

## **Promoting Artmaking to Develop Empathic School Leaders: A Sociocultural Model**

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### **Abstract**

This article makes a meaningful contribution to the field of educational leadership by offering a conceptual model centered on artmaking as a means to promote authentic empathic responses. Authors present an overview of artmaking as an analytical space to promote social justice-oriented work. They examine a call for school reform through artmaking as sensemaking and present a sociocultural conceptual model to promote the implementation of artmaking as sensemaking to promote social justice-oriented work around the globe.

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Did you know more Black men and women entered the criminal justice system than were enslaved in the United States in 1850? Alexander (2010) analyzes the extent Blacks continue to face housing, education, employment, racial, and economic discrimination, despite post-Civil Rights efforts to transform societal practices and policies. These unjust ways of knowing and being perpetuate the mass incarceration and racialized social control of Black people. Alexander identifies these unjust practices as a racial caste system, which permeates Black communities. The caste system utilizes the criminal justice system to target Black men and women. The system promotes additional civil penalties to sentencing such as, no access to public housing, denial of student loans, and harsh prison sentences. These racialized practices and policies continue to permeate school communities and grassroots organizations with the election of President Trump in 2016.

Since his presidential election, a nationwide wave of discrimination, hate speech, and violence has impacted K-12 schools and higher education. The South Asian Americans Leading

Together (SAALT, 2018), which is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization addressing racial justice and advocates for the civil rights of all South Asians in the United States, documented 302 hate-related incidents from November 2016-2017, which is a 45% increase over the previous year (p. 3). The Southern Poverty Law Center (2018) identified 1,020 hate groups across the United States. Over the last three years, since President Trump took office, the nation witnessed a three-year trend of increasing hate groups, which may give rise to paranoia and rage among White Supremacists (see Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019). Furthermore, it is important to recognize the rise in hate groups does not only comprise of White Supremacists. Between 2017-2018, this increase in hate groups also includes a 22% increase in Black Nationalist memberships (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019, para. 19). Those who identify as Black Nationalists often are characterized as anti-Semitic, anti-lesbian/gay/bisexual/queer (LGBTQ), and anti-white (see Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019). The influx seems aligned with increasing xenophobic political rhetoric, including white supremacist groups, President Trump and his administration, elected political officials, and mainstream media. In March of 2019, several social injustices were shared across the United States. White students at Newport High School engaged in anti-Semitic behaviors when they posed and posted photos on social media with red cups arranged in the shape of a swastika and appearing to engage in a Nazi salute (Chiu, 2019). On the other side of the United States, white students from Hoover and Spain Park High Schools in Hoover, Alabama were captured on social media. Teens were caught using disturbing racial slurs including, “F-k n-gers and F-k Jews” (see Klausner, 2019, para 4) and announcing the need for concentration camps for racial minorities. In addition to high school students engaging in hate, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the nation’s foremost civil rights organization, wrote letters to Congress on March 29, 2019 requesting they address issues of domestic terrorism against Black activists, who are being tracked and monitored by U.S. government agencies (see NAACP, 2019). As educators and school leaders navigate and address hate and harassment issues in schools, we are reminded of school community’s moral responsibility to denounce incidents of intimidation, hate, and bullying, which have no place in schools (Pollock, 2017). At this moment of cultural awakening around the world, the focus on social injustice could not be more timely.

### **Purpose**

We recognize artmaking as sensemaking as a critical means to address positive social change (see Eisner, 2008; Greene, 1980, 1987). Raising awareness, increasing critical consciousness, building bridges among communities, encouraging systemic change, and fostering empathic responses play a significant role to engage and empower school communities to address increasing social justice issues (see Southern Poverty Hate Map, 2018) throughout the United States. As authors who identify as social justice leaders, we continue to utilize artmaking as a means of addressing and engaging in critical issues facing K-12 school communities and understand the creation of artmaking and sensemaking as a social justice practice. The process becomes a meaningful catalyst bridging communities and addressing injustices faced by those who live on the margins. This article makes a meaningful contribution to the field of educational leadership by offering a conceptual model centered on artmaking as a means to promote authentic empathic responses. We begin with an overview of artmaking as an analytical space to promote social justice-oriented work. Next, we examine a call for school reform through

artmaking as sensemaking. Finally, we present a sociocultural conceptual model to promote the implementation of artmaking as sensemaking to promote social justice-oriented work around the globe.

### **Overview of Artmaking**

Educators interested in deepening their understanding of systemic and structural influences of hate-related incidents in schools may consider interrupting these oppressive ways of knowing and being through social justice-oriented literature. Preparing school leaders and teachers to promote meaningful transformations in K-12 schools is no easy task. Across the nation, school communities face dynamic obstacles at a time in which social justice work is often placed on the back burner due to high stakes testing. These state and federal mandates handed down from those in positions of power often encourage, support, and inform curricula and policy (Marshall & Oliva, 2010). These demands suggest external entities define student achievement, leaving little room for school leaders and educators to deepen their understanding of what these mandates mean for communities served (Pounder, Reitzug, & Young, 2002; Skrla & Scheurich, 2003). Despite these often difficult, rigid policies, school leaders interested in promoting social justice-oriented work must look within, consider the influence of these oppressive policies on self as leader, impact on marginalized communities, and contemplate the extent they are prepared to internalize what it means to undergo transformational leadership (see Shields, 2003). Those interested in this significant work are called to critically reflect on these challenges as opportunities for oneself to actively participate in collaborative responsibility (see Normore, 2008) and envision themselves as movers and shakers (Adams & Goldbard, 2001; Greene, 1995). This compelling community-based work finds its roots at the intersection of social justice, equity, art, activism, and education.

As educators engage in social justice work, art-based approaches may be considered. The arts provide opportunities to engage in imaginative possibilities, problem-solving, creativity, and the capacity to transform practices that sustain oppression as it weaves throughout history and locality. When school leaders tune arts-based approaches toward social justice-oriented work, the arts may play a vital role in making visible the narratives, counter narratives, and experiences of school community members who are often rendered invisible by structures of dominance. Of equal importance, arts-based approaches provide opportunities for people to confront how they have learned to view the world. This new understanding creates new lenses for perception and the relation of self and others (see Hinderliter, Kaizen, Maimon, Mansoor, & McCormick, 2009). Utilizing arts-based approaches as social justice art is not a monolithic term. These ways of knowing draw upon a myriad of ideologies rooted in civil rights, feminism, queer politics, postcolonial discourses, disability studies, and Marxism/neo-Marxism.

Social justice-oriented artmaking as sensemaking is rooted in activism, equity, social justice pedagogies, and equity-oriented literacies. When we think about relationships among social justice, artmaking, and meaningful change, as authors (i.e., university professor, teacher, high school students), we question the possible versus the present. The word transcendence comes to mind, which describes the role of the learner as artist transcending the here and now, and ultimately, imaginative possibilities. Artmaking calls upon individuals to be present and consider the way in which lived experiences shape people's ways of knowing and being. We use the word transcend to suggest that as learners engaged in arts-based work, we must go beyond conventional practices and transcend oppressive structures established by society. By

transcending or moving beyond conventional ways of knowing and responding, we have the capacity to deepen understanding of self and others. And ultimately, as artists, we transcend boundaries.

These principles play a significant role in engaging artists in diverse learning experiences and inspire learners to increase their critical consciousness regarding historical societal inequities facing marginalized populations (see Ayers, Quinn, & Stovall, 2009; Garber, 2004). Furthermore, artmaking as sense-making urges learners to look within and deepen their understanding of the lived experiences of self and others; inspires critical reflection with self and others, and encourages learners to participate in the interruption and dismantling of oppressive systems to foster humanity (see Dewhurst, 2010, 2011, 2012).

Artmaking as well as broader cultural movements often reflect the past, present, and future societal issues. The Harlem Renaissance (i.e., 1919–1929), the Civil Rights Movement (i.e., 1950s and 1960s), the concept of cultural democracy guiding grassroots artists (i.e., 1970s and 1980s), the promotion of civic dialogue (i.e., 1990s), and civic roles and community-based practices (1990s and 2000s) all play a significant role in weaving the arts with advances toward social justice. Throughout these movements, artists and the arts play a critical role in reflecting society. Artists around the world continue to create and present artmaking that confronts, challenges, probes, and reveals truths. The presence and creation of the arts evokes a critical consciousness and public discourse to enhance awareness, shift attitudes, and move people to meaningful action. And today, the arts continue to encourage this critical dialogue through aesthetic means to prepare school leaders to confront historical social justice issues facing K-12 schools in the United States. Artistry and leadership encourage the exploration of spiritual and moral dimensions of relationships (Kandinsky, 1977), social realities (see Samier, 2006), understanding of self (see Bailin, 2015; Boske, 2011), problem-solving (see Katz-Buonincontro & Phillips, 2011) and activism (Boske, 2012; Rapp, 2002). Some arts-based mediums utilize photography (see Arnold & Crawford, 2014), visual and performing arts (see Boske, 2011), and sound and music (see Boske & Liedel, 2017).

The process of artmaking as sense-making engages directly with school communities and urges members to come together to develop collaborative projects around real issues. Learners are encouraged to develop a purposeful and relevant artmaking in relationship to a school leader's intention, context, and concept. Artmaking is one means of engaging social justice and equity-oriented work. The aesthetic experience has the capacity to afford all school-community members a myriad of ways to create and promote democratic values, practices, and policies. This process, therefore, places artmaking as sensemaking at the heart of social justice and equity-oriented work. Furthermore, artmaking explores the myriad of conditions marginalized populations face due to race, class, native language, gender, gender expression, sexuality, religion/beliefs/faith, immigration status, ability (i.e., cognitive, social, emotional, physical) and other differences. These social, political, economic, and cultural understandings deeply reflect a learner's artmaking and capacity to understand the power of artmaking in promoting meaningful change (see Dewhurst, 2011). The process, therefore, inspires learners to engage in artmaking as sensemaking through inquiry, research, reflection, and exploration. As the artist draws meaning from lived experiences and ways of knowing, the artist is encouraged to not only translate these new understandings into artmaking, but to consider the ways in which their new understandings, which are embedded in their artmaking intend to impact society or social injustice. Artmaking, therefore, depends upon authentic interactions among self, others, and the community. The

process of acquiring new ways of understanding and being are often dependent on support, resources, and exposure to social justice issues.

As learners engage in authentic artmaking, they fluidly move back and forth from form to feeling and feeling to form. Students are encouraged to engage in critical thinking in effort to seek and create knowledge. They evaluate their lived experiences analyzing realities facing those deemed other. Learners utilize their artmaking to capture the way in which exploits of social injustices influence the lived experiences of disenfranchised populations. This analytical thinking provides spaces to synthesize differences among self, community, and those marginalized. As they translate their ways of knowing into artmaking, their artmaking becomes a driving force, a new way of responding, a new way of being. These alternative arts-based approaches, in which may include a myriad of art forms. Learners engage in the creation of murals, photography, poetry slams, and digital oral narratives that question the conditions marginalized populations often face in schools.

### **Call for Reform**

U.S. government and business leaders called for educational reform since the late 1980s, early 1990s, and 2000s including, but not limited to, *A National at Risk*, *No Child Left Behind*, and *Race to the Top*. Their vision found its roots in beliefs centered on transforming education through international comparisons. Schools had a new purpose: to increase economic development, which overall, was sold as a means to improve global competition. These eras stressed the need to measure student academic progress. Reformers therefore, promoted reform through school choice, improve “quality” teaching, and student learning through standardized test scores. Over the last 35 years, the U.S. embraced these reforms by exclusively emphasizing students’ math, reading, and science scores.

This call for educational reform continues to gain status as business leaders and right-winged politicians promote mandates and various legislation to promote the educational quality of schools. These reforms, however, provide little confidence in the capacity for school communities to provide the intellectual and moral leadership for youth. Although closing achievement gaps between Children of Color and White children, children in regular education and children in special education, as well as students identified as English Language Learners and students whose first language is English, and other marginalized groups involves a majority of Americans, business and government leaders’ legislation are left with empty promises of meaningful reform (Ravitch, 2011).

There is a need to prepare school leaders to engage in equity and social justice-oriented leadership to address failing legislation and the root causes of educational failure in the United States. Since the 1990s, interconnectedness among educational leadership, schools, and social justice-oriented work has been identified as priority. Defining the movement and what is meant by social justice educational leadership is at the forefront of the field (see Bogotch, 2002, 2008; English, 2003; Shoho, Merchant, & Lugg, 2011), including, but not limited to problematizing what is meant by being a social justice leader (Dantely & Tillman, 2010; English, 2008; Theoharis, 2007). Furthermore, creating school leadership preparation programs that provide candidates with opportunities to engage in social justice-oriented work in schools is essential to this movement (see Boske, 2011, 2012; Furman & Shields, 2005; Shields, 2014)

Teaching social justice and developing opportunities for school leaders to develop new ways of knowing and living social justice provide them with spaces to consider ways to provide

all students, especially those who live on the margins, with democratically inclusive environments (Dewey, 1932; Freire, 1972). As storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives, school leaders have the capacity to deepen their ways of knowing and responding to the increasingly diverse communities they serve. One means of emphasizing the interconnectedness of social justice and equity-oriented work in schools centers on the senses and artmaking. This process creates opportunities for school leaders to make meaning from their lived experiences and discover connections among self, community, and social justice and equity-oriented work.

Preparation programs have the capacity to play the role of bekons in promoting social justice and equity-oriented work. Because these programs play an integral role in developing leaders who understand the influence of systems on those served, we suggest utilizing artmaking as activism to move beyond conventional understandings of activism. The process encourages school leaders to consider their capacity to perpetuate practices, beliefs, attitudes, and policies for those with or without advantages. Those interested in engaging in social justice and equity-oriented work may need opportunities to examine these asymmetrical relations of power in order to create imaginative possibilities, build solidarity, and actively engage in strategic interventions to dismantle oppressive structures. There is a need for school leaders understanding how to address discursive practices and policies in the name of social justice to sustain this significant work in order to foster individual and systemic transformations necessary to empower members of disenfranchised populations in schools (Bogotch, 2002; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Brown, 2004, 2006). Addressing, sustaining, and promoting social justice and equity-oriented work encourages school leadership preparation programs to consider the influence of curriculum, pedagogies, and assessments. The implications of preparing school leaders to serve in these capacities also serves as an important reminder to consider ways to frame, evaluate, and improve educational leadership preparedness. Research (see Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Scheurich, 1998; Theoharis, 2007) suggests promoting social justice-oriented work suggests school leaders play a significant role in promoting and sustaining systemic change (Bogotch, 2002; Grogan & Andrews, 2002).

Because school leaders are storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively lead storied lives, their ways of knowing and responding to the world and those they serve are essential to understanding how they think, learn, and live. School leaders who promote social justice and equity-oriented work may engage in inquiry centered on leading and empowering marginalized populations. Therefore, from this perspective, lived experience is the starting point for understanding school leaders who promote this work, their understanding of self, their relation of self to others, and their relation of self with their environment (see Dewey, 1934, 1938, 1961).

Although school leaders draw meaning by engaging with their environment, there is a need to consider to what extent the senses (i.e., sight, smell, sound, taste and touch) influence how school leaders understand the influence of the senses. The way in which the senses shape school leaders' understandings of beliefs, attitudes, practices, policies, values, and community norms plays a significant role in shaping their decision-making. One way school leaders may make sense of their environments is to consider the senses, which may be embedded throughout their biases, practices, and understanding of what it means to lead in socially just and equitable ways. Therefore, sense-making can be understood as a political act, engaging school leaders in assuming that what makes sense to them is but one possible interpretation among a myriad of possibilities. The increased attention to understand school leaders and their capacity to engage in

social justice and equity-oriented work (see Bogotch, 2014; Theoharis, 2007) aligns with arts-based principles centered on understanding sensory ways of knowing. Therefore, artmaking is as an experiential mode of inquiry that reveals insights and ways of understanding that impact school leaders' capacities for knowing (e.g., Boske, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2014; Boske & Liedel, 2017; Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008; Eisner, 2002b, 2008). These ways of knowing find their roots in expressive art therapies, which can be categorized with movement, dance, art, drama, performance, and music therapies (see Rogers, 1993). The power of engaging in the arts affords has the capacity to afford school leaders with insights to navigate challenges, deepen understanding of self and self with others, and enhance imaginative thinking (Eisner, 2002a; Greene, 1995; Rogers, 1993).

This creative practice is a process in which school leaders find and discover themselves through their deepened sense of emotions. The school leader's capacity to express their inner feelings and thoughts emerges by creating and presenting outer forms, artmaking. The person-centered inquiry utilizes the arts to talk about feelings and express oneself in meaningful ways. These creative connections provide school leaders with opportunities to recognize their emotions, make meaning from lived experiences, and expand and deepen their ways of knowing oneself. Therefore, utilizing artmaking for making sense of school leaders' lived experiences through sensory exploration may create spaces to better understand their responses, decisions made, and insights regarding the impact of those decisions (Eisner, 1994, 2002a, 2002b, 2008; Ellsworth, 2005; Springgay, 2008).

In response to the emphasis on social justice and equity-oriented work over the past two decades in educational leadership research, scholars contend artmaking as sensemaking may play an integral role in providing school leaders with opportunities to address social justice issues in schools. For example, Greene (1995) calls for approaches leading to the release of imaginative possibilities while Eisner (2002a) argues artmaking is an essential means of transforming consciousness. Interconnections between artmaking and sensemaking have the capacity to influence a school leader's ways of knowing impacting the individual's affect, thinking, and intuition (Eisner, 2008; Zwicky, 2003). Therefore, artmaking as sensemaking focuses on understanding emotions school leaders come to know (Langer, 1972). One means of understanding these interconnections is to identify artmaking as an abstract symbolic projection of vital emotional and intellectual tensions among the mind, feelings, and process (Langer, 1953, 1972). In other words, artmaking as sensemaking produces presentational symbols giving form to feeling.

Social justice and equity-oriented work is challenging. Artmaking as sensemaking encourages educators to engage in possibility, engaging a learner's heart, mind, and spirit (see Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Pounder et al., 2002). Several scholars (see Bogotch, 2012; Brown, 2004, 2006; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Starratt, 2003) urge preparation programs to promote social change in K-12 schools. Those who actively participate in this significant work may benefit from reflecting on their practice, beliefs, and emotions (see Boske, 2011). One means of exploring these pathways includes artmaking. Art is a means to express one's thoughts, feelings, and ideas.

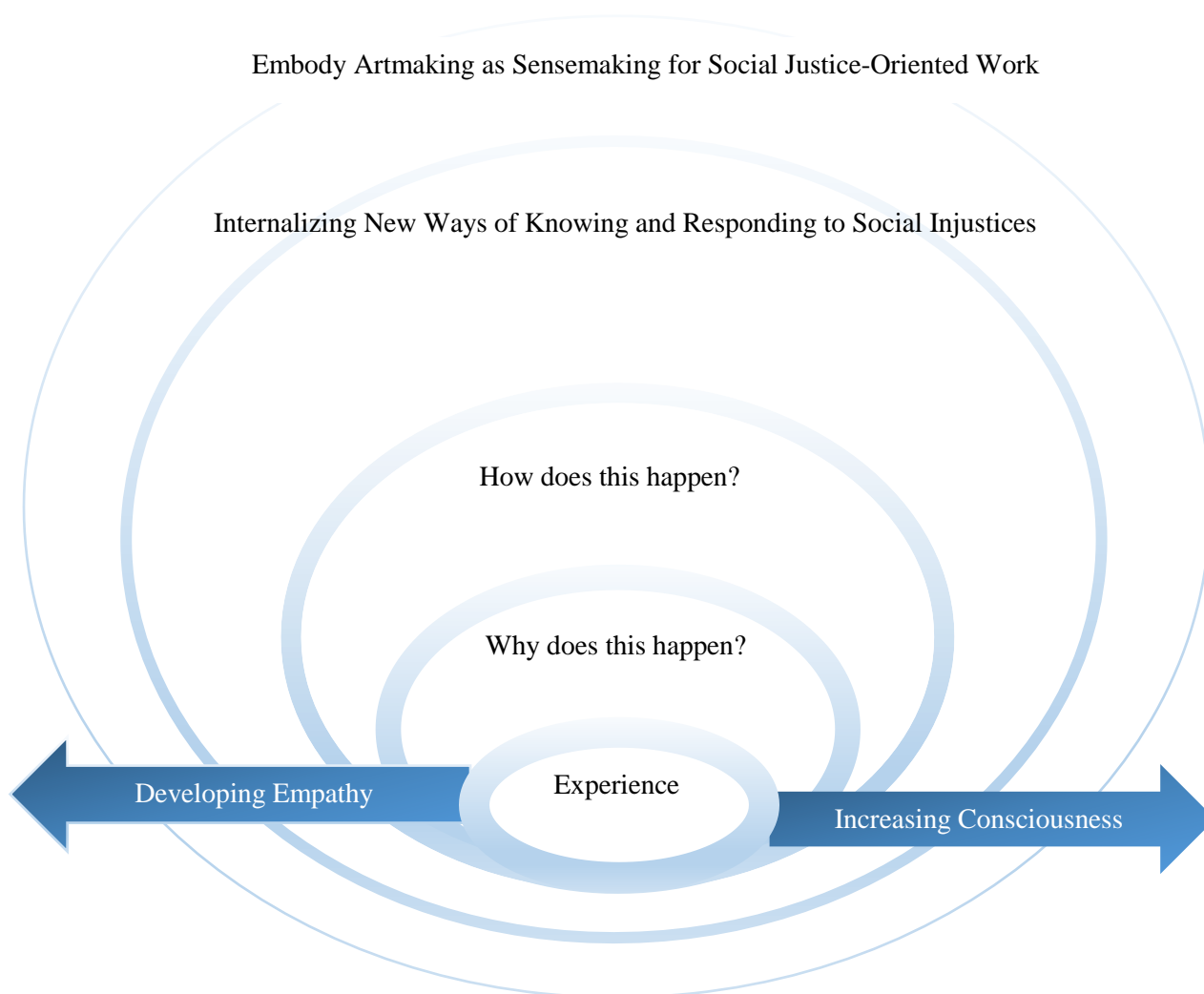
The increased interest to promote artmaking as social justice and equity-oriented work in schools can be found in multiple venues. These venues include recent professional conferences (see University Council for Education Administrators (UCEA) at <http://www.ucea.org/about-ucea>), books (see *They're Called the "Throwaways"* edited by Dr. Christa Boske (2018b) at <https://brill.com/view/title/39274>), and a special journal issue (see *National Forum of*

*Educational Administration and Supervision Journal*, edited by Dr. Christa Boske (2018a) at <http://www.nationalforum.com/Journals/NFEASJ-SI2018/NFEASJ-SI2018.htm>). These scholarly works suggest a growing popularity across art education, social justice education, education, and school leadership preparation (see National Arts Education Association, 2018). Art as a person-centered inquiry combines reflection, self-expression, and creativity to support educators in solving problems, overcoming stress, and creating context-specific interventions to navigate challenges. Educational leaders interested in this work may draw from writings and research to enhance their understanding of arts-based person-centered work. The artmaking process, therefore, is a means to engage school leaders in focusing on creating ideas, deepening understanding of self and others, and avoiding binary thinking of right versus wrong.

### **Sociocultural Model**

Enacting social justice-oriented practices and policies in schools begins with increasing consciousness and organizing actions toward justice and social change. The power of arts-based approaches reveals injustices, operations of power and privilege, engages imaginative possibilities, and provokes critical reflection (see Greene, 1987). As we deepened our understanding of artmaking as sensemaking and what it means to transform oneself and embody artmaking, we created a sociocultural conceptual model (see Figure 1) that guides school leaders' senses and new ways of knowing to transform consciousness, imaginative possibilities, ethic of care, reform (see Seo & Creed, 2002), and empathic responses. The arts-based conceptual model draws upon sociocultural theories of learning. These understandings suggest school leaders develop new ways of knowing and responding through cultural, social, historical, and institutional contexts. These contexts provide school leaders with spaces to draw meaning from lived experiences, social interactions, and cultural experiences (see Chaiklin & Lave, 1993; Cole & Engestrom, 1994; Nasir & Hand, 2006). These understandings, therefore, shape the way in which school leaders make decisions. This conceptual model calls upon those who prepare school leaders to provide spaces in which learners examine their lived experiences, sense of self as leader, positions of power, purpose of maintaining the status quo, and the extent their ways of knowing and being perpetuate oppressive practices and policies (Seo & Creed, 2002; Battilana, 2006).





*Figure 1.* Developing empathy through the embodiment of artmaking as sensemaking in a sociocultural conceptual model.

The model incorporates an enactive approach to developing empathic responses through embodying artmaking, which suggests cognition is not something that occurs within, but as a result of interactions, experiences, and the creation of meaning. School leaders live their artmaking and thus, their artmaking reflects their responses, decision-making, and how they lead. As school leaders draw meaning from their lived experiences and new ways of knowing, their patterns of self-perception, new understandings, and responses toward self and others emerge.

The process begins with the individual. As people look within, they begin the process by examining their beliefs, values, and perceptions. This reflective process encourages school leaders to deepen their understanding regarding of society's role in promoting beliefs and values, development of self, and relationships among self, society, and school communities. Within the model, the way in which school leaders draw upon their meaning-making is identified as consciousness (see Edmund Husserl, the original founder of phenomenology). School leaders increase awareness, develop perceptions, and are conscious of something. In this model, a

person's consciousness, therefore, is inseparable from the process of developing an empathic self through artmaking as sense-making. The process, therefore, provides individuals with a means of moving through new understandings of self and others, boundaries, developing new ideas and ultimately, embodying artmaking as a means of developing authentic empathic responses. These processes suggest individuals move from spectator to embodying and living their new understandings and ways of being. As people develop their sense of self within a social world, these new ways of knowing and being shape beliefs, values, ideas, and emotions, which serve as a starting point for understanding the self as school leader. The embodiment of diverse human experiences through artmaking as sensemaking affords people with opportunities to look within and deepen their awareness. This deepened awareness plays an integral role in school leaders embodying the artmaking and engaging in self-initiated movement toward social justice-oriented work. The model suggests that when individuals project their new understandings of self and embody these understandings, their artmaking plays a fundamental role in contemplating the role of self. The new self recognizes the influence of feelings, lived experiences, and interoception, which is a lesser-known self-regarding how people understand what occurs within one's body (see Dworkin, 2007).

This sociocultural model considers the significant contributions artmaking as sensemaking makes to the development of an individual's empathic self. The conceptual model emphasizes interactions among individuals as artists and the culture in which they live. The gradient lines from the center to the outside of the model symbolize the significance of transparency or self-reflection throughout this transformative process.

Within this model, artmaking is the workings of an individual's mind, body, and spirit; thus, artmaking can be seen as a rhythmical and reflexive dance. As people engage in this process, artmaking as sensemaking has the capacity to deepen empathic responses. These new ways of knowing and responding emerge as a cultural expression of self, moving beyond text and language and shifting to feeling and form. Therefore, artmaking may create spaces in which self-narratives are shared, valued, and transformed toward new ways of being. These new ways of being suggest individuals internalize their new understandings of social justice and equity-oriented work through artmaking. Their first-tellings, lived experiences, and ways of knowing are deeply connected to their artmaking. In essence, people who engage in this process acquire new insights into the why, how, and what of social justice-oriented work.

The embodiment of artmaking as sensemaking is not only central to this conceptual model, but plays an integral role in transforming an individual's sense of self. Artmaking is not an instrument to deepen empathy, but rather, the primary signifier. This signifier exemplifies the power of the empathic self in the transmission of self as a social justice and equity-oriented activist.

This conceptual model specifically focuses on the power of artmaking as a means of requiring bodily attentiveness and attunement. Both are essential to the participatory process of artmaking as sensemaking. This embodiment process encourages exchanges within these three spheres: artmaking, sensemaking, and consciousness. Together, they influence and shape the aesthetic and expressive-affective self throughout the meaning making process. Artmaking, therefore, provides spaces for the self as learner and capacity for developing empathic responses that emerge from the new understandings of self.

The model encompasses an enactive approach to cognition as a form of embodied artmaking. As people make meaning from lived experiences and new understandings, patterns of perception and action emerge. Within this model, artmaking as sensemaking begins at the point

in which the individual lives and recognizes this space as the starting point for understanding the world. The way in which individuals draw upon meaning is identified as consciousness, which suggests people are perceiving, aware, and conscious about something. Therefore, in this conceptual model, consciousness is inseparable from the process of developing an empathic self through artmaking as sense-making.

The reflective documentation within the process captures a person's insights, ways of knowing, emotions, changes, decisions, and ways of responding to engaging in the artmaking process. Without this critical reflection, the transformative nature of the artmaking process may be all but lost. Within this phase, their attention is directly focused on what we do, why we do what we do, and how we came to know and respond to the world. People are encouraged to stop and analyze their responses in the midst of their doing and being. Furthermore, they are in search of understanding oneself, oneself in relation to others, and oneself with their artmaking. Within this space, the promotion of deepening understanding and critical consciousness, the significance of empathic responses emerges.

People immerse themselves in the artmaking and infuse meaning making throughout the process. This in-depth examination of self and others is essential to working on meaning-making, and less on technical aspects of artmaking (see Greene, 1984). The experience is not skill-based, but consciousness-based; therefore, the process cannot be hurried. As people encounter this reflective process, their focus on self and self with others motivates them to continue to inquire ways to translate their new understandings into artmaking.

As individuals engage in this multisensory layered process, their experiences are rooted in sense-making to deepen understanding of why social injustices exist in society. Their multisensory experiences are scaffolded. The development of intellectual knowledge and facilitating intentional learning is stressed throughout the process. Gradient lines within the conceptual model symbolize transitions, moving individuals from one phase to the next toward the embodiment of their artmaking. As people become more cognizant of states of embodiment of their artmaking as sensemaking, they become more aware and knowledgeable of their sensory experiences. Their embodiment of artmaking as sensemaking, therefore, becomes an extension of their bodies, of their work, and conveys a multisensory experience of engaging in social justice-oriented work (see Greene, 1980; 1984; 1995).

### **Concluding Remarks**

The promotion of this significant work as an alternative advocacy model for social justice and equity-oriented work may create a new generation of activists.

*Awareness alone is not enough.*

*Silence is the enemy.*

*Artmaking is the voice of self.*

This conceptual model is inherently optimistic. It is a movement that emerges to end address injustice. Artmaking as sensemaking is a commitment to the belief that communities can promote a better world. The art may not interrupt the reproduction of oppressive practices and policies. However, the desire for a better world remains at the heart of this work. This desire requires school leaders and educators to commit to reflecting upon oneself, to be humble, to

disrupt oppressive ideologies or practices, and remain alert to emergent possibilities. The potential to embody imaginative possibilities through artmaking affords school communities with new lenses. Artmaking for social justice has the capacity to cultivate an ethic of care, compassion, and more importantly, authentic empathic responses for every human being within our nation's borders. These new ways of knowing and being encourage educators to stay awake, to embody, and to respond to the world and those they serve in new and meaningful ways.

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