There is a pressing need to consider how education praxis, research, theory, and policy can change the world—toward more justice. The challenge is especially urgent at this time when the democratizing possibilities of education remain forestalled. That the “arc of the moral universe . . . bends toward justice” is an oft-heard affirmation. To what extent does this conviction apply to persistent inequities in education if justice is our objective—given the meanings, unrealized potential, and continuing conundrum of culture, language, and heritage in education and related research, theorizing, and policy-making?

The 2015 AERA Annual Meeting theme is a call to examine the meaning of culture, language, and heritage in education research and praxis with the aim of advancing justice. We have the opportunity and the moral obligation to apply principles and evidence from social science research and theorizing to the problems of injustice. How do various communities conceptualize justice, including the many scholarly communities within our association?

One of the questions considered in the amicus brief that AERA submitted to the U.S. Supreme Court in the Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin case is whether diversity is, in fact, a compelling interest in education. The 2015 Annual Meeting theme suggests the relevance of a related empirical and values-based question: “Is justice a compelling interest in education research, theorizing, and policy-making?” What research evidence and ways of knowing across the AERA divisions and SIGs are relevant to an ethically informed stance regarding empirical inquiry and theorizing in the human sciences and education praxis?

The 2015 Annual Meeting theme is intended to focus our attention on justice—locally as well as globally—in a spirit of mutually respectful collaborative engagement with our disciplines and modes of inquiry in the context of the world around us. The aim is to make room for democratized knowledge and knowledge production in which the experiences of all people are shaped by principles and practices of justice. When we do so, our scholarly interests can align more closely with the interests of justice for those who have been and are educationally marginalized, dispossessed, and excluded.