernandez, 2004; Trautman, 2000; Truslow, 2001)

- provides a current theoretical framework from which to examine the perceptions of superintendents and school boards with regard to the four factors of the theory (Hernandez, 2004)

- provides an explanation and understanding of the context of the superintendency and the superintendent – school board relationship, as well as identifies potential sources of conflict between the superintendent and school board (Hernandez, 2004)
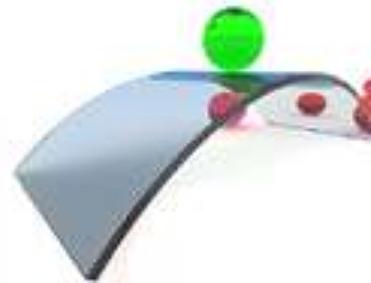
The SLT

The SLT is a post-modernist theory. It does not advocate a binary "either/or" criteria for the existence of new theories over old, but merely a co-existence or continuity of theories that are mutually co-dependent. Its purpose is not to replace the old, but to expand the knowledge base.

(1) adds to existing leadership theory to include:

-a theory that addresses gender, cultural, and political issues

-a theory that directly addresses social justice

-a theory situated in post-modernism

-a theory reflective of females' leadership experiences

-a theory applicable to both men and women leaders

(2) enhances relevancy of theory presented in leadership programs for both females and males

Social Justice

We believe that the use of the SLT can promote social justice in schools--:

- democracy in schooling
- equitable practices in schools
- equal treatment in social, economic, and political arenas
- removal of racial, linguistic, gender, and class-based barriers
- academic excellence for all children
- elimination of hostile environments
- equal power relationships
- opportunities and resources for career advancement
- voice to the marginalized or the oppressed
- changes in attitudes, thoughts, and action (Brown, Irby & Lara, 2004)