

Growing for Justice

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Growing for Justice

A Developmental Continuum of
Leadership Capacities and Practices

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In the flush of love's light we dare be brave

—Maya Angelou, “Touched by an Angel”

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Eleanor Drago-Severson, EdD, is professor of education leadership and adult learning and leadership at Teachers College, Columbia University. A developmental psychologist, Ellie teaches, conducts research, and serves as a consultant—to school and district leaders, systems leaders, and teacher leaders in public, charter, and private schools and systems—on professional and personal growth and learning; leadership development; and coaching and mentoring. She is also an internationally certified developmental coach who works with leaders to build internal capacity, lead on behalf of social justice, and grow systemwide capacity.

For more than three decades, Ellie's research, teaching, and partnerships in the field have sought—synergistically—to explore and extend the possibilities of adult development and developmental leadership as levers for internal capacity building at the individual, team, organizational, and societal levels. Her work explores interconnected streams that focus on internal capacities and educational leaders' practice on behalf of social justice; a developmental approach to feedback; pressing challenges faced by leaders nationally and internationally; leadership preparation and development; a learning-oriented model for leadership development; teaming across and within systems; supporting diverse adult English language learners and those who serve them; and growing teacher leadership. Consonant with the urgent conversations about transforming schools, systems, and society as more learning- and equity-oriented contexts, her work foregrounds *how* we can support leaders' internal capacity building in schools, organizations, and leadership preparation programs. Ellie loves opportunities to accompany school leaders in their vital work—and never takes it for granted. Instead, she considers it a gift.

At Teachers College, Ellie is director of the PhD Program in Educational Leadership; teaches aspiring and practicing principals in the Summer Principals Academy, aspiring superintendents in the Urban Education Leaders Program, and leaders from a variety of different sectors in the Accelerated Education Guided Intensive Study (AEGIS) Program; and also coaches leaders in the Cahn Fellows Program for Distinguished Leaders and in her private coaching practice. She also serves as faculty director and cofacilitator of the Leadership Institutes for School Change at Teachers College. Ellie is author of the best-selling books *Helping Teachers Learn: Principal Leadership for Adult Growth and Development* (Corwin, 2004) and *Leading Adult Learning: Supporting Adult Development in Our Schools* (Corwin/The National Staff Development Council, 2009), as well as *Becoming Adult Learners: Principles and Practice for Effective Development* (Teachers College Press, 2004) and *Helping Educators Grow: Strategies and Practices for Leadership Development* (Harvard Education Press, 2012). She is also a coauthor of *Learning for Leadership: Developmental Strategies for Building Capacity in Our Schools* (Corwin, 2013), *Reach the Highest Standard in Professional Learning: Learning Designs* (Learning Forward & Corwin, 2014), *Tell Me So I Can Hear You: A Developmental Approach to Feedback for Educators* (Harvard Education Press, 2016), and *Leading Change Together: Developing Educator Capacity Within Schools and Systems* (ASCD, 2018).

Ellie's work has earned awards from the Spencer Foundation, the Klingenstein Foundation, and Harvard, where she served on the faculty for eight years and was awarded the Morningstar Award for Excellence in Teaching and the Dean's Award for Excellent Teaching. Most recently, Ellie received three outstanding teaching awards from Columbia University. She has earned degrees from Long Island University (BA) and Harvard University (EdM, EdD, and post-doctoral fellowship). Ellie grew up in the Bronx and is very grateful for the way in which it and that community has shaped her life.



Jessica Blum-DeStefano, PhD, is an instructor and advisor in the Leadership Department at Bank Street College of Education, where she teaches adult development and qualitative research methods. Her teaching, scholarship, and approach to leadership foreground the power of growth and interconnection—especially as they relate to individual perspective transformation, authentic collaboration, and capacity building systemwide. Toward these ends, her work is inspired by an interdisciplinary tapestry of ideas—including adult developmental theories, social justice

frameworks, the history and philosophy of education, organizational studies, student voice, and qualitative/mixed-methods research—as well as the nine rewarding years she spent as a teacher and school administrator in K–12 alternative education settings. Jessica earned her PhD in education leadership from Teachers College, Columbia University, and holds additional degrees from Emory University (BA), Hofstra University (MA), and Teachers College (MPhil). Jessica is a coauthor of *Learning for Leadership: Developmental Strategies for Building Capacity in Our Schools* (Corwin, 2013), *Tell Me So I Can Hear You: A Developmental Approach to Feedback for Educators* (Harvard Education Press, 2016), and *Leading Change Together: Developing Educator Capacity Within Schools and Systems* (ASCD, 2018). She is also the cofacilitator of the Leadership Institutes for School Change at Teachers College, Columbia University.



Deborah Brooks Lawrence, EdD, is a native New Yorker who believes that equitable access to viable resources will pave the road for universal recognition and sustainability of human rights, and as educators we, without question, need to prepare all of our practitioners and students to embrace the possibilities of equitable opportunity. This is couched in her witness to, and participation in, the civil rights and women's movements as well as her firsthand witness to apartheid and Nyerere's pan-Africanism. It is through this inclusive lens that she weaves theory, research, advocacy,

and practice in her current role as a city research scientist with the City of New York. Alongside her current role, Deborah was a teaching fellow in educational leadership and development for the Summer Principals Academy at Columbia University, she cotaught a dissertation research course at Teachers College, Columbia University, and designed and teaches a course on the historical and philosophical foundations of education at Bank Street College of Education. Prior to this work, Deborah taught logic and rhetoric for Antioch College's NY Extension, taught in a charter elementary school, and was the founding director of the only supplemental educational program to mandate parents' attendance to learn and discover alongside their children. Deborah's scope of work includes interim director of ReServe (an organization for retired individuals); education director of in-school, out-of-school, and after-school programs throughout NYC for a large nonprofit; work on tolerance with the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA); and pivotal work with immigrant populations, disenfranchised adults, marginalized children and families, and education and child welfare practitioners. She is the coauthor of *Inherited Wisdom: Drawing on the Lessons of Formerly Enslaved Ancestors to Lift up Black Youth* (Cognella, 2022).

CHAPTER 1

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INTRODUCING A DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL FOR JUSTICE-CENTERING EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Social justice: it's on everyone's mind these days. From political pundits to teacher educators, from school principals to parents, and from political scientists to car salespeople, everyone has an opinion on social justice . . . But what exactly is social justice? And . . . what does social justice have to do with education?

—Sonia Nieto (2010, p. ix)

A goal. A process. A commitment. Social justice is everywhere—and in everything—because of the inescapable *injustice* that permeates daily life. Yet, as esteemed author and Professor Emerita Sonia Nieto wrote more than a decade ago—in the epigraph above that feels both prescient and fresh—the ubiquity of social justice in modern discourse does not presume a shared definition of the concept, nor a common understanding of the underlying imperatives. Nor does it offer a clear blueprint for action for educational leaders committed to social justice in their classrooms, schools, districts, organizations, and communities.

As nearly any justice-minded principal, coach, teacher, superintendent, team leader, consultant, or teacher educator could likely attest, supporting aspiring and practicing educators in their social justice work (writ large) means finding ways to support adults along a vast continuum of experiences, understandings, and capacities. Even when educators enter into their work with deep and professed commitments to social justice, they will often orient to—and enact—these commitments in markedly different ways, for many different reasons (e.g., personal positionality, lived experience with privilege and oppression, familiarity with social justice concepts, time spent in their professional roles). Seeing into and honoring this expansive diversity while pushing forward the urgent work at hand can be a real challenge without a roadmap for making sense of it—especially because doing so also requires simultaneous *inner* work and reflection. No matter a leader’s readiness and know-how, there is always more to learn, unlearn, and do—within and without. So, how might leaders committed to social justice support the growth and contributions of others while also developing their *own* capacities to engage, appreciate, understand, connect, and lead for change and transformation? This question inspires the heart of our study.

The developmental model we present in this book is based on research with fifty diverse educational leaders in different roles from across the United States, in addition to our combined decades of teaching and leading in schools and university educator preparation programs. It offers, we hope, one promising mapping of overlapping, synergistic, and increasingly expansive justice-centering practices in education, and it connects growth along this continuum to specific developmental capacities leaders need on the inside to enter into and engage most effectively in different domains. As such, we offer our model as an invitation to consider pressing aspects of social justice leadership on multiple but complementary levels.

Toward this end, you may find it helpful to hold the following questions in heart and mind as you read the chapters ahead:

- How might ideas from this book inform your work supporting others as they develop as educational advocates and allies?
- How might the many different stories shared by the leaders who participated in our study resonate with, be different from, and/or reflect your own leadership journey?
- How might the focal ideas, stories, and practices help you recognize and address areas for needed growth—in yourself and/or others—that can limit or even impede impact and contributions?
- How might the trajectory of learning, growth, and action detailed across the chapters that follow help you see into yourself and others in ways that celebrate the gifts, brilliance, passion, dedication, and love educators can bring to this work?

Although there are, of course, many lenses through which to explore social justice leadership in education and in the world, we hope that introducing an adult developmental lens to the discourse adds something new to the conversation and to our collective leadership toolboxes. In honor of and in solidarity with the teachers, administrators, students, parents, researchers, policymakers, activists, and leaders from around the world and across time who have been working to cultivate more equitable, liberatory educational systems from different vantage points, understandings, and roles, we offer this book, humbly, as one new thread in the rich tapestry of scholarship dedicated to fundamental human dignity and potential, and to education as one promising lever for real change and progress.

OUR TEAM: A PURPOSEFUL COMING TOGETHER

We—Deborah, Jessica, and Ellie—have had the gift of knowing and loving each other for more than a decade. We have grown closer and closer over years—caring for and about each other’s families and loved ones, accompanying each other through sorrows, joys, celebrations, and life’s milestones. We have been learners and teachers together in leadership preparation programs—and in life. We have deep respect for each other and share with compassionate honesty and kind frankness. These and other aspects of our relationship have made this book better.

We are a cross-cultural team who—together—have engaged in much thinking, dreaming, and collaborating in this project and others. We have the deepest respect for each other as human beings, scholars, friends, and givers. We are three cisgender, heterosexual, married women, each in a different decade of life. Deborah self-identifies as Black. Jessica and Ellie self-identify as white. Each of us teaches at a university, and our teaching centers on supporting all adults, especially practicing and aspiring leaders and teachers. Our deep collaboration and friendship continue to inspire us, expand our individual and collective fields of vision, and inform our work together and in the world. Our deep and ongoing conversations about our own identities, stories, experiences, theories, and ideas about justice, race, education, and more enrich our lives and the pages of this book.

LEARNING FROM FIFTY LEADERS

In a similar way, the fifty educational leaders we learned from in our study all shared an underlying commitment to social justice while holding incredible but different capacities and understandings. Although no one person had all the answers or solutions, their experiences—together—helped paint a composite portrait of real-life leaders in education, at this moment in history, making sense of and enacting their commitments. Receiving and paying forward their powerful and deeply personal, front-line sharings has been an honor of the greatest kind, and we extend our most enduring and heartfelt

gratitude to each of them for their generosity, insight, courage, compassion, passion, and expertise. This book is a tribute to them, and we hope that their stories help surface new points of entry into advocacy (for more and more people!), deepen understandings of leadership terrain already traversed, and point us toward horizons of justice yet unexplored—in ourselves, each other, schools, and society. We thank you, sincerely, for thinking, dreaming, and exploring with us, and we welcome you wholeheartedly to this book.

CONTEXT AND MOTIVATION FOR THIS BOOK: WHY A DEVELOPMENTAL LENS? WHY NOW?

Philosophically speaking, this project has been in development all our lives. More formally, though, we began some conceptual writing about the connection between adult development and social justice leadership during the lead up to the 2016 election, with the idea that we could share some of the ways a developmental lens had been helping us and the graduate students in our leadership classes make sense of the phenomena unfolding—especially since it seemed a lens largely missing from wider analyses. Atop these conceptual explorations, we dreamed of doing a more empirical study that asked, “How, if at all, might educational leaders’ different developmental capacities influence their leadership on behalf of social justice?”

Over the next few years—backdropped and further fueled by the tumultuous and tragic events across the United States and the world—we learned from leaders up and down the educational system who shared a commitment to social justice as a core value but spoke from a diverse array of roles, positionalities, identities, and geographies. Through in-depth interview conversations, we explored important and pressing questions like the following:

- How were leaders making sense of and approaching pressing social justice challenges?
- What internal capacities helped them lead in the ways that felt most important and urgent to them?
- What did we—and the world—need to learn from them?

We conducted our first interviews as the Trump administration was nearing its midpoint, and we continued learning from leaders through the 2020 election and as COVID-19 first grew from a distant worry to an inescapable, worldwide pandemic. As such, our learning cannot be disentangled from the time in which it took place—a time marked by deep polarization; the traumatic and increasingly public killings of Black men and women at the hands of law enforcement; deadly alt-right rallies and the January 6th insurrection at the Capitol; social and legal battles over fundamental LGBTQIA+ rights and protections; surging transphobia, Islamophobia, xenophobia, antisemitism, and anti-immigration sentiment; hate crimes against the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community; the separation of children and parents at

the border; mounting economic, healthcare, educational, and social inequities further exacerbated by the pandemic; and human rights crises and climate disasters that seemed to come in relentless waves of hurt and sorrow.

As we continued to think about, discuss, and learn from the wisdom leaders shared with us in their interviews, our own analytic processes continued to be informed by the times. We couldn't help, for instance, but feel the fury of the backlash against both the Black Lives Matter movement and the increasingly mainstream (but still too slow) acknowledgment of systemic racism in the politicized campaign against Critical Race Theory as well as the reignited curriculum wars and book bannings. We couldn't help but feel the weight of the war in Ukraine, the terror of the shootings in Buffalo and Uvalde, and the implications of the Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade*. We had no choice but to carry with us the grief of our own pandemic losses and good-byes and those of our students and loved ones. There were too, too many. It is into this painful context that we offer this book, not as panacea, but as testament to the potential—and hope—of human growth and development amidst and in spite of the tragedies of the world.

Most specifically, this is a book about the promise and possibilities of development and its relationship to growing as justice-centered leaders. Though distinct from the concept of *conscientization* pioneered by renowned Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire—who wrote and taught powerfully about the importance of developing critical consciousness (i.e., deepening one's awareness of inequities, biases, assumptions, and oppressive systems as a lever for change)—the trajectory of development and practice we describe in this book is likewise aimed at, as Freire (1970/2000) described it, “the pursuit of a fuller humanity” through internal learning, growth, and transformation (p. 47). More specifically, we use constructive-developmental theory (Drago-Severson, 2004a, 2004b, 2009, 2012, 2016; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2016, 2017, 2018; Drago-Severson, Blum-DeStefano, & Asghar, 2013; Kegan, 1982, 1994; Kegan & Lahey, 2009, 2016) as an organizing lens to consider the relationship between leaders' inner meaning making and external action—particularly as it relates to their efforts as advocates for justice in schools and the education sector.

Constructive-Developmental Theory: Previewing an Integrative Lens

An integrative theory of human development that recognizes identity as inherently sociocultural, constructive-developmental theory highlights adulthood as a potentially rich time of growth and change, rather than a static period in which development is “done” or complete. More specifically, the theory posits that adults actively *construct* their experiences at all times—and that the complexities of these constructions can continue to *develop* when we benefit from appropriate supports and challenges. Drawing from decades of research with thousands of adults from around the world (Kegan, 1982, 1994; Kegan & Lahey, 2009, 2016), the theory outlines four distinct

stages of meaning making—the instrumental, socializing, self-authoring, and self-transforming—which we call *ways of knowing* (Drago-Severson, 2004b, 2009, 2012; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2016, 2018, 2019; Drago-Severson et al., 2013). Taken together, these ways of knowing describe a cumulative (but not essentializing or normative) directionality to development, while honoring the complexities and socially embedded nature of human identity.

Briefly, what we refer to as a way of knowing is an internal meaning-making system or developmental orientation to the world. In Chapter 2, we will discuss constructive-developmental theory in greater depth. For now, though, we offer what follows as an orienting preview.

In this book we will use the terms *way of knowing*, *meaning-making system*, and *developmental orientation* interchangeably. Like any system, a way of knowing has both strengths and areas for growth, which we refer to as “growing edges.” As mentioned, this theory identifies four ways of knowing in adulthood. As a person grows from one way of knowing to the next, they increase their cognitive, affective or emotional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal capacities that enable them to better manage the complexities of living, leading, learning, and teaching (Drago-Severson, 2004b, 2009, 2012; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2016, 2018). Next, we share some of the main characteristics of each way of knowing, which we discuss in more detail in Chapter 2.

Adults with an instrumental way of knowing have concrete, right/wrong orientations to leadership and the world. They view things through the prism of their inherited worldviews and personal needs. When we say *inherited* worldviews, we are referring to ideas consciously or unconsciously passed down from others—including families, teachers, curricula, and the media—that can go unquestioned without conscious examination. We want to emphasize that we all have these kinds of constructions to varying degrees at different points in our lives. Part of growth, as we’re defining it here, involves coming to more consciously understand and take a perspective on these imprinted influences—carrying forward the things that still serve us well and strengthen who we want to be and renegotiating those that may no longer fit our needs, values, or aspirations. It is also important to know that, although adults with an instrumental way of knowing can be kind and intelligent, they have not yet developed the internal capacity to more fully take others’ perspectives or to see beyond the bounds of the constructions and worldviews they see as “right” or even universal.

Adults with a socializing way of knowing *have* developed this capacity, and accordingly orient strongly to valued others’—and society’s—opinions and assessments of them. This capacity allows them, generally speaking, to tune in effectively to emotional states. Reality for socializing knowers is co-constructed—and having the approval of authorities, supervisors, and valued others is essential to adults with this way of knowing. They need it to

feel whole and in balance. Because socializing knowers remain largely “run” by their relationships in the psychological sense (i.e., their relationships feel so close up, embedded, and immediate that socializing knowers cannot yet stand outside of them or take a greater perspective on their influence), it tends to be a developmental stretch to engage in conflict and/or take a strong stand for what they believe in when they sense others may disagree.

Growing into a self-authoring way of knowing involves building even more internal capacity to take a reflective perspective on external expectations, others’ judgments, and important relationships. Self-authoring knowers also have a corresponding capacity to author—and advocate for—their own values, internal standards, and beliefs. Like adults with any way of knowing, self-authoring knowers still have growing edges and can benefit from internal growth. One important growing edge for them is developing the capacity to critique their own ideologies and to recognize the bounds of their personal value systems (i.e., seeing how they are still necessarily partial, incomplete, and influenced in unconscious ways).

Like self-authoring adults, self-transforming knowers have personally generated philosophies and value systems, yet they are no longer “run” by them in the ways just described. Instead, self-transforming knowers have the internal capacity to recognize that they have multiple self-systems—and some of them are more fully developed than others. In light of this, they are constantly seeking to grow parts of themselves through intimate connection—in the psychological sense—with others. In fact, from their perspective, mutuality and interconnection are ongoing prerequisites for reflection, renegotiation, self-growth, and the evolution of communities. We will dive more deeply into these ways of knowing in Chapter 2 and will highlight their connections to justice-centering educational leadership throughout the book.

Although individuals are, of course, infinitely complex and multi-dimensional—and bring *all* of their intersecting identities, experiences, abilities, and rich fullness to their work—we hope that foregrounding the connection between leaders’ internal, developmental capacities and the different strengths and foci they can bring to practice as justice-centering leaders helps give shape and form to at least some of the space between the world as it is and the world as it could be. For instance,

- What might educators need to be able to know and do—internally and externally—to more effectively teach and lead for justice?
- Where might different people find new ways into justice-centering education—and opportunities to grow their impact?

What Does it Take—Internally—to Engage in Social Justice Work?

As Bobbie Harro (2013) wrote when describing the cycle of liberation in her widely cited piece in *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*,

moving toward emancipatory action—and breaking free from inherited and oppressive norms—is a *process*, often a cyclical one, that requires ongoing investment, learning, time, and persistence. As Harro recognized, “many people who want to overcome oppression do not start in the critical transforming stage, but as they proceed in their efforts, it becomes necessary for them to move to that level for success” (p. 619). Indeed, although Harro’s cycle illuminates some of what the most successful advocates, organizers, and leaders do to precipitate greater change and liberation (e.g., influencing policy, sharing power, supporting healing), less is known about what it takes—internally—for leaders to actually be able to engage most effectively in such practices or how they grow toward and into these ways of working over time. What specific internal capacities might help serve as entry points—or stepping stones—for leaders as they build their practice as justice-centering leaders? This, we feel, is where constructive-developmental theory—and the stories from the leaders in this book—may be of particular, practical value.

By offering a granular portrait of what it looks like, sounds like, and feels like to care deeply about justice from different developmental points along the continuum—as well as a deep dive into the iterative and often painful experience of developmental *stretching* that can accompany the exhilaration and responsibility of growing as justice-centering educational leaders—our book adds something new to both the social justice literatures and our understanding of developmental theory and its applications. We offer it with deep love and respect for each of the leaders who shared such important parts of their hearts, lives, sense making, and selves with us. Their stories are acts of loving care. We also offer this book with deep admiration and respect for you—and for the hard work of the heart you give every day in pursuit of a future big enough to hold everyone with dignity, equity, and tenderness.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY JUSTICE-CENTERING EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP?

Throughout history, the idea of justice has been pursued from many diverse epistemological, cultural, and intersectional standpoints (Reisch, 2014; Sen, 2009)—and informed by varied philosophical, political, religious, empirical, and theoretical strands of thought. Today, along distinct but interrelated axes of *injustice* (Fraser, 2019)—including racial, economic, carceral, medical, environmental, reproductive, social, and educational—people around the world continue to fight for systems and societies that foreground dignity and liberation.

Yet, there remains no universal approach to justice, nor consensus even around its definition (Adams, 2014). In fact some, like the American philosopher Richard Rorty (1998), propose thinking of the concept in the plural (i.e., as *justices*).

Thinking About (In)Justice in Education

The same holds true, it seems, about the role of justice in education. As Maurianne Adams (2014), an early advocate for social justice as an academic discipline in the education field, explained, the robust literatures about social justice in schools are “rooted in and nourished by multiple historical and interdisciplinary traditions” (p. 257). Much justice-centering teaching and leading today, for instance, draw from and build upon pathfinding ideas about multiculturalism, ethnic studies, progressivism, anti-racism, culturally responsive/sustaining practices, inclusion, critical studies, restorative approaches, and more. Though diverse in focus and application, social justice efforts in education generally share a common commitment to recognizing and addressing systemic inequities in schools and society and to foregrounding education as one promising lever for critical learning, resistance, agency, and change (e.g., Adams, Blumenfeld, Castañeda, Hackman, Peters, & Zúñiga, 2013; Apple, 2018; Au, 2018; Ayers, 2008; DeMatthews, 2018; Dover, 2013; Giroux, 2016; Grant, 2012; Irby, 2021; Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009; Keenan, 2017; Khalifa, 2018; Kumashiro, 2015; Love, 2019; Muhammad, Dunmeyer, Starks, & Sealy-Ruiz, 2020; Nieto, 2010; Welton & Diem, 2022; Young, O’Doherty, & Cunningham, 2022).

Today, as more and more schools are folding social justice into their strategic visions—or, alternatively, crafting “anti-woke” policies to deliberately limit or even prevent vital discussions of race, racism, gender identity, sexual orientation, history, and current events—it seems more clear than ever that people’s understandings of justice are deeply influenced by the positions they inhabit on earth (i.e., geographic, temporal, cultural, racial, economic, developmental, intersectional). The stakes also remain incredibly high. The highest, really, as they concern children’s lives.

So what does it mean to center justice as an educational leader amid all of this urgency and complexity? By “justice-centering educational leadership,” we mean leadership that holds justice (along multiple dimensions) as central to—and inseparable from—the work of caring for, joining, championing, and guiding any group, team, faculty, school, district, or organization. It is not, in other words, an add-on or side project distinct from or running in parallel to academic learning and professional supervision. Also, though we recognize that leaders will orient to and understand justice in different ways—and can bring different foci, passions, capacities, sensitivities, and expertise to their work—we focus in this book on a diverse group of educators who have already expressed a commitment to addressing the roots and manifestations of harm and oppression as they surface in schools and society. In other words, this is a book about the different ways educators who *want* to lead on behalf of social justice are trying to do so—and the different developmental supports and challenges that have helped them grow in and expand their practice. It is not, in other words, a book about how to *convince* someone that justice matters in education. That said, a developmental

lens may hold promise for understanding why people come to think the way they do, as every belief system is ultimately a construction and a product of a universe of influences.

Here and throughout this book, we are using *justice-centering leadership* as an umbrella term (along with *social justice leadership* and *leadership on behalf of social justice*) to cover but not conflate the many different areas of focus the leaders in our study prioritized—such as anti-racism, support for emergent multilingual learners and students with physical and learning disabilities/variations, authentic collaboration with parents and families, greater support and care for LGBTQIA+ students, more equitable resources and learning opportunities, scaffolding for economic mobility, the importance of representation in school staffing and administration, culturally responsive and inclusive curricula and pedagogies, DEI coaching and training, and holistic support for children *and* adults. We use the term also as a way of emphasizing the collectivity required to move the needle toward greater justice. With so many roots and branches of justice (and injustice) to address—and so many imperatives connected to race; culture; gender; sexual orientation; religion; immigration status; socioeconomic status (SES); linguistic, physical, and neurological diversity; and the intersections of these and all dimensions of identity—*everyone* is needed.

As we will say more about next, in the preview of our developmental model, we share our mapping not with the intention that everyone should be able—today—to engage full speed ahead in every way in each of the four domains we describe. Rather, we hope that our model helps bring new clarity to potential points of entry (for self and others), as well as areas of strength and needed growth. As you will see, when we talk about “entry points” into justice-centering educational leadership, we are referring to the different—and each very important—layers of justice-centering practice that adults can most readily engage with, depending on their ways of knowing and internal capacities. Although leaders can, of course, continue to grow and enrich their practices in the different domains once they’ve “entered” them, effectively engaging in each subsequent layer requires new internal capacities. Because so much of development can happen under the surface, we hope that bringing the connections between leaders’ internal capacities and their justice-centering practices into more conscious awareness creates a roadmap of sorts for meeting people where they are *and* stretching forward. As one of the leaders in our study put it, it’s about “owning the things we need to grow in, but also owning our gifts.”

Before journeying forward, and as a way of framing what follows, we invite you to consider the following reflective questions.

A REFLECTIVE INVITATION

1. What ways of centering justice are currently at the fore and in the core for *you*?
2. What is top of heart for you right now? What is top of mind for you at this time?
3. What questions are you holding?

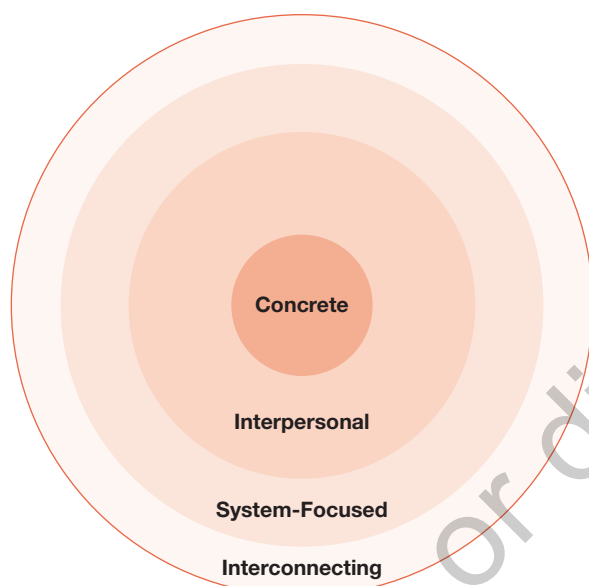
PREVIEWING OUR DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL FOR JUSTICE-CENTERING EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

As we listened carefully during the interviews, it became clear that—in their thinking and acting—leaders were describing four qualitatively distinct domains of justice-centering practice in education that felt implicitly connected to the ways of knowing as outlined in constructive-developmental theory. More specifically, and when considered collectively, the leaders spoke passionately about their efforts, successes, joys, and struggles across four domains:

- the **concrete** domain, which is characterized by an individual’s tangible action steps, often in response to specific needs;
- the **interpersonal** domain, which foregrounds the emotional, relational labor essential for strengthening bonds, belonging, and inclusion between people and groups;
- the **system-focused** domain, which involves the purposeful alignment of efforts and initiatives within a school or educational organization, in keeping with a leader’s guiding vision or value system; and
- the **interconnecting** domain, which, while less commonly surfaced in our study, is distinguished by an emphasis on *interdependence*—of schools and broader social systems, of people across roles and positionalities—and the need for coalition when leading for justice and change.

By articulating these different but overlapping domains of practice and focus, our model parallels other lenses and theories that recognize racism and oppression as operating on multiple levels simultaneously (e.g., we are thinking here about individual, organizational, and structural/systemic factors [Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Kendi, 2019; López, 2000] as well as the “four I’s of oppression”: ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized [John Bell, n.d.]). Distinct from these other important frameworks, however, our model emphasizes how effective action within each distinct but cumulative

FIGURE 1.1 THE LAYERED DOMAINS OF JUSTICE-CENTERING EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

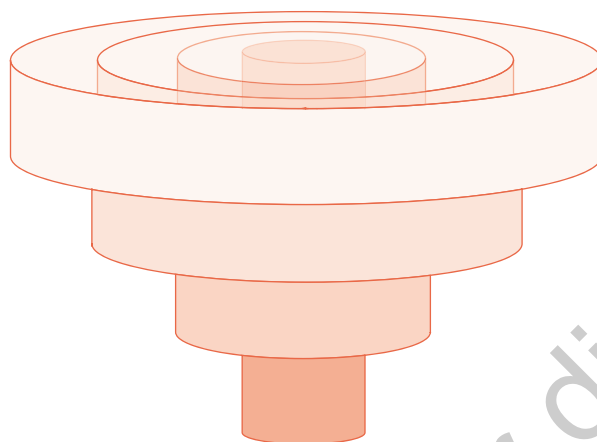


domain is connected to leaders' *internal capacities*. Much like the ways of knowing themselves—or the rings of a tree, and as illustrated in Figure 1.1—we see these domains as increasingly expansive approaches to justice-centering leadership, with each new, mutually reinforcing layer reflecting an expanded scope of vision, understanding, and locus of control and agency.

Importantly, while we connect the different domains—or layers—of our model with specific developmental capacities that provide a readiness for effective engagement in each, the domains in our model are not directly *correlative* with ways of knowing. In other words, there is not a simple 1:1 relationship between leaders' developmental capacities and the approaches they took to center justice in the field, as leaders bring—along with their internal ways of making meaning—the sum total of *all* of their experiences, learnings, positionalities, knowings, and not knowings. That said, we do hope that these four domains of practice nonetheless provide a helpful organizing framework for seeing into the strengths and growing edges of aspiring and practicing leaders working to center justice, as well as the differentiated supports and challenges they may need as they grow these parts of their practice and themselves.

When thinking about how the different domains of leadership practice intersect and overlap—and connect to developmental capacities—we find it helpful to turn the concentric circles in Figure 1.1 on their sides, as we have in Figure 1.2. Seeing the domains in this three-dimensional way helps illustrate a few key features of our model.

FIGURE 1.2 A THREE-DIMENSIONAL, DEVELOPMENTAL VIEW OF THE DOMAINS OF JUSTICE-CENTERING EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICE



First, visualizing the domains of practice as stacked, interlocking cylinders—that cover increasingly more “ground” as they get wider—helps underscore *the expanding scope of focus foregrounded in each layer*. Moving from the concrete, to the interpersonal, to the system-focused, to the interconnecting domain means aiming one’s justice-centering efforts at an ever-wider expanse of practice and impact (i.e., from individual actions, to interactions with others, to the entirety of an organization or sector, to the relationships between groups and systems). Although each area of focus is necessary and important, if a leader only has the capacity to engage within one or some of the cylinders, other critical facets of justice-centering leadership can be unintentionally left out without purposeful attention.

Toward a similar end, the fact that the thinner cylinders at the center continue to run through and inside of the wider ones serves as a reminder that *moving from one domain to the next doesn’t mean leaving the earlier ones behind*. The domains are not “stages” of justice-centering leadership, but rather *layers*—although they do imply an order of sorts, as filling up one’s capacity in one layer serves as a prerequisite for moving to the next (i.e., a leader can’t just skip ahead, as the capacities that came before are embedded in and part of the wider ring). Put another way, each consecutive layer fits within and becomes a part of those that follow.

Moreover, as the heights of the different cylinders suggest, *there is also room to grow “vertically” within each domain*—to infuse a specific layer of practice with greater richness and intentionality as one grows and develops over time. In fact, and as you will see in Chapters 3 to 6, even though leaders

require certain developmental capacities to first enter into and engage with each new layer, educators can continue to strengthen their practice in the innermost domains as these cylinders become incorporated into the larger, more encompassing ones layered overtop.

As an illustration of growing within the concrete domain, please consider the distinction between enacting a tangible kindness—like offering to tutor someone—as a reaction to an immediate problem (e.g., “This student is in distress because of their grade, so I’m going to give up my time after school and help them.”) and engaging in that same concrete action with an understanding of, say, the interpersonal complexities and power dynamics of tutoring, or with a critical eye toward how corporate curriculum design, testing culture, and sociocultural and historical factors may also be at play. Although the offer to serve as a tutor could look the same from the outside even when approached in these different ways, and could feel just as meaningful to the beneficiary, the thinking and meaning making *underlying* the offer can be qualitatively distinct. These are the kinds of internal shifts we are most interested in exploring and describing in this book. The ability to grow within and across different domains is also why you will see many of the leaders in our study appear in different chapters—as they were able to draw on different parts of themselves (and their constellation of internal capacities) at different times.

Finally, we hope that our three-dimensional view helps illustrate how *effective engagement in each domain isn’t automatically accessible to leaders*, even though understanding the developmental arc of practice can give directionality and purpose to leaders’ efforts. Rather, engaging meaningfully in each new layer requires ongoing learning and growth. For instance, although the opportunity to make concrete contributions—at any point in time—rests on the ground floor of our model, so to speak, and can serve as an entry point or area of focus open to all, contributing most meaningfully in consecutive domains requires iterative “jumps” in capacity and perspective taking. Put another way, growing from one domain to the next requires ongoing developmental stretching, both up and out.

With their generous and courageous sharing, the leaders in our study actually helped map out the ways development (i.e., internal growth) can help leaders become more effective within and especially *across* domains of justice-centering leadership. In the chapters that follow, rich stories from the leaders in our study help answer the following questions:

- What did it look like, sound like, and feel like for leaders to bring a growing edge into conscious awareness?
- How did they find ways to expand their thinking and acting when they bumped into the “border” of one domain and wanted to grow toward the next?
- What supports and challenges best helped them in the moment and over time?

By sharing leaders' stories of stretching and growing, our model also details a continuum of developmental supports and challenges that—like the promising practices in each domain—can carry through a leader's journey and be deepened, enriched, and revisited over time. Figure 1.3 is a preview of another key focus in Chapters 3 to 6: the stretches that helped leaders grow between domains. The figure's wave-like background echoes the movement involved in increasing our internal cognitive, emotional, intrapersonal, and interpersonal capacities—iteratively—as we grow and benefit from differentiated supports and challenges.

Ultimately, by linking justice-centering leadership practices in different, cumulative domains to particular developmental capacities—and mapping out layered stretches forward—our model provides a map with many different entry points for educators, much to celebrate, and clear pathways for growth. The powerful practices, strategies, and experiences highlighted throughout this book underscore the vast range of possibilities, contributions, and areas of focus for justice-centering leaders today and—we hope—spark visions of ways that you, and those in your care, might continue to give, grow, and lead. There are, after all, so many needed, synergistic ways to center justice—and we offer all that follows with the hope, promise, and wonder of connecting people and practices across the system.

FIGURE 1.3 A PREVIEW OF A CONTINUUM OF DEVELOPMENTAL STRETCHES FOR GROWTH FOR JUSTICE-CENTERING EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

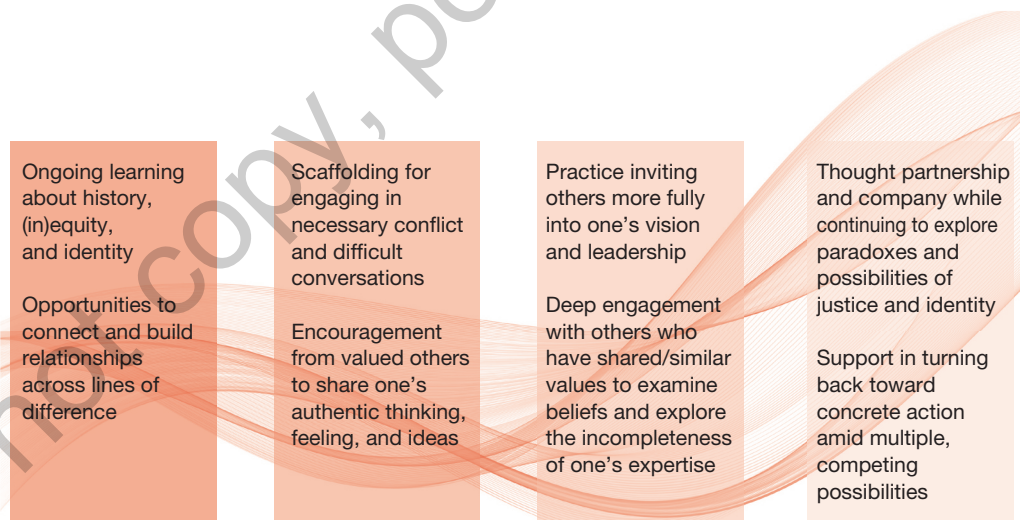


IMAGE SOURCE: istock.com/Lesikvit

THE RESEARCH INFORMING THIS BOOK: METHODS

To gather the data and stories that informed our developmental model of justice-centering leadership, we engaged in two in-depth interviews with fifty

educational leaders from various roles, backgrounds, and geographic regions in the United States.

Two Sets of In-Depth Interviews With Fifty Leaders

The first set of interviews—which we conducted with leaders over the phone for 90–120 minutes—was aimed at exploring leaders’ thinking, feeling, and practice about social justice. We asked questions like the following:

- How do you define social justice?
- What brought you to this work?
- What is most important to you about social justice leadership? Most satisfying? Hardest?
- What kinds of practices/initiatives are you are engaging in as you lead on behalf of social justice?
- How do you go about supporting others’ social justice-oriented work?
- What is working well? What is challenging?
- What do you want to get better at?
- What supports have been most helpful to you?

The second set of interviews involved semi-clinical, developmental assessments called subject-object interviews (SOIs; Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, & Felix, 1988/2011). Using a protocol tested and refined since 1988, the SOIs—which lasted about 90 minutes—aimed to pinpoint, with a relatively high degree of accuracy, the contours of a person’s meaning-making system or way of knowing at the time. We hired a nationally recognized, independent expert not on our research team to administer and score the SOIs, so that we would not know participants’ “scores” as we engaged in the first phase of data collection and analysis. For a subset of the SOI interviews, we also hired additional, outside scorers to help strengthen the validity of our interpretations and deepen our sense of leaders’ scores and ways of knowing. In total, and as we worked to integrate learnings from both sets of interviews, we drew from more than 200 hours of leaders’ conversation, reflection, and sharing.

ATTENDING TO VALIDITY AND DEEPENING ANALYSES

Throughout the study, we attended to descriptive, interpretive, and theoretical validity (Maxwell, 2013) to the best of our ability. More specifically, we did this by paying careful and mindful attention to our own identities as researchers on a cross-cultural team. As you may recall, we are three cisgender, heterosexual women, each in a different decade of life; two of us identify as white and one of us identifies as Black. In purposeful ways that we feel expanded our collective field of vision, we coupled our analyses with ongoing discussions

about our own identities, stories, theories, and ideas about justice, race, education, and more. We feel strongly that these experiences of authentically coming together enriched both the process and the outcome of our work.

By way of example, we would like to make transparent here how—in addition to exploring how a developmental lens could illuminate relevant patterns in leaders’ experiences—a significant focus of our analytic discussions involved reflecting on the study design and the instrumentation itself. Specifically, we found it vital to recognize that, although the semi-clinical, SOIs provided us with very important snapshots of participants’ meaning making about particular issues at a given moment in time, these interviews are ultimately interpretive tools, influenced and informed—as all research is—by the lens and epistemological orientations of the tool design and the analysts interpreting the data.

We made the conscious decision, therefore, to consider participants’ *most expansive* range of making meaning—as evidenced across *both* sets of interviews—when linking their justice-centering leadership practice with underlying developmental capacities in the chapters ahead. Recognizing that the complexity and fluidity of human development is nearly impossible to truly pin down or capture in a raw score, we also want to give you a sense of the overall range and frequency of leaders’ ways of knowing, as measured by the SOIs. Accordingly, in Figure 1.4, we provide an overview of the developmental scores that served as a general barometer and jumping off point for our analyses.

FIGURE 1.4 OVERVIEW OF THE SUBJECT-OBJECT INTERVIEW (SOI) RESULTS



As you can see in Figure 1.4, the largest number of leaders in our sample made meaning with a mix of both the socializing and self-authoring ways of knowing (i.e., they had, to different degrees, elements of both meaning-making systems operating simultaneously), followed by leaders who seemed to be operating firmly as self-authoring knowers. A few of the participants in our study were making meaning most fully as socializing knowers, while some seemed to be moving between the instrumental and the socializing ways of knowing. Finally, as revealed in the last column, we were also able to identify a group of leaders who were growing beyond the self-authoring way of knowing toward a more self-transforming way of making meaning. Because, in some cases, additional data from our qualitative interviews helped us see even more deeply into leaders' meaning making at the time, we share this overview without linking individual scores to specific individuals. As mentioned earlier, because leaders making meaning with more complex ways of knowing are better equipped—on the inside—to engage within and across more of the domains, you will see many of the leaders appear in multiple chapters, as they foreground different aspects of their practice.

INTRODUCING THE LEADERS IN OUR STUDY

As we move closer to sharing the stories, insights, joys, struggles, and triumphs of the leaders in our study, you might be wondering, “Who are these people? How did you pick them, and why are their stories important?” As we shared earlier, learning from these leaders—listening open-heartedly and with deep gratitude to their experiences, wonderings, insights, and hopes—has been, for us, a humbling honor. We feel confident that you, too, will feel wise for getting to “know” them through this book.

As you will soon see in Table 1.1, we were privileged to learn from a diverse group of teachers, administrators, former leadership students, professionals in the field we met through professional development work, educators recommended to us by trusted colleagues, and even people who reached out to us after reading some of our earlier pieces about the connection between adult development and social justice leadership. Our primary selection criterion for inclusion in this particular research study was that each participant had an explicit, espoused commitment to social justice. Our hope was not, per se, to generate a book of best practices culled from the most successful, most accomplished justice-centering leaders out there (although we do, we are happy to report, get to recount *many* promising strategies and approaches!). Rather, we were interested in learning from leaders across the *widest possible range* of perspectives, identities, experiences, roles, geographies, and ways of knowing that we could at the time.

For this reason, and as you can see in the list below and in Table 1.1, the leaders in our study were diverse across a number of metrics:

- *role* (e.g., principal, assistant principal, dean, teacher leader, assistant superintendent, former superintendent, teacher educator, central office/district-level leader, curriculum leader, consultant, coach, head of school, early childhood director, ESL coordinator, director of culture/language, admissions director, educational technologist, social worker, counselor, department chair, regional- /national-level leader, nonprofit leader)
- *organization/school type* (charter, public, independent; urban, suburban, rural; nonprofit)
- *race* (thirty-one people of color, including seventeen who identified as Black and/or African or Caribbean American, seven who identified as Latinx and/or Afro-Latinx, two who identified as Asian American, three who identified as bi- or multiracial, one who identified as Iranian American, and one who identified as Egyptian American; nineteen identified as white)
- *gender identity* (nineteen identified as men and thirty-one as women, with no participants identifying as nonbinary or transgender)
- *sexual orientation* (four participants self-identified as gay/queer)
- *age* (early thirties to seventies)
- *experience in education* (nine years to multiple decades)
- *religion* (Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, agnostic, atheist)
- *location* (Arizona, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, and Washington D.C., with a large number of people [n = 32] from the Tri-State area, as we began sampling by tapping our own networks of professional contacts. For this reason, many of the examples reflect the perspectives of participants in the Northeastern United States)

In addition to spotlighting many different dimensions of diversity the leaders brought so generously to our study, the list also reveals some of the broader limitations of our sampling, as it raises the ever-important question of, “Whose perspective is missing?” We recognize, for instance, that—because of the limits of our networks at the time—we were unable to benefit from the perspectives of any educators who identified primarily as Native American/Indigenous or South Asian, as just two examples of cultural groups under- or unrepresented. While a few of the leaders in our study described personal experiences within the special education system, none explicitly identified as differently abled, disabled, or neurodiverse. In addition, to our knowledge, none of our participants identified as nonbinary, transgender, or gender expansive/nonconforming, although we remain indebted to the students and colleagues who continue to teach us about and share these parts of their personal experiences. Your trust and collaboration also infuse these pages.

We likewise think it's very important to share a bit about our choices around language and naming different aspects of identity. Recognizing the complexity and deeply personal nature of who people "are," we list—in Table 1.1—the identifiers leaders *chose* to share with us in their interviews, as a way of honoring their specific words and choices at the time. That is why, in some cases, we use different terms (i.e., African American or Black, Latino or Latinx) to refer to race, and why certain identifiers (e.g., marital status, age, parenthood, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, years in education) appear inconsistently in the table. We thank you for honoring, as we do, the parts of themselves leaders felt most important to name and center.

In keeping with the most recent guidelines articulated by the Associated Press and our publisher, Corwin, when using participants' self-selected racial, cultural, and ethnic identifiers, we capitalize names of minoritized groups to honor and convey the shared sense of history and identity implied. Although there are different opinions on the current decision to leave "white" in lowercase, we do so now in keeping with current journalistic standards and with the understanding that language conventions are both evolving and important to name, as they carry significant weight. In addition, we intentionally use "they/their" as gender-neutral singular pronouns when describing unnamed individuals in illustrative examples (i.e., rather than "he or she" or "his or her"), to move our language beyond binary constructs. Later in the book, we also use the term *BIPOC*—meaning Black, Indigenous, and people of color—as an umbrella term to acknowledge the cultural and experiential diversity of different groups, as well as the solidarity that can exist between communities of color.

Also, in most cases, the names that appear in Table 1.1 and throughout the book are pseudonyms. These were often selected with care and intention by the participants to honor family, heroes, and ancestors. This, again, is the reason the names sometimes take different formats.

We have also been careful to remove any identifying information about people's schools, organizations, and colleagues from the text and quotes. In some cases, participants opted to use their real names—as Brent did—because it felt important and/or more comfortable. As Brent explained his decision,

To be honest, I'd like you to keep it as is. I spent a long time trying to be someone I wasn't, and I really value owning who I am now, and so part of me wants you to just call me Brent. This is who I am, and I'm totally comfortable with . . . everything I've said, even if it's challenging.

We trust and hope, as you get to know each of the inspiring leaders and people—who, like Brent, gave so generously of their time, expertise, hearts, wisdom, and personal journeys to make this book possible—that you will love and admire them as much as we do. What we share here is their gift to you.

TABLE 1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE LEADERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY

NAME/ PSEUDONYM	SELF-IDENTIFIED DEMOGRAPHICS	PROFESSIONAL ROLE/REGION
Adam	white, male, cisgender, forty-four years old father, married	assistant superintendent; suburban Northeast
Amaia	Mexican American female, eleventh year in education	teacher leader/coach, charter school; urban Northeast
Angela	thirty-one years old, African American with West Indian heritage, female, Christian, heterosexual, ninth year in education	district-level teacher development and evaluation coach, former teacher; urban Northeast
Bernard	fifty-seven years old, African American/Black, male, father	teacher educator, former principal/superintendent; urban Northeast
Brent	white, gay male, married, mid-thirties	assistant principal; urban Northeast
Brooke	white, cisgender female, late forties, gay, married	interim independent school head; suburban Northeast
Carter	thirty-one years old, white, male, cisgender, recently engaged	high school principal; urban Northeast
Celine	female, multiracial, partnered, mother, daughter of Chinese immigrant, physically and emotionally able, survivor	regional leader of national nonprofit; Mid-Atlantic
Charlotte	white, woman, married, thirty-three years in education	district-level leader (teacher leadership focus); urban Northeast
Cheryl	white, woman, wife, mother, eighteen years in education	district-level school improvement leader; urban Northeast
Christopher	forties, Christian, African American male, married, father	leader in national nonprofit philanthropic organization, focus on principal development and support; Northeast
D.	forty years old, Latino, first generation American, married with two kids	teacher leader; urban Northeast
Dana	African American male, father	elementary teacher leader; suburban Northeast
Donald	white, Jewish, married to a woman, seventy-five years old	retired high school teacher leader, higher ed; West Coast

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NAME/ PSEUDONYM	SELF-IDENTIFIED DEMOGRAPHICS	PROFESSIONAL ROLE/REGION
Dr. B	forty-one years old, African American female, divorced, mother	teacher educator, former principal; Southwest
Elena	Latin American, born and raised in Dominican Republic, forty-five years old, mother	assistant principal, PK–5, ELL focus; urban Northeast
Ella	thirty-four years old, African American, woman, not married	director of culture/language learning, charter school; urban Northeast
Evan	white, cisgender male, thirty-six years old, thirteen years in education	district-level curriculum leader; urban Northeast
Gabriel	thirty-seven years old, African American male, married, father	CEO of a reading-focused institute, former principal; South
Harris	forty-eight years old, white, male, gay	principal, high school for English language learners; urban Northeast
Hazel	Filipino American, daughter of Filipino immigrants, married	college persistence counselor; Southwest
Henrietta	white, female, grew up on a farm, married	co-founder of education nonprofit company; Southeast
Ian	thirty-one years old, white, cisgender male	elementary teacher leader; urban Northeast
Irene	white, female, fifty-six years old, Jewish, mother left Vienna 1939, married, mother	director of admissions and enrollment, independent school; Northeast
Jack	Eastern European/Slavic, immigrant, fifty-four years old, male	assistant principal, former principal; urban Northeast
James	Hispanic, mixed race, male, born-again Christian	teacher leader, middle school department chair; suburban Northeast
Janae	Black, woman, mother	leader in national nonprofit philanthropic organization with education focus; Northeast
Jean-Claude	Asian American, male, forties, strongly identifies with values of his progressive West Coast city	district-level leader, coordinator of curriculum and teacher leadership; West Coast

NAME/ PSEUDONYM	SELF-IDENTIFIED DEMOGRAPHICS	PROFESSIONAL ROLE/REGION
Joyce	Caribbean African American woman, early thirties, single, Pentecostal, daughter to Jamaican immigrants	educational consultant; Northeast, national, and international
Kathy	white, woman	teacher leader; suburban Northeast
Kristina	Black woman, native of a Southern city well-known for its civil rights history, from a faith-driven family, married	consultant; South
Ladan Jahani	Iranian American, straight, female, partnered, thirty-nine years old, bilingual	social worker in a transfer high school; urban Northeast
Lee	forty years old, white, cisgender gay male, partnered, Jewish	national-level nonprofit leader; Northeast
Linda	Black, woman	educational consultant, former principal; Northeast
Lisa	thirty-seven years old, Black of Haitian descent, female, single, seventeen years in education	early childhood center director; Northeast
Loile	thirty-four years old, African American, cisgender female, Black woman of Caribbean/Jamaican descent, single	district-level leader, former principal; urban Northeast
Luz	Black Afro-Latina, cisgender woman, twenty years in education	high school principal; urban Northeast
Margot	white-presenting, multiracial	assistant superintendent; urban Northwest
May	white, woman, thirteenth year in education	academic dean in charter middle school; Northeast
Micki	Black, woman, fifties	assistant principal/dean of students, alternative school; Southwest
Nat	thirty years old, tenth year in education, Puerto Rican woman, cisgender (she/her), heterosexual, single	STEAM ed technologist, independent elementary school; Northeast
Nick	forty-one years old, white, male, heterosexual	independent lower school head; mid-Atlantic

(Continued)

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NAME/ PSEUDONYM	SELF-IDENTIFIED DEMOGRAPHICS	PROFESSIONAL ROLE/REGION
Norma	thirty-two years old, white, cisgender woman, married, eleventh year in education, grew up in the South and Midwest with a single mother in a low-SES household, lived abroad (South Africa)	dean/ESL coordinator; Midwest
Rana	Egyptian American, Muslim woman	head of independent school; urban Midwest
Serena	thirty-one years old, cisgender, Caribbean American, woman	central office special education leader; urban Northeast
Shokry	thirty-four years old, mixed race Egyptian and Dominican, “American-ish,” Northeastern person of color	educational consultant; Northeast, national, international
Sylvia	thirty-eight years old, Puerto Rican, woman, Christian, mother	district-level teacher support administrator; urban Northeast
Thea	Black woman, married, tenth year in education	district-level leader with teacher leadership focus; urban Northeast
Yaacov	Orthodox Jewish father and husband, thirty-two years old, nine years in education	teacher leader, charter middle school coordinator; urban Northeast
Zora	African American woman (she/her), heterosexual, grew up in low-income community, experienced economic mobility, mother, wife	founder and CEO of nonprofit with national reach; urban Midwest

LOOKING BACK AND AHEAD: THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

In this chapter, Chapter 1, we foregrounded social justice as *the* imperative of education—and educational leadership—today. After setting the stage in relation to the urgency of this work—and honoring the long, rich, and varied justice efforts of educators, researchers, scholars, and activists from across time and around the world—we shared how understanding the arc of leaders’ diverse ways of knowing, as outlined by constructive-developmental theory, can add something new and vital to these conversations. In effect,

this chapter opened a new window into *how* to develop and support social justice leaders along a continuum of experiences and understandings—and made explicit the connection between leaders’ internal capacities and their effectiveness in different, layered domains.

Toward this end, this chapter introduced our developmental model for justice-centering educational leadership practice and learning. More specifically, we began to discuss how the four distinct but cumulative domains in the model—the concrete, interpersonal, system-focused, and interconnecting—can offer different entry points and growing paths for leaders with different ways of knowing. As we will continue to explore throughout the book, understanding the developmental underpinnings—and prerequisites—of engaging most successfully in these layers can help leaders even more intentionally differentiate supports and challenges, for both self and others.

In addition to framing and introducing our model, we also shared a little about ourselves and what brought us together to collaborate on this dream project. Likewise, we introduced the fifty diverse educational leaders—from across the United States—who so generously made this book possible by sharing their wisdom, stories, and experiences with us in interviews. We began this study and end it with tremendous, heartfelt gratitude to each and all of them for opening their hearts and minds to us so that we could share with you their life experiences, strengths of practice, growing edges, courage—and inspiration.

In Chapter 2, we will offer a deep dive into constructive-developmental theory (Drago-Severson, 2004b, 2009, 2012, 2016; Kegan, 1982, 1994, 2000; Kegan & Lahey, 2009, 2016) as one promising lens for considering social justice capacity building. Although our prior research has highlighted many important applications and dimensions of constructive-developmental theory (e.g., for collaboration, feedback, designing professional learning, mindfulness, supervision), in this book we introduce the newest extensions and implications of the theory—particularly as they relate to justice-centering educational leadership and leading for social justice in schools and society.

Specifically, we will dive deeply into the four ways of knowing most commonly found in adulthood—the instrumental, socializing, self-authoring, and self-transforming—and consider them, holistically, as an integrative meta-story of learning and growth, both in general and especially as it relates to leading on behalf of equity or justice. Understanding the different ways of knowing as part of a cumulative continuum can help you see more deeply into your own and others’ developmental strengths and growing edges—and the different supports and challenges that can scaffold growth as justice-centering leaders.

In Chapters 3 through 6, we offer leaders’ stories and lived experiences of justice-centering educational leadership in each of the four domains of our model—the concrete, interpersonal, system-focused, and interconnecting. Each chapter also foregrounds how the internal capacities connected to

a particular way of knowing can serve as an entry point for the featured domain of practice. For example, we explore how

- instrumental capacities can serve leaders well in the concrete layer (Chapter 3),
- socializing capacities can enhance and enrich leaders' work in the interpersonal domain (Chapter 4),
- self-authoring capacities are needed to most effectively engage in the system-focused level (Chapter 5), and
- self-transforming capacities allow for fuller engagement as interconnecting leaders—bringing together individuals, systems, and domains (Chapter 6).

In addition to spotlighting areas of focus and strength in the different domains—and celebrating them—each chapter also describes leaders' experiences of growing toward the next layer of practice, including the stretches and experiences they found most helpful as they grew.

In Chapter 7, we will look back on and bring together the many different ideas covered in this book and offer stories, metaphors, and tools for launching forward. In particular, we will present a full and synthesized version of our model, invite you to engage in some additional reflective opportunities to connect big ideas to your practice and experience, and provide opportunities for action planning and future application.

Most important, as you move through every chapter, we invite you to hold, carry forward, and share whatever feels most relevant to *you*—for the fullness, complexity, and potential of your own growth and the growth of those in your care.

A REFLECTIVE INVITATION

Before journeying forward into the next chapter—in which we will dive even more deeply into constructive-developmental theory as an integrative lens—we want to invite you to consider a series of centering questions. Often, we've found, it can be helpful to begin by reflecting privately (by either free writing or free thinking) about some or all of these questions and then sharing your reflections with a partner or several partners.

1. After reading this chapter, what is top of mind and/or heart for you?
2. At this time, how do you define social justice?

3. What, in your experience, does it mean to lead on behalf of—or center—justice in education?
4. What do you consider to be two or three of your bigger strengths as a justice-centering leader?
5. What is one practice you engage in on a regular basis (by yourself or with colleagues) to support justice in your workplace? How is it working at this time?
6. What are two or three of your biggest, personal hopes for learning in reading this book?
7. What, at this time, are you most curious about after reading this chapter?
8. Now that you've had a preview of ways of knowing, what do you see as some of your bigger developmental strengths? How do these show up in your day-to-day care for others? For yourself in your leadership?
9. What do you consider to be your own growing edges or areas for growth?
10. What feels like your most pressing challenge in your justice-centering leadership right now?
11. What is something you'd like to grow about your justice-centering leadership—or get better at?
12. What is something you'd like to grow in your workplace culture, especially with respect to justice, diversity, and equity-focused learning, teaching, and leading?
13. What are some of your burning questions at this time?
14. After reading this chapter, what is something you'd like to think more deeply about? Do differently? Learn more about?

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