

MAKING SENSE

See if this sounds familiar.

A senior vice president (SVP) in a small corporation called me for some help.¹ Her division had just reorganized, and one of the units in it had been newly created to help with some issues that had plagued the division for years. While this new unit was trying to get its focus and its vision, there was increasing conflict in the whole division. The reorganization had pulled some people off of the work they had been doing, and everyone was feeling pinched and irritable. The SVP noticed that conflict was springing up all over, and that the lines of communication, which had never been stellar, were disintegrating. She worried that unless they began to really understand one another and learn how to deal with their disagreements, new silos would spring up that were worse than the ones the reorganization was designed to dismantle. She thought some kind of retreat would be just what the group needed, including a few days of the basics: listening skills, Myers-Briggs, and so forth, to get into a better space with each other. We decided on a joint focus of, on the one hand, trying to understand and make sense of this new structure now that it was in place; and, on the other hand, building skills around listening to one another and dealing well with the inevitable conflict. We picked a date, the client found a venue, and I bought airplane tickets.

The first day of the retreat was fantastic. The group was much less divided than I had feared, and they were eager to learn new skills and tools. It wasn't until the end of the first day that I picked up on the murmurs about two of the members of the group—both in the newly organized unit. By the end of the morning session on the second day, I had begun to pay attention to those two fellows, and it was clear that they hated one another. In clipped, polite-in-front-of-the-outsider tones, they interacted tersely, each of them looking like he might swat at the other given any provocation. How had I missed this on day one? Because I thought the problem was *between* units inside this division, not *inside* a single unit, I had designed the first day to mix the units up; this was a team-building retreat, after all. It was only as we began to unpack

strategy that the units got together, and I saw what the SVP had seen. Now the level of anxiety in the room was high. Other groups of people were warily watching the two at the heart of the conflict, and the easy banter of the day before was gone. I took my client outside the meeting room at a break time, and asked her to describe these two guys. "They hate each other," she said. "That's another thing that's going on here."

It turned out that one of the fellows was a supervisor of the other, and the supervisor (Jacob) thought the subordinate (Perry) was out of line. Jacob thought Perry was a maverick, breaking rules and not following the chain of command. Perry thought Jacob was an idiot, following the policy manual like the Bible and ignoring the common sense that he saw. They were both under advisement that this was unacceptable behavior, and Jacob had written up a behavior plan which Perry was to sign by the end of the retreat, or be fired. It was at this point, in the warm California sunshine, that I realized that this whole retreat—with the whole division off site for two days—was to deal, in great measure, with the ripple effect on the culture and on the work when two of its members were openly hostile to one another. This piece about these co-workers who hated each other was not peripheral; it was a key part of the system of negative feelings that the department was facing. And they didn't just have different opinions about things or need additional skills to get them up to speed on their work; it was possible that these two fellows had totally different ways of being in the world—and no way to make sense of one another. I knew that without attention in the direction of this conflict, the whole retreat was partial and not likely to be very useful, like giving a decongestant to someone who has a viral flu. Faced with this knowledge mostly too late to do any good, I shuffled some things around, recreated some exercises, and finished the retreat with both a clearer idea of the problem and far less clear idea of the solution.

Perry and Jacob were smart, interesting men with long and successful track records. They each got along well with most of the others in the organization. They had similar backgrounds, educations, and personality types. So what was the problem? Somehow each of them violated core ideas and values of the other. They talked past one another and each felt deeply misunderstood. Yet when I asked their boss what the problem was, she could hardly put it into words. "They just clash," she told me.

It is the subtlety that makes human interactions so difficult—and so rich. And the more time you have to spend with different sorts of people, the more difficult it is. With some skills or tasks, it is simple to see what people can do and how they understand the world. When the task is clear, well-defined, and easy to evaluate, a person's competence is clear—and so is the need for additional training or support. When the task is complex and unbounded, and the evaluation difficult or

impossible to connect easily, it is much harder to determine competence. Even once we determine it (e.g., not great people skills), we do not quite know what to do next. Do we offer training? Coaching? Team building? Helping to build the complex skill sets needed in the modern business world is significantly more difficult than it once seemed.

In addition to skills or behaviors we can learn, there are also the reflexes we were born with. When you touch a hot pan, you pull your hand away without thinking about it. This is a helpful reflex and saves you from real pain. If you had to think about the heat and weigh your choices (shall I put this hot pan down and risk my new countertops?), no matter how fast you processed the variety of choices, none of them would be fast enough to save you from a burn. This is a gift from your unconscious mind that protects you from harm. Other reflexes, however, are much less helpful. If every time a manager asks you a question you feel she is questioning your competence and you become defensive, that reflex is likely to get you burned instead of protecting you. And yet changing it is as hard as holding on to a hot pot—and feels, to some part of you, just as stupid. Lots of our ancient reflexes—fight versus flight, for example—that served us on the savanna hurt us now. Our inner wiring is still better suited to the tribal world than the corporate one.

So, in a world where our reflexes are increasingly misleading, and the skills we need are increasingly complex and multifaceted, how can we manage ourselves better? And if we need more-sophisticated leaders throughout our organizations and our world, how can we help organizations actually cultivate leadership and complexity?

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES THAT YOU CAN SEE—AND THE DIFFERENCES THAT YOU CANNOT

Anyone who has ever worked inside an organization will tell you that different people make decisions, deal with conflict, and understand their relationships with colleagues quite differently. They have different strengths and weaknesses, different kinds of skills, and different backgrounds and personalities. In this book, I explore another component of difference: people's capacities to make sense of the complex world in which they find themselves and the way those capacities grow and change over time. While we do not often consider the growth of people's *minds* in the same way we consider the growth of their *skills*, both kinds of growth have a vital part to play in a person's success and effectiveness.

Although people have long recognized that as children grow, their ability to make sense of the world in a complex way grows, the idea that adults have

minds (and not just skills) that are growing and developing over time is relatively new. It is easy to see these different worldviews in children. For example, when a three-year-old in the bathtub sees the water go down the drain, she makes a fairly straightforward connection between the water that disappears and her body and toys that seem in imminent danger. A kind grown-up who tries to soothe her by explaining that water and people are different will likely have no luck. At this stage in her life, the child does not have the *capacity* to see the difference between the water that disappears and the toys that are too large to wash away; crying, she begs to be removed from the tub and she struggles to save all of her precious things as she escapes. Several months later, the same child—with something of a different mind now—calmly and playfully watches the last bit of water disappear, poking it with her toys as it goes. The water has not changed at all, but her ability to make fine distinctions has grown more complex; she now has a different form of understanding the world, a greater level of what I call “self-complexity.”

Self-complexity refers to these qualitatively different ways of understanding the complex world around us—an idea I’ll talk about here as “forms of mind” and others talk about as “order of mind”² or “action logics.”³ These terms all describe the changing capacity of humans to cope with complexity, multiple perspectives, and abstraction. And the key news is that this pattern—being able to make sense of greater and greater levels of complexity—continues throughout the lifespan, long after we can handle the magical properties of bathwater.

In adults, self-complexity is not marked by anything so obvious as fear of washing down the drain. Instead, as adults grow and change over time, their ability to deal with the many pressures of their lives changes in important but subtle ways. Leaders with different forms of mind will have different capacities to take the perspectives of others, to be self-directed, to generate and modify systems, to manage conflicts, and to deal with paradox. We do not have to go very far to find ourselves in the middle of complexity and ambiguity; we face complex, unclear situations over and over each day. Here is a quick example of one such unexpected dilemma:

You go to make an appointment to meet with your manager, Monique. While you’re scheduling, Monique’s executive assistant makes reference to the fact that Monique has a meeting the next day with one of your direct reports, Jonathan, and that Jonathan scheduled the meeting. Monique is relatively new to this division, but she long ago finished the meet-and-greet meetings with everyone in your area. Now, mostly she deals with you on projects from your unit, but on several occasions over the last several months, you have felt blindsided by Monique’s tendency to deal directly with

your direct reports on her favorite projects, making decisions you only find out about later. You pride yourself on being approachable and easily accessible to your employees. How might you respond to this new information?

Think for a minute about how you would deal with this situation. Would you confront Monique? Jonathan? What would you say? What is the real problem here? What might you be most worried about?

Here is how three different people might deal with this same situation. As you read, think about their perspectives—what does each of them see as the problem? What are they each worried about? Which one most shares your thoughts and concerns?

DIRECTOR 1

You scheduled your meeting quickly, and then walked away to think the situation through. You had never had a situation quite like this and you didn’t really know how to deal with it. For a minute you wished that you had never found out about the stupid appointment in the first place. It would be better just not to know, because now you were angry at Jonathan for going over your head and breaking all of the appropriate chain-of-command rules. And you were irritated with Monique, too, who shouldn’t encourage this kind of inappropriate behavior in her employees. What could this meeting be about, anyway? Your anger quickly turned to concern—what if Jonathan was going to Monique to complain about *you*? You began wracking your brain to see what you had done that might get you in trouble. Maybe it was something that came up when you were working on that outside project last month. You knew that you were not supposed to take on these consulting assignments, but this one looked fairly easy and the money was good. You didn’t understand why you shouldn’t do other work on your own time, anyway—it was a stupid rule. And how could Jonathan have found out about that in the first place? Maybe what you would do was get to Jonathan and talk to him kind of casually and find out what he wanted to talk about with Monique. Yes, that was the thing to do, talk to Jonathan and see what the whole thing was about, and then see if you could stop the meeting before it happened. Maybe you would remind him of all those times last fall when he had left early to go to his daughter’s soccer games. That kind of reminder had worked well in the past. And it wasn’t about blackmail at all, rather, your point was that if you didn’t work together against the higher-ups, your lives would be overtaken by stupid rules and regulations. Now you felt glad that you had found out about the appointment because now you would be able to fix it before things got too far out of hand.

DIRECTOR 2

You scheduled your meeting quickly, and then walked away to think the situation through. You had never faced a situation like this because your previous manager had been so well-aligned with the appropriate ways communication was supposed to happen. This new manager was either stupid or wrong-headed to be breaking out of these roles, and it made your head spin sometimes. If all of the reporting chain was up for grabs, how do you even understand your role as a supervisor? Were you supposed to take this as Monique's hope that you would start meeting with the direct reports of your own direct reports? Perhaps that was the message you were being given, but you wished Monique would give the message with more clarity—you weren't a mind reader, even if you tried to be. You never had to scramble this way with your previous manager; you two were on the same page, and there was never any confusion over roles. For a minute, you felt a little unsteady. If you didn't know your role as a leader, how could you do your job? And if you couldn't do your job, how could you contribute to your family? What would your friends say? This felt like a terrible mess, and you didn't know how you could begin to fix it. There weren't any guidelines for this in any leadership book you had ever read, and now that your former manager had been replaced, you didn't know whom you might go to for advice.

DIRECTOR 3

You scheduled your meeting quickly, and then walked away to think the situation through. You had never had a situation quite like this, but you had been in other interpersonally difficult situations before, even a couple that involved some confusion over organizational roles, and you never enjoyed them. For a minute you wished that you had never found out about the stupid appointment in the first place. It would be so much easier to just go about your business and not worry about the meeting between Monique and Jonathan. But now that you knew, you would have to confront the issue because it pointed toward important philosophical differences in both your manager and your subordinates. You wondered briefly what Monique and Jonathan might talk about together. There were some things that might merit a meeting between the two of them (where Jonathan was bringing a grievance you had ignored, for example, or where they were planning a surprise party for you, you thought, smiling ironically), and if this were one of those meetings you could happily ignore it until directed otherwise. But those scenarios didn't ring particularly true to you. The fact was that ignoring the chain of command was something of a pattern for Monique, and it was beginning

to be a destructive pattern. You had noticed new tensions among your employees lately, had noticed the subtle ways they were competing for Monique's time and attention, and you knew that it was hurting both morale and productivity. You decided that you needed to talk to Monique to figure out what her goals were for these meetings. She clearly had different visions of what was expected up and down the chain of command, and maybe if you understood one another more explicitly, you could find styles that were best for the whole team.

Perhaps you did not find yourself in any of these people, or perhaps there were bits of your reactions in one or two of them. In any case, these three leaders face the same problem, but they think about it and act on it in different ways. Director 1 took what she felt was a novel situation (because nothing exactly like it had happened before) and immediately began to worry about the impact this situation might have on her. Her perspective was narrow and focused—on this time, on the particular consequences to her. Director 2 was confused about what his reaction *should* be. He tried to understand the subtext in the situation so he could figure out what was expected of him and what his role might be. Director 3, while not having had exactly this experience before, was able to get a more broad perspective and see the ways that this experience was similar to other interpersonally complex experiences she had had. Similarly, she had a bigger perspective about why such behavior (which she remembered as a pattern) was problematic. While this problem affected her, her own stake in it was not her primary concern. Instead, she worried about a larger issue—about the morale and productivity of her entire unit.

There may be many differences between these leaders that create the various ways they have handled the situation. They may have different kinds of leadership training, different amounts of experience, different styles of leadership. When I ask others about the variations between the thoughts and actions of these three managers, they point to many possible differences, but they almost all conclude that Director 3 just seems more “grown-up” than Director 1, and more “secure” than Director 2. It is that sense of “grown-up” and what it means to be “secure” that are explored by theories of adult development. Instead of making claims about the skill or effectiveness of any of these leaders, I focus on the possibility that these are not simply leaders with different *styles*, but rather that they are leaders with different *current capacities* for self-complexity.⁴ Using the lens of self-complexity, we may decide that perhaps Director 1 is not selfish or self-centered or shortsighted, and that Director 2 is not insecure or lacking assertiveness (all of which are enduring personality or character flaws). Perhaps Director 1 and Director 2 do

not yet have the *capacity* to take the same perspective as Director 3. No amount of leadership training or other forms of intervention will teach them to quickly understand what is going on, just as the three-year-old could not be taught about the bathwater. Like the three-year-old—like all of us—Directors 1 and 2 need to *develop* this understanding over time. Similarly, Director 3 likely could not point to the particular training or event that led her to take the perspective of her whole unit. She probably cannot remember a time when she was unable to take on such a complex perspective. She is likely to assume that everyone else sees the world her way, and when she talks to her manager and direct reports, she may have a hard time believing in the legitimacy of their perspectives—especially if those perspectives feel more simplistic than hers.

If, then, there are differences that are difficult to understand and recognize, and if those differences lead to profound distinctions in the way each of us sees the world, what can we do about it? One helpful option is to learn something about the patterns of adult development—and learn how to recognize them and use them to create workplaces more conducive to growth. Adult development theory may help us articulate more of what we mean by “grown-up,” because it describes the qualitatively different worlds of meaning people grow to have over time. It also describes their current capacities—those things people can and cannot do or think about. These theories are more than simple descriptive tools, though. Developmental theories chart a path that each person might take to develop more-complex forms of mind. Additionally, these theories also help us examine the *match* between a person’s form of mind at any given time and the form of mind that may be required by a particular task. Because of the great difference in roles and organizational environments, each person’s situation may require more or less capacity for complexity. The match between capacity for self-complexity and environment is a key factor in a person’s ability to be successful. In fact, while the form of mind tends to grow over time, such growth is only important in relationship to the demands made upon each individual. Developmental models seem to suggest that higher is *necessarily* better, but I’d like us to hold that idea with a little more subtlety. Having a greater capacity for self-complexity is important—even vital—in some leadership situations. In situations where the tasks are clear and not filled with complexity, though, it is possible that there would not be any advantage to having a greater level of self-complexity. Again, it is the *interaction* between the demands made on the leader and the leader’s capacity for self-complexity that matters the most. It is also true that having high levels of self-complexity does not guarantee success, any more than greater height guarantees more points on a basketball court. Having the capacity to deal with

complexity does not necessarily mean that a leader is a careful observer, has good interpersonal skills, or even that the leader exercises good judgment in general. It does mean that the leader has the capacity to see more nuance and deal with paradox and ambiguity—and the capacity to be agile and responsive. My hope for us all here is to lose a simple higher = better sense of development and instead work to construct workplaces where we can recognize—and help develop—the complexity necessary to do the work well.

CONSTRUCTIVE-DEVELOPMENTAL THEORIES OF ADULT DEVELOPMENT

Early theories of adult development were most often connected to age or phase of life; they described the various life stages as related to age or key task (e.g., finding a career) and described the different perspectives, hopes, and goals a person might have at these different ages or phases (e.g., early 30s as a time to settle into young family life).⁵ In contrast, *constructive-development* theories are centered on the particular meaning-making of each individual rather than on age or phase of life.⁶ They are *constructive* because they are concerned with the way each person creates her world by living it (rather than believing, as some theories do, that the world is outside us and there is some kind of objective truth to be discovered). They are *developmental* because they are concerned with the way that construction changes over time to become more complex and multifaceted. Unlike the age/phase theories, constructive-development theories do not assume that years lived or life stages completed necessarily mean anything developmental at all. There are a wide variety of constructive-development theories—all with broad similarities in their orientation to development, and all describing similar trajectories. While this book is informed by the many theories of adult development, the theory upon which this book is primarily based is Robert Kegan’s theory of adult development. Most of the names I use for the forms of mind also come from Kegan.

Constructive-development theories tend to focus on development in specific ways. They look at issues of authority, responsibility, ability to tolerate complexity and ambiguity. The easiest way to understand them is as they relate to perspective-taking and relationship to their own responsibility. As people develop, they become more able to understand and take into account the perspectives of others while, at the same time, becoming more aware of their own responsibility for their emotions and life events. As people develop, the *content* of their ideas may not necessarily change (e.g., someone might retain a belief he developed in his MBA program that a good leader maintains open lines of communication with

his direct reports), but the *way* they understand these ideas is likely to change (e.g., what “open communication” means may be revised and expanded).

As an example, think for a minute about what leadership books want you to be able to do. One of my favorite leadership books—Ron Heifetz’s *Leadership without easy answers*—asks leaders to “get on the balcony” and away from the action on the dance floor.⁷ This is a helpful piece of advice, because it reminds leaders to step outside the particularities of their situation in order to see the whole picture. What Heifetz does not tell you, though, is that there are a variety of different “balconies” depending on your form of mind. Developmental theories describe different balconies which each offer a different perspective. How far you can get above the dance floor depends on your current form of mind. Is your perspective changed by how high you go in the balconies? Certainly. Is your decision making *necessarily* changed or your allegiances or beliefs *necessarily* different? Absolutely not. While your higher perspective may allow you to see a bigger picture that ultimately changes your mind about something, the new perspective might also confirm—or even intensify—your commitment to some person, theory, or decision.

A key feature of development that is different from going to a club and looking down at the dancers on the floor is that your image of what “the story” is expands as your vision expands. When you go to a club, no matter how far away you are from the dance floor, the main action is way down there—you just get farther away from it as you go up. But when your form of mind grows, you discover that what you once thought was the main action was simply a tiny portion of what was going on; now the club is much larger and has far more interesting characters. You might get a perspective on the band, on the line cooks in the kitchen, on the conversation the owners are having about whether to raise drink prices again. You might also gain a perspective on your own reactions as you look down at the dance floor—and be able to think about which buttons are being pushed by which people and what you might do about that.

Developmental theory describes the ability of people to gain these new perspectives—and what it takes to be able to move from one balcony to the next one. In this way, it is a useful lens through which to look at the world. Every theory has its limits, though. Constructive–developmental theories focus on complexity and perspective-taking; thus they do *not* focus on many other aspects that make humans interesting and unique—nor do they focus on group or system interactions (although there is much to be learned about groups and systems from paying attention to the meaning-making of individuals). These theories do not claim that perspective-taking is the most important part of an individual; they just attempt to understand (and sometimes measure) this one facet of human experience.

What does any of this have to do with changing on the job? Nearly everything. Developing professionals in the workplace requires, to a greater or a lesser degree, actual *development*. As you think about supporting another human being at work, it is vital that you understand just what you mean by *support*. Are you guilty of that supremely human error of assuming that others operate from the same form of mind as you do? Are you designing training, support, systems of rewards and sanctions that might work for someone like you? How might you think more broadly about your constituents—or perhaps think more specifically about a particular person you have never understood? An understanding of adult developmental differences allows us to both reach the diversity of groups more thoughtfully (as we create programs and systems) and also reach the uniqueness of a single human being more carefully (as we listen in ways we may not have listened before and hear nuances that may have been inaudible to us previously). In the next section, I describe the rhythm of development and sketch out the four most common forms mind of adulthood (longer descriptions, implications and strategies are in the subsequent chapters).

FORMS AND TRANSFORMATION

From our earliest days, each of us has been engaged in an ongoing journey to learn and to grow. These two human forces are often connected, but they are not the same. Learning can be about acquiring a new skill or knowledge base. If I master PowerPoint in order to put together a slide show for a client, I have learned something. I have new information in my head. But have I really *grown*? From a developmental perspective, real growth requires some qualitative shift, not just in knowledge, but in perspective or way of thinking. Growing is when the *form* of our understanding changes; we often call this “transformation.” Learning might be about increasing our stores of knowledge in the form of our thinking that already exists (in-form-ation), but growing means we need to actually change the form itself (trans-form-ation).⁸ Each moment of our development, then, is a potentially temporary form of mind that, with the right support, can become more expansive. As we grow, the previous form is overtaken by the new form, leaving traces of the less-mature form behind like rings in a tree trunk.

The rhythm of this movement is about increasing our ability to see more complexity in the world. When we are young, we have very simple ways of understanding the world (the earliest form of mind mostly just makes the distinction between “caregiver” and “not-caregiver”). We grow to see and understand more and more fine gradations in the world, and as we do this, we begin to question

assumptions we had made before (perhaps there are differences between those beings formerly considered to be "not-caregiver"). Theorists for centuries have named the distinction between *subject* (that which you cannot yet see because you are fused with it) and *object* (that which you can see and make decisions about because you have gained more distance from it). As elements of understanding move from subject (hidden) to object (seen), our worldview becomes more complex, and constructive-developmental theorists would say we have developed. This can happen when we discover a choice where we once saw only one option, when we discover multiple perspectives where we once only saw through a single lens. Each small shift from subject to object increases our scope, but enough incremental changes collectively add up to qualitatively different ways of seeing the world, to transformation, the creation of different forms of mind.

These forms of mind generally fall into identifiable, qualitatively different ways of making sense of the world in adulthood (as well as many identifiable in-between places where a person will have parts of one form of mind and parts of another).⁹ In Table 1.1, I offer a quick sketch of the four central forms of mind of adults by looking at perspective-taking and authority. Then I offer quick descriptions of each of the forms of mind of adulthood.

The self-sovereign form of mind. This form of mind in adults is marked by the combination of a sense of self-centeredness and a focus on what *I* want (much like our visions of spoiled imperial youth). More common in teenagers and young adults, the self-sovereign mind is nonetheless sometimes seen in adults in their 40s, 50s, and beyond. At this form of mind, people discover that they have beliefs and feelings that remain constant over time (e.g., I love chocolate but hate mashed potatoes; I'm great at ice skating). This insight lets them know that other people have opinions and beliefs that remain constant, too. Their concrete understandings let them know that a rule yesterday is probably a rule today. Their orientation is to figure out how to get past the rule if it is in their way. While they are aware that others have feelings and desires, true empathy is not possible for them yet because the distance between their minds and other minds is great. Mostly other people's interests are important only if they affect the interests of the self-sovereign person. When annoying rules are not broken, it is because of a fear of being caught; when friends do not lie to each other even when they're tempted to do so, it is because of a fear of retaliation. Children—and adults—at this form of mind are self-centered in the most literal, least judgmental meaning of that word. Because they cannot yet take the perspective of others, the thinking and feeling of those around them is generally mysterious. This means that they often see others as helpers or barriers on the road to their desires. Authority lies outside them

TABLE 1.1 Comparison of orientation to authority and perspective-taking across the adult forms of mind

Form of mind	Perspective-taking	Authority
Self-sovereign	The only perspective a person can automatically take while in the self-sovereign form of mind is his own. He may experience all other perspectives as mysterious, and can only get make a guess at them from what he sees.	Authority is found in rules and regulations. When two external authorities disagree, it can be frustrating but not internally problematic.
Socialized	Looking through the socialized form of mind, a person can take—and become embedded in—the perspectives of other people/theories/organizations/religions. When she sees the world, she sees it <i>through</i> these other perspectives, judging right and wrong, good and bad, from the perspectives of others.	Authority is in an internalized value/principle/role which comes from outside herself. When those important values/principles/roles conflict (as when her religion disagrees with an important value from her partner), she feels an internal tearing, as though parts of herself were pitted against one another.
Self-authored	Seeing the world through the self-authored form of mind means a person can take multiple perspectives while maintaining his own. He can understand the views and opinions of others and often uses those views or opinions to strengthen his own argument or set of principles.	Authority is found in the self. The self-authored system determines the individual's rules and regulations for himself. When others disagree, it can be inconvenient or unpleasant, but is not internally wrenching. (When one internal value disagrees with another, however, that can cause an internal tearing.)
Self-transforming	With a self-transforming mind, a person sees and understands the perspectives of others and uses those perspectives to continuously transform her own system, becoming more expansive and more inclusive. She does not use the perspectives of others to fine-tune her own argument or principles as she did when she was self-authoring; rather, she puts the entire system at risk for change with each interaction with others.	Authority is fluid and shared, and is not located in any particular person or job. Rather, authority comes from the combination of the situation and the people in the situation. A new situation (or different players) may cause a shift in where authority is located.

and is marked by both the formal authority of a title and also power over them in some way. Because of this, those with the self-sovereign form of mind appreciate (and obey) rules because of the direct consequences of the rules. They are unlikely to be motivated by mysteriously abstract factors like loyalty or a commitment to the relationship.

Of the three people earlier who faced the same difficult situation between their manager and their direct reports, Director 1 saw the world through the self-sovereign form of mind. Notice that her focus in this situation is on herself—what is the impact on me, what can I do to change any negative consequences, and so forth. Director 1 does not stop to wonder about the perspective of her manager or direct report in any way other than to worry about herself. This is because she cannot yet take the perspectives of anyone but herself. The feelings and actions of her colleagues are mysterious to her; she does not yet realize that they are interesting characters in a larger play. In the club as she understands it (right from the middle of a crowded dance floor), people are mostly visible only if they are dancing with her. Director 1 is the only star character; the others play bit parts in her quest to get her own way. She is not selfish or self-centered (although she may appear so to those with a larger perspective than hers); she is simply stuck in the middle of her own story, and she has no perspective from which to view the rest of the action. She is doing the best she can with the view she has now.

While there are likely to be few people with this form of mind in the leadership ranks of an organization, studies have shown that as many as 13 percent of adults see the world through this form of mind—or who are growing to (but not yet arrived at) the socialized mind. This means that especially the younger and less well-educated members of an organization have the potential to have this form of mind. Those with this mind can be very frustrating to colleagues and managers who have moved beyond it, and those colleagues can wrongly assume developmentally related capacities are stable personality flaws.¹⁰

The socialized form of mind. As a person's worldview increases in complexity, he leaves behind his image of himself as the center of the world and takes inside him the opinions and perspectives of others; he comes to see the world through the ideas and theories of other people. Sometimes this transition begins in adolescence, but it can happen at any point throughout adulthood. If this increasing perspective-taking continues, eventually he will grow to have a socialized form of mind. He will become a full member of whatever society he belongs to, and someone who takes on the rules of that society as *the right way* to be in the world. With a socialized mind, the formerly imperial self-sovereign mind is enlarged to include other perspectives and understand authority in a new way. It is at this stage that people can begin to become devoted to something larger than themselves and become loyal to—and embedded in—some larger system, theory, or relationship. This larger system, however, is not for me to make decisions about, believes a person with a socialized worldview. Rather, having internalized the importance of the authority of others, the person with the socialized mind no longer believes in his

own authority. As he grows to take on this new perspective, he sees through that new perspective, becoming fused with it. Those with a socialized mind internalize the feelings and ideas of others and are guided by those people or institutions (such as a synagogue, a political party, or a particular organization) that are most important to them. They are able to think abstractly, be self-reflective about their actions and the actions of others, and are devoted to something greater than their own needs.

The major limitation of this form of mind is that, when there is a conflict between important others (or between a single important other—like a spouse, and an institution—like a political party), those at the socialized mind feel torn in two and cannot find a way to make a decision. There is no sense of what *I* want outside of others' expectations or societal roles. This is generally admirable in teenagers, but in adults it can often seem like a personality flaw. A developmental perspective, however, shows us that this is an achievement rather than a flaw. For a person to arrive at this form of mind requires leaving the solitary confinement of his own mind and welcoming new members into his perspective and decision-making process. Like an executive looking for guidance beyond himself, he has created an internal Board of Directors to help him see the world and make decisions. This metaphorical Board may be made up of important theories, relationships, or ideas. Problems can arise, though, because someone at the socialized mind is not yet the chairperson of this internal Board, leaving room for disagreements or power struggles among Board members.

Director 2 currently sees the world from the socialized form of mind. Comfortable with his responsibilities for others, comfortable with abstract theories of leadership and complex organization charts of reporting systems, he is stymied by the interaction between his direct report and his manager. The theories and relationships in which he is embedded—and which have served him well before—are not helpful to this situation. In the absence of helpful guides, he clings to any message he might find, and assumes that there must be some directive in his manager's actions. As he searches for the messages that must be hidden between the lines, he feels off-center and confused. He sees enough of the dance floor to guess at a larger subtext and to notice abstract patterns, but he cannot gain enough distance from the voices of others to hear his own voice.

The socialized mind—and the midzone between the socialized and the self-authored mind—is the most common form of mind for adults; perhaps as many as 46 percent of adults currently have a socialized mind (or are on the journey from the socialized to the self-authored mind). Because of this, it is likely that many of your colleagues (and maybe even you) see the world from this form

of mind. The modern organizational world, however, often assumes that most people have a perspective that is beyond socialized, and so many organizational structures and programs are "over the heads" of the majority of adults.

The self-authored form of mind. In a modern, global world, those with a socialized form of mind are likely to begin, eventually, to bump up against conflicting ideas and perspectives that are incomprehensible to their form of mind. When this happens, they need to find some mediating force to help them decide among the different—and reasonable—options. To continue an earlier metaphor, as their Board of Directors begins to disagree (or not keep up with the times), they need some way to break the tie or add new information. They need, in short, a Chair of the Board to mediate among the different ideas, relationships, and theories that formed in these internal Boards. When finally they themselves become the Chair of their own internal Boards, they have developed a new form of mind.

The opinions and desires of others which they internalized, and to which they were subject when they were making meaning with a socialized mind, are now object to them. They are able to examine those various rule systems and opinions and are able to mediate among them. Those with self-authored minds have an internal set of rules and regulations—a self-governing system—that they use to make their decisions or reconcile conflicts. Unlike those who make meaning with a self-sovereign mind, those who are self-authored feel empathy for others, and take the wishes and opinions of others into consideration when making decisions. Unlike those with a socialized mind, though, those with a self-authored mind do not feel torn apart by the conflicts of those around them because they have their own system with which to make decisions. These are the people we read about in the business literature who "own" their work, who are self-guided, self-motivated, and self-evaluative.

Director 3, above, understood the leadership challenge through her self-authored form of mind. She is not enmeshed in either her own sense of the risks to herself (she ironically wonders if her direct report might be bringing a grievance, but she does not feel concerned about it) and is not puzzled as she tries to unpack her manager's odd sense of organizational communication. Instead, she weighs the situation against her own values and experience, and creates (authors) her own response. She has enough distance to recognize and hear, simultaneously, the perspectives of others and her own self-authoring voice. Instead of viewing the dance as a member of the audience, she now understands that she creates the dance by her actions, and she choreographs it while she watches.

The self-authored form of mind is common in organizations, especially in leadership roles (although so is the socialized form of mind, so it is important to never

assume that the leader with whom you are dealing is necessarily self-authoring). About 41 percent of adults see the world through this form of mind, or, much more rarely, in the midzone between the self-authoring and the self-transforming form of mind.

The self-transforming form of mind. As I describe above, when someone with a socialized mind questions the infallibility of her external guides, she begins to develop the internal guide that is the hallmark of the self-authored form of mind. Similarly, when someone with a self-authored mind begins to question the infallibility of his internally driven self-authoring system, he begins to take steps toward becoming self-transforming. This move toward the self-transforming form of mind is almost never seen before midlife, and even then it is seen rarely. Still, because the world today may make demands on leaders for capacities beyond the self-authoring mind, the self-transforming mind is an important one to begin to understand.

Those at this form of mind are tuned in to all the various constituencies around them. They see multiple layers of every issue and can hold even very different perspectives simultaneously. Instead of viewing others as people with separate and different inner systems, those making meaning with a self-transforming form of mind see across inner systems to look at the similarities that are hidden inside what used to look like differences. These people are less likely to see the world in terms of dichotomies or polarities. They are more likely to believe that what we often think of as black and white are just various shades of gray whose differences are made more visible by the lighter or darker colors around them. Unlike those making meaning with a self-authored form of mind, those who are self-transforming are likely to be less ideological, less easy to pin down about a particular opinion or idea. This is because those with a self-transforming mind are more oriented to the *process* of leadership than to any single product or outcome.

So what would someone with a self-transforming mind make of the leadership challenge described earlier in this chapter? First of all, the challenge itself is likely described incorrectly for it to be the thinking of someone who is self-transforming; he is unlikely to feel "blindsided" at all. Instead, he is likely to feel the central pulls of curiosity and open-mindedness. Take Justin as an example.

He knew that he would have to bring up this pattern at his next meeting with Monique, but he did not feel worried or concerned about that. Remembering a time when he would have cared very much about vertical reporting line, Justin smiled at his former self. These days, he appreciated Monique's interest in his direct reports, and felt good about a place with open doors regardless of reporting structure. Indeed, he had found that lately people from all over the organization were seeking him out for his thoughts

and perspectives on a variety of things—or for him to ask them questions to help them get clear. Still, Justin would need to talk with Monique about it, because Justin knew that many of his direct reports were uncomfortable with the ambiguity of who should talk to whom about which projects. It was even changing the culture of the team, and there were both good and bad parts to that change. Some people liked more clarity about such things, and that perspective should be as valuable as Justin's own. In fact, he carried that perspective inside himself even as he moved away from his attachment to it. Justin welcomed the chance to stretch his own thinking in conversation with Monique, Jonathan, and others.

The self-transforming form of mind is by far the least common: Less than 1 percent of the population understands the world in this way. With the aging of the baby boomers, however, and the medical innovations—at least in the developed world—that keep people healthy and sharp into increasing old age, it is likely that there will be more and more people who see the world with at least the beginnings of a self-transforming mind. As this happens, organizations will have to reconceptualize important parts of senior roles and responsibilities if they want to take advantage of the great riches of this, the most complex perspective yet described.

SO WHAT?

The most important question to ask of any theory is “so what?” If there are these differences, what does that mean for me and my work? The answer to this from my perspective is: Everything. Whether you think about it or not, your own form of mind shapes your world and influences everything you see or think about. And every time you speak to another person, think about another person, or want something from another person, that person's form of mind becomes important to you whether you like it or not. So why is it that this theory is not common knowledge? Because it is complicated, and mostly it has been useful only to people with the time and energy to study it in academic circles. This is changing, though. In this book I build on work being done by practitioners who are trying to make adult developmental theories useful to adults in organizations.¹¹

ETHICS

If you have hung in with me to this point, chances are good that you have some willingness to try on this adult developmental thing (a willingness which, among other things, bodes well for your own development; more on this later). You might even be beginning to think that this developmental idea might be useful in your

work in some powerful ways. Let me say a couple of things about that here, and look for me to add to the list of moral and ethical issues as the book progresses.

Perhaps the two most serious pieces of criticism lobbed at developmental theories are (1) that they are necessarily judgmental and (2) that they privilege some things over others. These concerns are important because they are true. Developmental theories *are* hierarchical, and they do have the internal belief that as you move along your developmental path, you have more of some things than you had before (and, necessarily, more of some things than others who are not yet as far as you). Developmental theories do also privilege some things; constructive-developmental theories privilege ability to take multiple perspectives and see many shades of gray.

I believe that while these critiques are true, they are not inherently problematic. We all have judgments inside us about other people in our lives. Developmental theories do not create such judgments; they shape them and offer a framework for making good decisions about them. The difference between “I’m frustrated with Peter because he can’t ever make up his mind for himself” and “I’m frustrated about what to do with Peter because he hasn’t yet developed the capacity to make up his mind for himself” is enormous. While both sentences point to the same issue, the second sentence—aided by a developmental perspective—points to a time in the future when Peter might be able to do that which he cannot yet do, and also hints that there may be some practical ideas to support him before he gets there. Similarly, we all make decisions about more and less (we may have colleagues who are “super smart” or “incredibly high on emotional intelligence” or “really in need of people skills”). Development is just another way of categorizing our judgments, so that we can test them and decide whether they’re worth holding on to—and worth helping our clients work on.

Developmental theories, like all theories, are tools. Good theories (like the one this book uses) are particularly useful tools. Any tool can be used for good or used for harm. Because the theory described in this book is a particularly potent one, and because it deals with something most people do not even begin to think about, those who understand it have a distinct advantage. Understanding developmental theory gives you the advantage of tailoring interventions more carefully to the individuals involved, of opening opportunities, of giving people a chance to grow into a job instead of assuming that someone does not have “leadership potential.” But it is also true that knowing about the meaning-making systems of others allows people to create more useful propaganda, better-targeted manipulation. Also, since many people have a higher-is-better orientation, using developmental models is far more risky than talking about someone’s personality style.

By the time you finish this book, you may have yet another ethical problem on your hands, so consider this fair warning. You may walk away with not only an understanding of these developmental differences but also a desire to support people to grow. It is in fact my hope that you do acquire both of those things on our journey together. This leads us into even more complex ethical territory, though Growing is difficult work, and it brings losses along with the gains (as we lose who we once were in order to become who we will be next). You may find that you suddenly have a long list of people you think could use a little push to get back onto the developmental highway. Or you might want to do as I suggest throughout and try to make our workplaces more supportive of people's growth.

It's one thing to try and grow when you have your eyes open about what you're doing and what the risks are. It's another thing to support others to grow when you're not sure they know what they're in for. And yet at the same time, it doesn't seem like a very helpful idea to withhold developmental possibilities and supports from people for fear that they won't like where they end up. You see the quandary. I've dealt with this by offering developmental supports and at the same time creating ways for collectives to work together to bring their highest capacities to the team. Ultimately, my hope would be that as we understood the journey of our lives and what was possible for us, we would be able to make good choices that help us live into our full potential, remembering that not every child who has an ear for music and long fingers that can span two octaves on a piano actually wants to be a concert pianist.

This all means that we will plunge ahead carefully, noticing the powerful things we can learn and the important things we cannot learn as we peer through this lens. If together we can be both open to these ideas and also skeptical, together we can shape this theory into a set of new and potentially transformative set of ideas and practices to support everyone who wants to change and grow on the job.

2 DIVING DEEPER

You are in an endless line, waiting to pass through security to get to your airplane. You've been inching forward, transferring your briefcase from hand to hand, shuffling to hold your book and coat and lunch. Finally, you get to the table and begin to load your things into bins to go through the X-ray machine. You chat with the people in front of you and behind you as you all take off coats and shoes and belts. Then, just as you lift your final bag toward the conveyor belt, a man three people behind you steps forward and begins putting his bags and trays on the belt in front of you. You watch, open-mouthed, as he finishes with his bags and then saunters through the metal detector. You shuffle through, watch your first bag come off the conveyor belt and then his, and finally, after he is long gone, your last. You are stuck between amusement and irritation, and you know that if you had been afraid of missing your plane, you would have felt rage.

People do selfish, thoughtless things every day. They do kind and generous things every day. Sometimes they do not even notice the difference. The question about the rude traveler above and all the other people whom you brush against isn't so much, "Why did you do that?" (although that might be a good question, too) but rather, "How did you make sense of your actions there?" The rude traveler does not think of himself as The Rude Traveler. He thinks of himself as the harried traveler, the frustrated-with-the-person-in-front-of-me-with-too-much-stuff traveler, the almost-missing-my-plane traveler. Or maybe he was lost in thought and did not notice that he had skipped ahead in line. Or maybe he was a flight attendant and used to skipping to the front of the line and forgetting that he was not in his uniform that day. In any case, your staying lost in *your* experience of him will never open up a profitable place for learning and change. In order to be a good help on someone's journey toward transformation, you need to understand the world as *he* sees the world, not as *you* see him.

In this chapter, we will dive more deeply into the four forms of mind of adulthood, and we will spend some time seeing how each of these forms of mind sees