Using the Senses in Reflective Practice

Preparing School Leaders for Non-text-based Understandings

CHRISTA BOSKE
Kent State University

Introduction

WE THINK AND LEARN through multi-layered lived experiences. Because people are storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives, our ways of knowing and responding to the world are essential to understanding the ways people think and learn. People's lives and how they are composed are of interest to both educators and school leaders. Their inquiry centers on understanding learning and teaching, how it takes place, as well as undertaking different beliefs, values, and assumptions within diverse contexts in an effort to find links to learning, teaching, and leading. From this perspective, experience is the starting point for understanding people, their relation of self to others, and to their environment (e.g., Dewey, 1934, 1938, 1961).

School leaders and teachers concerned with student learning recognize the need to pay closer attention to the impact of the nation's deepening cultural texture, racial tensions, and increasing percentage of students from historically disenfranchised populations (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010), and the influence such changes will continue to have on the nation's schools, colleges, and universities (Gay, 2010). Scholars—including Sonia Nieto, Geneva Gay, Jeffrey Brooks, Lisa Delpit, Gerardo Lopez, Patrick Slattery, Michael Dantley, Linda Tillman, and Gloria Ladson-Billings—are concerned about the serious academic achievement problems among children and families who live on the margins. Their underachievement calls for systemic, holistic, authentic, comprehensive, and curriculum transformative interventions in U.S. public schools (e.g., Gay, 2010; Henderson & Gornik, 2007; Sleeter & Grant, 2009). This broad-based and systemic curriculum reform requires deeper and more comprehensive analysis of schools, which needs to be collectively addressed with transformative curriculum leaders who focus on raising consciousness (Burns, 1978; Eisner, 1994; Noddings, 1984). Given these connections, my focus here on questions of equity and access are applicable not only to some strands in the field that focus on questions of teachers as leaders (e.g., Henderson & Gornik, 2007), but also, and perhaps more importantly, speak to core questions that remain central to curriculum studies (e.g.,

Kridel, 2010; Malewski, 2009). In sum, the arguments made here regarding school leaders are simultaneously discussions germane to central questions in curriculum studies.

School leaders are not prepared to engage in transformative curriculum leadership. Instead, they are traditionally prepared to understand their roles as managers of systems rather than deepening their empathic responses and connections with school communities. This article seeks to push at current conceptual boundaries within the field of educational leadership in understanding the relationships between preparing candidates to lead for social justice through the senses—ways in which school leaders perceive their lived experiences and relation to others.

Before continuing it is important to articulate how I have constructed differences between sense-making and artmaking for school leaders in this study. Sense-making is the process by which participants drew meaning from their lived inquiries while engaging in complex reflective processes. Artmaking and audio/video technology were essential tools used to provide participants with spaces to construct meaning making through the senses. Such spaces afforded participants to deepen their ways of knowing and responding to the needs of those they serve, especially for those who live on the margins due to race, class, gender, and other differences from the mainstream. Because of inherent challenges in preparing school leaders to take a more critically conscious stance towards deepening their empathic responses towards children and their communities, especially with issues centered on social justice and equity (Lopez, 2003; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Tooms & Boske, 2010), participants in this study were provided opportunities to engage in sense-making, by which school leaders give meaning to their experiences (Boske, in press; Brown, 2004, 2006).

Programs that emphasize the need for transformative educational school leaders require critical thought and reflection with regard to personal beliefs, lived experiences and cultural identity. Attempts may include building the capacity and will to transform school leaders to deliver policies and practices that address the lived realities of disenfranchised populations. Sometimes such discussions center on disparities facing Children of Color (Ladson-Billings, 1994); school policies that fail to serve marginalized populations (Marshall, 1993; Marshall & Gerstyl-Pepin, 2005); or long-standing achievement gaps between mainstream and marginalized children in U.S. public schools (Apple, 1993; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Marshall & Oliva, 2010). School leaders must interrupt practices that perpetuate the belief that some groups of children are intrinsically more able than other groups of children due to class, skin color, language, sexual identity or gender (Shields, 2003). In light of this, the leader-in-training should be made aware of leadership as a powerful intervening variable in determining whether children from diverse backgrounds are successful or not (Reyes, Scribner, & Parades-Scriner, 1999; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). In this way, those who prepare school leaders must reconsider how programmatic decisions that influence curriculum content and pedagogy foster transformational experiences for aspiring school leaders (Boske & Tooms, 2010). One means of promoting the courage and skill set necessary to sustain social justice and equity work in schools is to provide them with safe spaces to reflect on the impact of sense-making on their school leadership identity.

Although school leaders make meaning from engaging with their environments, those who prepare school leaders have not considered to what extent the senses (i.e., sight, smell, sound, taste and touch) influence how they understand the influence of the senses impacting community norms, attitudes and values as preferences. The way school leaders make sense of their environ-

ments is derived from these senses, which are embedded throughout school practices, curriculum, pedagogy and policy. 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.

There is an urgency to deepen understanding regarding how to create spaces in which school leaders promote and address issues of social justice and equity in U.S. public schools. This increased attention is aligned with arts-based principles centered on understanding sensory ways of *knowing*. Artmaking is recognized as an experiential mode of inquiry that reveals insights and ways of understanding that impact our capacities for knowing (e.g., Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008; Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2008). Utilizing artmaking for *making sense* of our lived experiences through sensory exploration creates spaces for school leaders to consider their actions and reflect upon their impact (e.g., Ellsworth, 2005; Springgay, 2008). This study is significant to furthering the extant literature by examining curriculum through the senses. Specifically, it does so through the use of auditory and video reflections in an effort to create spaces for school leaders to shift their sense-making from text to audio/visual artmaking—a formal curricular decision grounded in the recognition of rich meanings and imaginative possibilities embedded in non-text-based, sensual understandings.

I begin with a brief overview of the significance for preparing school leaders to lead for social justice and the considerations made to utilize sensual reflective practice as a transformative pedagogy in order to link the senses to social justice work in schools. Next, I present three cases of graduate level candidates who engaged in sense-making reflective practices. The article concludes with understanding the implications of this reflective practice in preparing school leaders to address issues of justice in U.S. public schools.

Leading for Social Justice in U.S. Public Schools

Leading for social justice[1] is a highly emotional endeavor requiring courage, integrity, imaginative possibilities, and self-awareness. As school leaders address issues of marginalization within U.S. public schools, they begin to discover aspects of schooling to which they had previously not attended such as fundamental structural inequities (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006), insufficient school funding (Kozol, 1991, 2006) and a lack of highly qualified school personnel within urban and rural communities (Darling-Hammond, 2002, 2005). Within U.S. public schools, children are exposed to the effects of *these* inequities through the perpetuation of hegemonic school practices, which reproduce and reinforce cultural and educational traditions of White, middle-class, English speaking, Christian, heterosexual communities (e.g., Tooms & Boske, 2010; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Marshall & Oliva, 2010). The impact of social justice and equity issues on the lives of underserved populations is so profound that it has begun to cause those who prepare school leaders to reconsider the academic content and pedagogy of their courses in order to provide spaces for candidates to recognize, analyze and respond to systemic inequities (e.g., Boske, in press; Boske & Tooms, 2010; Brown, 2004, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Marshall & Oliva, 2010).

Artmaking as Sense-Making

In response to concerns raised about the importance of addressing issues of social justice, several scholars contend artmaking has the potential to deepen empathic responses and increase readiness to interrupt oppressive school practices. Greene (1995), for example, calls for approaches in education that lead to the release of imagination. She connects artmaking to deepening empathy stressing, "If people cannot imagine a better state of being, they will likely remain stuck or anchored" (p. 52). Eisner (2002) contends artmaking is a vehicle to transform an individual's consciousness, enlarge the imagination and encourage problem-solving is another such example. Artmaking plays a significant role in sense-making, because the act of knowing is interconnected with affect, intuition, and imaginative thinking (Eisner, 2008; Zwicky, 2003). Therefore, artmaking is not about feelings and emotions the artist *has*, it is about which feelings the artist comes to *know* (Langer, 1982). As such scholarship indicates, it has been my experience that the inclusion of artmaking offers school leaders opportunities to increase their critical consciousness and examine how identities are constructed.

One way of understanding processes of artmaking is as a symbolic projection of vital emotional and intellectual tensions between the mind, feeling, and process (Langer, 1972). It is constructed symbolism and presents the artist's "way of feeling" abstractively (Langer, 1953, p. 146). Artmaking produces what Langer calls *presentational* symbols, i.e., symbols that give *form to feeling*. Therefore, artmaking reaffirms the significance of lived experiences and personal knowing of what it means to address issues of social justice (e.g., Land & Stovall, 2009), in this case, in their roles as school leaders.

Context of the Study

In the spring of 2010, a northeastern university created the "Leading for Social Justice" course in response to the University Council of Educational Administrators' (UCEA) call for school leadership preparation programs to center efforts on promoting social justice leaders (e.g., Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Tooms & Boske, 2010). Programmatic course requirements, curriculum, and pedagogy were revised accordingly in order to afford candidates with transformational learning experiences (e.g., Dewey, 1897/2004). Similarly, faculty engaged in an explicit effort to understand the nuances of educational growth for school leaders, embrace the need for self-understanding, and promote the significance of visionary work to reframe curriculum conversations and pedagogical practices (e.g., Brown, 2004, 2006; Shields, 2003).

Leading for Social Justice engaged students in sense-making reflective practices, a process that included increasing critical consciousness through weekly audio/video reflections (e.g., Boske, in press; Brown, 2006), experiential service learning (e.g., Bowden, Billig, & Holland, 2008), and artmaking (with guidance from community artist mentors) (Boske, 2009, in press; Shapiro, 2010). For 15 weeks, students responded to predetermined questions centered on cultural proficiency via audio and video-recorded reflections (e.g., Terrell & Lindsey, 2009), examined lived realities of specific marginalized groups in U.S. schools (e.g., Marshall & Oliva, 2010), conducted an equity audit (e.g., Kozol, 2006; Skrla, Scheurich, & Bell McKenzie, 2009), and took a critical stance on one social justice issue, translating their often emotional-laden responses into visual art that were in turn displayed at the university's gallery space at the end of the semester.

Methodology

This study examined the overarching question: How do students experience encounters with sense-making in such a way to understand, examine, and make meaning in being in relation with school communities as school leaders? To examine this question, I utilized a case study approach to research, a method that was particularly well-suited to the work because of the ways in which it affords the researcher an opportunity to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context across multiple sources of data (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991; Yin, 1994). Data collected for this study consisted primarily of 48 weekly audio/video reflections (three participants and 15 reflections each), field notes, and course assignments (i.e., 3 equity audits, 27 metaphors, 15 small group reflections, 3 action research studies, and 3 artmaking projects).

Three Cases

The remainder of this article focuses on the following three representative cases drawn from 15 students who enrolled in this course.[2] Adrianna is a White, female, inner-city high school English teacher in her late twenties who wants to pursue an assistant principalship in an urban district. James is a White, male, rural high school principal in his early fifties raised in an impoverished town in which his family owned the only "corner store." James entered the program to work toward obtaining his superintendent's licensure. During the first class he stated strongly that, "I have never heard the term social justice in my entire academic career." Marcus is a Black male high school principal in his early thirties who works within a racially segregated middle class suburban community. He enrolled in the course as a requirement for the doctoral program. Unlike the families of White children who choose to send their children to private schools in areas surrounding this community, the student population for the school Marcus serves is over 95% Black.

Analysis

Data analysis consisted of examining and categorizing data evidence to address the initial propositions of a study (Yin, 1994). To do this, I utilized a kind of pattern-matching, one of the most desirable strategies for analysis in case studies because of the ways in which this technique compares an empirically based pattern with a predicted one (Trochim, 1989; Yin, 1994). Analysis yielded the following four emergent themes: (1) Promoting social justice leadership; (2) sense-making and school leadership identity; (3) living inquiries through sense-making; and (4) embodied sense-making through artmaking.

Promoting Social Justice Leadership

Students stressed the shift in their understanding from "school leaders as managers" to addressing issues of social justice and readiness to interrupt oppressive school practices. Being afforded spaces to critically reflect on issues of social justice through sense-making created spaces for participants to promote imaginative possibilities. For example, Marcus emphasized

how the process “allowed him to express things written words alone could not say.” Raising these future leaders’ consciousness about the lived realities of children and families who live on the margins played a pivotal role in their sense-making and helped these students realize the importance of examining the impact of their ways of knowing in understanding the tensions between their beliefs, responses and lived experiences.

In this process, students recognized that transitioning from written words to audio/video “freedom of response spaces” and in turn to metaphors created spaces for personal knowing and reconsidering what it means to respond to the call to lead for social justice and equity issues in schools.

This increased awareness and promotion of social justice issues expanded her discourses of schooling and encouraged Adrianna to begin to identify as a catalyst for making meaningful change in schools.

Marcus similarly emphasized his need to “engage and commit” himself to social justice issues, because “as a Black man I have the moral responsibility to immerse myself in this literature…I have been gone for far too long.” For instance, he realized the promotion of social justice issues “has the potential to push me to reconsider what I do and draw new meanings from these experiences,” which potentially offers “chances to lead for transcendent change.”

As he does in the preceding video data, coming to terms with contemporary realities facing schools, especially for those who live on the margins, created what Marcus identified as an “emotional laden process of continued struggle.”

In this process of identifying this struggle as “opportunities for unexpected gains,” Marcus came to see sense-making as a means of creating spaces in which more realistic perspectives regarding the realities of social justice work emerge.

Sense-Making and School Leadership Identity

The class began by asking students to describe their identities as a combination of positions and tasks associated with their jobs (e.g., disciplinarians, curriculum developers, supervisors) and then to contrast that construction with a vision of a self emerging from their lived experiences. As a result of this framing, participants grappled with understanding the learning self in times of complex meaning making, often referring to their "selves" as "situated" in "rigid spaces, routines, and job descriptions." For example, James noted that "job descriptions" often define "who we are as school leaders" as opposed to considering how "stressing the need to look within and think about how our assumptions, privileges, and beliefs" might influence school leadership identities. Similarly, Adrianna described how she understood her role as "saying what other people consider right" versus "sharing how she makes sense of the world."

Such concerns center on participants' peer acceptance, especially for students who are members of the dominant culture. Adrianna revealed her "guardedness" in her role as a school leader when she turned her written replies to weekly reflections into a prewritten script that her boyfriend filmed at her request. In them, she recognized possible consequences of her not being "true to herself." In an effort to come to terms with this tension between "what others want in her" and "what she wants for herself" as a school leader, she decided to "take a risk" and sharing her ways of knowing by privately filming herself rather than performing for her boyfriend and any other audience, present, or implied.

In light of such comments, it is perhaps not surprising that students' reflections revealed how often they struggled in processes of sense-making that in many ways challenged their traditional approaches to understanding leadership as well as the influence of self as learner. For James this process was "difficult and painful," because he "sees things in himself that he doesn't really want to see as a White male with privilege." His sense-making focused on coming to terms with his privilege and tendency to perpetuate practices in which one group is constructed as more significant than another. As can be seen in the following video data, James came to recognize that his identity plays a significant role in addressing "when and if he will choose to serve those who have been forgotten in schools," positing that using "voice" is essential to "understanding self and what you stand for."

As James internalized a newfound sense of self through this process of sensual meaning making over the course of the semester, he described how "surprised" his colleagues were with his "new" interests in social justice and equity issues. In response, James chose to engage others in pursuing similar processes of sense-making towards equity and access in order to improve the lived experiences of students on their high school campus.

As can be seen in these examples, engaging in identity development centers on making connections between lived experiences, assumptions, and responses towards children and families. Through these experiences participants discovered how the process of looking within can create intense emotional experiences. Adrianna, for example, noted how "surprised" she was when she

"gets emotional" about a documentary, and how her voice "cracks" when she described how the experience influences how she understands her school leadership identity.

The sense-making process in which students engaged encouraged participants to deepen their understanding of the lived realities and historical events paramount to overcoming issues of social injustice in schools. For Marcus, this can be found in his recognition of the power of social construction, identity formation, and the significance of experiential, embodied meaning-making.

> Who I am as a school leader reflects my lived experiences. I am more than just a bunch of adjectives people want to hear, like being organized…I am what I have lived. I realize I am a Black male administrator…this influences how I see the world, how I live my life and how I lead. (Marcus)

As was the case with James, Marcus' school leadership identity continued to evolve through his effort to share his sense-making with young Black males on his campus as a means to encourage them to engage in living their inquiries—to facilitate "difficult conversations" in an effort to "push the boundaries" of what it means to be a student, teacher, community member, and leader.

Thus, as can be seen with James, Adrianna, and Marcus, participants' experiences of understanding identity through sense-making often relied on immersing oneself in new contexts, creating new images of self, and internalizing new learning selves. Similar to the examples provided above, this process was instrumental in creating making the familiar strange for students in this course, an integral aspect to engender a complex web of meaning making necessary for school leadership identity formation towards socially just leadership.

Living Inquiries through Sense-Making

As students' awareness that their constructions of school leadership were but one of many possibilities increased, so did their recognition of the capacity for genuine choice in addressing issues of social justice and equity in schools. For James, this understanding was embedded in the impact of this emotional process in his recognition of the existence of oppression and the role he could play as a school leader to interrupt such practices—he could no longer use the excuse of "not knowing" to "deny" the existence of social injustices.

As he describes in the following sound data, James identifies a catalytic moment in his living inquiry in which he discovers the influence of cultural naming during daily interactions with students, colleagues, and families.

Marcus and Adrianna both had catalytic experiences that were rather similar in spite of the differences in their identities and contexts. Marcus recognized his potential as a Black male school leader to interrupt oppressive practices on his campus as they relate to social, political, and economic issues facing students and families.

Adrianna too began to see similar kinds of concerns at her school site. As a high school teacher in pursuit of a school leadership position, her experiences in class encouraged her to immerse herself in uncomfortable spaces to examine the interconnectedness between her ways of knowing and responses to those most in need. She started to realize the need to engage others in her inquiry by inviting them into conversations, forming alliances with teachers and community members, and creating forums centered on new discourses.

Likewise, Adrianna shared a situation through an audio reflection in which she realizes her responsibility to "do what was right and just"; however, she is aware of possible consequences she faces as a "teacher" versus a "school leader" by her colleagues.

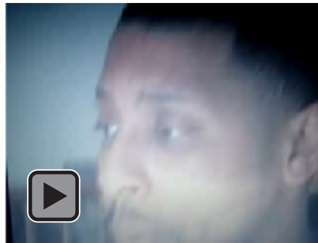
The similarities between their experiences can also be seen in how their discussions centered on enacting their newfound understandings at their respective school sites. When Adrianna first engaged in her new understanding as an "evolving leader for social justice" by identifying "times and spaces," she referred to herself as "only a teacher." However, she came to recognize how teachers responded to Mr. Barbs, a well-respected colleague, when he entered the teachers' lounge or partook in a meeting. Adrianna recalled "teachers acting differently in front of him and wouldn't even think about saying anything negative about students in front of him." While Adrianna was wrestling with understanding herself as a "teacher" and her role in "leading for social justice," ideas that were in tension with pressures associated with the "in crowd" of teachers at school, she encountered a "popular" teacher who perpetuated what she called "unjust speech" in the teachers' lounge:

> There is a teacher who says a lot of inappropriate things and people laugh. [For example, he said that] One freshman girl is Black, looks like a man, and she has AIDS. So, she is a target all the time…I told him I thought it's crazy what you are saying.

As a result of this interaction, Adrianna started to realize her possible role as a leader for social justice and the available power she had to impact daily interactions with teachers and students. This catalytic experience created a space for Adrianna to reconsider not only her newfound

ability but also her willingness to "join forces with Mr. Barbs" in an effort to interrupt oppressive school practices—a realization that strongly influenced Adrianna's "moral commitment" to "stand by her beliefs."

Marcus also makes explicit remarks regarding links between his evolving social justice oriented work and his lived experiences of being marginalized (i.e., due to his race, inter-racial marriage). He emphasizes the impact of feeling as though he "represents all Black males in the eyes of the White teachers" and for "all of the Black students who attend my school." Marcus notes, "I don't even know if they ever saw a Black male school leader, let alone a Black teacher." He contends, "Addressing unjust practices requires me to listen and to teach others how to care about our students' lives.". Marcus stresses "all school leaders must engage in this type of work; otherwise, they are not leading for social justice."



In these ways, Adrianna, Marcus, and James can be understood as different iterations of similar concerns regarding how difference is cast as deficit in their respective, predominantly White, suburban schools. What Adrianna saw in her colleagues' discussions about race regarding others, Marcus experienced in his White colleagues' reaction to him as a person of color, and James came to recognize in his own perceptions of people of color in his role as a school leader.

Embodied Sense-Making through Artmaking

Towards the end of our semester together, this group of students explicitly noted what they saw as the importance of sense-making through artmaking, a process that they felt encouraged them to act on their ways of knowing and the process of arriving at such understandings. As with the previous sections, Adrianna, Marcus, and James' narratives about their experiences serve as exemplary lenses that performatively document the kinds of transformations that students experienced over the course of the semester.

Adrianna

Adrianna's reflections on the processes of knowing through artmaking noted her "struggle with making meaningful change" and taking the necessary steps to "seeing a whole change…that these little tiny changes being made within a person are worth the growth, and I know they are its just…you don't always see it right away." Her artist-mentor Roman lived through Vietnam protests and the Civil Rights Movement. Roman shared with me that he often thought that Adrianna was unaware of significant historical events or people who sacrificed their lives for others' rights (i.e., Ruby Bridges, Emmett Till, Jim Crow, Frederick Douglas, Josiah Henson). As they engaged in meaningful dialogue about the role of race and racism within the foundations of modern culture and policy, Adrianna started to make more concerted efforts to deepen her

understanding and implications for leading for social justice in schools through her artmaking (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Social Justice is Like Art…If We Don't Pay Attention, It's Not There

Over the course of the semester, Adrianna's responses in her reflective practice documented how artmaking illustrated the deepening understanding and empathy in her sense-making—her final art object focused on the need to *look within* in "order to grow as school leaders." For her piece, Adrianna used a clock to represent a "timeline" of events that signified "horrifying beginnings" and "ideal" ends. She created the clock as a catalyst to provoke meaningful dialogue about the lived experiences of marginalized populations and the role each of us play to improve the realities of underserved children and their families. Adrianna hoped to engage viewers in an examination of their tendency to perpetuate oppressive practices. Her clock symbolized a vision centered on each of us playing a vital role in leading for social justice from spinning hands, a metaphor for how "those in dominant positions perpetuate the status quo," to artifacts placed at each number on the clock to represent a continuum of change, beginning with slavery and ending at the Human Rights Federation's equal sign. Her use of silver paint symbolized a mirror and the need to look within and acknowledge how each of us perpetuate oppressive practices.

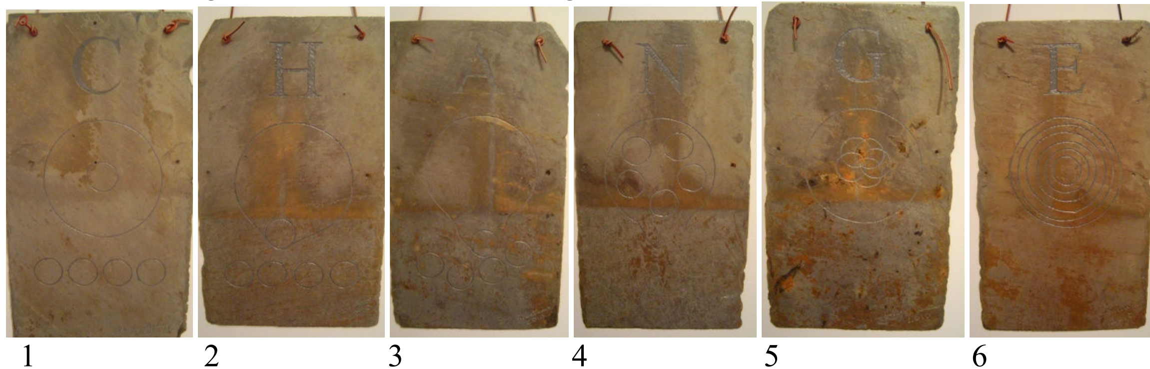
James

James struggled with ways to make sense of his discomfort. He questioned how to represent the catalytic moments in his evolution as a leader for social justice in the following quotations excerpted from his audio reflections about his process.

> [It was difficult to] think about the ways he understood the lived experiences of marginalized people because of their race, sexual identity, class, language, religion, ability and ability (both mental and physical)…[I] never contemplated what it was like to be other [or how often] these blinders stopped [me] from serving the students most in need.

As a result of this growing awareness, James elected to represent the impact of power and privilege as well as his burgeoning understanding and experiences throughout the reflective process as a series of catalytic moments on panels of slate. The first symbol represents how he benefited as a member of the dominant culture (see Figure 2). The smaller circles symbolize how often marginalized groups were undervalued. The second slate illustrates a catalytic moment in which James became aware of the impact of power, privilege and entitlement and the need to “invite others” into his “circle.” The third slate represents a catalytic moment in which James recognized the need to “open himself to new ways of knowing” by immersing himself in the literature and deepening his understanding of the lived experiences of marginalized people. In his talk about this piece, he noted the need to “move forward on the social justice continuum” and what he saw as the importance of “stretch[ing] the boundaries of his school leadership identity.”

Figure 2 The Change Within Slates One Through Six



The fourth slate is pivotal to James’ embracing his new school leadership identity. It represents his coming to terms with being a member of the dominant culture and implications of power and privilege. He acknowledges the lived realities facing those who lived on the margins as well as “his responsibility to address such issues in schools”—a movement from considering traditionally marginalized populations as separate “others” to their inclusion in his own circle of understanding. In the fifth slate, James illustrates his need to utilize his position of power to address and interrupt oppressive practices on his campus. The combination and overlapping circles represent the need to “honor and respect” differences among students, teachers and families. For the final slate piece, James represents his lived experiences on his campus and how he immersed himself in practices that deepened the interconnectedness between himself and his leadership practices. Here, the concentric circles represent James’ newfound need for sense-making reflective practices, because “the change begins with James.”

Marcus

Marcus’ sense-making served to deepen his understanding of what it meant to a Black male school leader, and to maintain and sustain involvement within the Black community. During this time, Marcus moved from thinking of himself as passing in White worlds to recognition of his embodied Black male-ness, an awareness that accompanied a clarification of “what he fights

for," "what he stands for," and "who is worth fighting for." Marcus constructed the complexities associated with race and racism as the "Black struggle" (see Figure 3), concluding that a school leadership identity must be aligned with a particular social justice stance as well as committing to that specific "fight" or else "why are you in school leadership?" As a result of his own process, Marcus came to emphasize the need to use artmaking and scholarship to hear the voices of those who have been silenced. Similar to Delpit's (1996) constructions of power, Marcus contends that what it means to be "other" is understood by those who live on the margins and is often missed by those in positions of power and privilege. Parallel to his own growth in understanding how his privilege allowed him to simultaneously enact his role as a school leader while overlooking his status as a Black man, he urged school leaders to reconsider their role in perpetuating a system that comprises the lived experiences of marginalized people.

Figure 3 The Struggle

Marcus' artwork is a translation of his reflections into symbolic form. Here, the mountain is the metaphor for this struggle and the pathways carved into the mountain symbolize the intentions and realities of the struggle "Black men undertake" in society. The obstacles carved into the mountain side emphasize the lived experiences of young Black males and their contributions to "reverse the oppressive systemic trends" that incarcerate them through imprisonment, high percentages of students in special education and increasing numbers of high school dropouts. As one who is now viewing this piece, Marcus urges you to engage in this struggle by "believing in our young Black men and ACTING on those beliefs."

Discussion

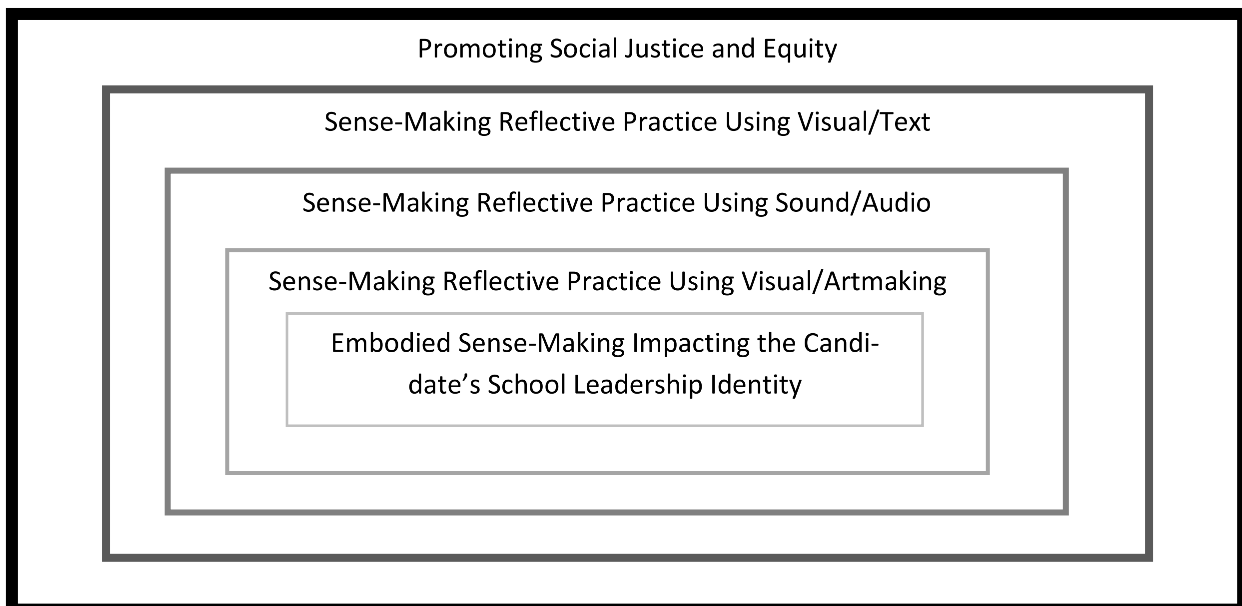
The three students who are the focus of this article came to understand reflective sense-making practices as a process through which they began to recognize themselves as tools of expression rather than their source. Their sense-making reads as contiguous interwoven threads that blur any separation between their artmaking and their living inquiries outside of class. The artwork they created served as visual representations and that reality captured their journeys,

tools for sharing their social justice stances as well as how they construct themselves as school leaders, documenting their living inquiries into social justice and equity-oriented practices in the U.S. public schools in which they work.

While such work is not necessarily new in literature on the arts in classrooms and teaching, there is a dearth of such opportunities for future or current school leaders to make sense of their understandings through artmaking, and opportunities to consider socially just leadership through art are even more infrequent. Students in this class stressed how often school leaders are encouraged to withhold their emotions and remain in control in order to be identified as a professional (Beatty, 2000). However, after engaging in this process, they realized controlling emotions often suggests repressing intense emotional responses that may have detrimental effects on their ability and willingness to commit to social justice work (Larson & Ovando, 2001). They also realize the need for intellectual guidance with context specific activities and spaces for reflective narrative practices (e.g., Clandinin, Conelly, & Chan, 2002).

The findings suggest a framework for sense-making as a reflective practice (see Figure 4), examining the impact of using sensual inquiry to make sense of school leadership identity development.

Figure 4 Framework for Sense-Making Reflective Practice



At the outermost layer, students immerse themselves in extant literature regarding social justice and equity issues facing U.S. public schools. They then engage one another in meaningful text and dialogue centered on the lived realities of marginalized populations in schools. This is followed by audio/video reflections about their process that in turn leads to the creation of artwork that serves as a physical manifestation of their growing understandings about social justice and their possible role in its enaction in their lives as school leaders. The process urges dramatic shifts from written prompts, to audio (sound)/video (visual) understandings, to visual metaphors, to new embodied selves, all of which become the impetus of radically understanding oneself in relation to others, especially for those who live on the margins.

Utilizing the senses (sight and sound) encourages these participants to give *feeling to form* and *form to feeling* (Langer, 1953). As they move from text to audio to visual metaphors through

artmaking students *came to know* and *live their inquiries*, which center on social justice and equity issues facing U.S. public schools. The interconnectedness between the senses affords them spaces to create multiple meanings centering on an evolving school leadership identity. They make connections between what they see, hear, and experience by connecting their emotion-laden experiences through artmaking, directly impacting their ways of *knowing* (Langer, 1982). This sense-making process guides them through a process in which their senses transform their consciousness (Eisner, 2002), deepen their understanding of their beliefs and attitudes towards power (Allen, 1995), and create spaces centered on an ethic of care through imaginative possibilities (Greene, 1995; Noddings, 1984).

Students' notion of making sense not only centers on deepening their understanding of sensory exploration, they engage in actions aligned with revelations from their reflective processes. These new responses encourage understanding the interconnectedness between sense of self, school practices, and impact of responses (Schön, 1983). Understanding the implications of this reflective process range from using text as a way of knowing to understanding the significance of sight and sound to deepening their beliefs as school leaders (Allen, 1995). These spaces serve to uncover the influence of lived experiences as well as marginalized voices through storytelling (Barone, 2002). The process functions as a release, promoting imaginative possibilities centered on understanding their role in interrupting oppressive school practices (Greene, 1995). In these ways, sense-making pushes students' rigid conceptual boundaries of what it means to lead to understanding how their senses influence their ways of knowing, recognizing structural inequities, and ability to challenge cultural and educational superiority of the dominant culture (i.e., White, middle-class, English speaking, Christian, heterosexual communities) to interrupt oppressive school practices (Tooms & Boske, 2010; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Marshall & Oliva, 2010). The impact of sense-making transforms their school leadership identities from narrowly defined roles, attitudes, and beliefs to new ways of knowing and responding to the world, especially for underserved populations.

Conclusion

Social justice leaders are agents of change and are cognizant of the impact of their identity in addressing the lived experiences of underserved school populations. There is a need for school leaders to deepen their understanding of the emotional-laden process of social justice work and ways of knowing (Langer, 1953). Understanding the impact of the senses is one pathway to increasing a school leader's critical consciousness regarding social justice and equity work in schools (Boske, in press; Brown, 2004, 2006; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Theoharis, 2007).

This article opens up possibilities to deepen understanding in how to prepare school leaders' ways of knowing through sensory experience in order to make meaningful change. Experimental exploration and thinking about knowing through sense-making suggests faculty reconsider how to expand candidates' ways of knowing about what it means to lead for social justice (e.g., Boske & Tooms, 2010). The sense-making reflective practice framework affords tremendous possibilities for teaching and learning by placing pedagogy at the center of programmatic practices with knowledge and experience in the making (e.g., Ellsworth, 2005).

Sense-making evolves as candidates engage in a myriad of mediums, which afford them spaces to engage as visual artists. Artmaking creates uncertain spaces for students to reconceptualize what is meant by leading schools as well as how their identities are viewed within art

(e.g., Springgay, 2008). The process is a constant exchange of knowing and not knowing and becoming more comfortable with the intersections of personal and situational experiences. Faculty may reconsider how they encourage leaders to boldly confront their inquiry and willingness to engage in a process centered on imaginative possibilities. Such examinations encourage school leaders to continuously reflect on their ways of knowing and implications for marginalized populations, all of which are essential to this *making process*.

Their purpose as school leaders continuously evolves rather than remaining constant and stagnant. Sense-making encourages candidates to reconsider their ability to engage in new ways of understanding through perception, selection, and responsiveness. The relationship between how they understand themselves as school leaders is reorganized throughout the ongoing dialogue of reflection, metaphor, and artmaking. The experience therefore becomes more than finding value in artmaking. It engages school leaders with the senses, expanding values of personal knowings, interpretations, and expressions that evolve into a newly constructed school leadership identity. This examination relies heavily on the individual's ability and willingness to engage in meaningful dialogue and active participation in sense-making. The experience is not only shared with peers, but it is *felt* and *lived*. As such, these opportunities encourage future leaders to be absorbed by the complexities of relations and identify themselves as a medium or vehicle for learning and change, and utilize pedagogy as medium for sense-making.

If educational preparation programs promote sense-making reflective practices, sensitivity towards curriculum as medium will deepen understanding between an exchange of self and other. And in this case, *other* refers to school communities, especially members of disenfranchised groups. The connective process precedes meaningful learning, because it is a transformational medium centering on change of self, and ultimately, change in ways of knowing and responding to the world. The creative process affords a worthwhile direction emphasizing teaching and learning for social justice and equity in schools.

About the Author

Christa Boske is an Assistant Professor in Educational Administration at Kent State University. Recent work includes the *Journal of School Leadership*, *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, and the *Multicultural Education and Technology Journal*, book chapters, and two edited books with Information Age Publishing.

NOTES

1. It is important to acknowledge the ongoing debate and tensions regarding multiple meanings for *social justice*. For the purpose of this article, social justice is defined as committing to the moral use of power (Bogotch, 2002), fostering critical inquiry (Brown, 2004, 2006), and promoting social action (Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Tooms & Boske, 2010).

2. The study received IRB approval. Participants gave their written consent after final course grades were submitted to the university. In addition, all three participants had an opportunity to review this article as a member check and gave their consent for both the use of the audio and visual data and for its interpretation in this article.

REFERENCES

Allen, P. B. (1995). *Art is a way of knowing*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications.

Apple, M. W. (1993). *Official knowledge: Democratic education in a conservative age*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Barone, T. (2002). From genre blurring to audience blending: Reflections on the field emanating from an ethnodrama. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, *33*(2), 255–267.

Beatty, B. (2000). The emotions of educational leadership, *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *3*(4), 331–357.

Bogotch, I. (2002). Educational leadership and social justice: Practice into theory. *Journal of School Leadership, 12*, 138–156.

Boske, C. (2009). Imaginative thinking: Addressing social justice issues through MovieMaker. *Multicultural Education and Technology Journal*, *3*(3), 213–226.

Boske, C. (2011). Audio and video reflections to promote social justice. *Multicultural Education Technology Journal*, *5*(1), 70–85.

Boske, C., & Tooms, A. K. (2010). Clashing epistemologies: Reflections on change, culture and the politics of the professoriate. In G. Jean-Marie, & T. Normore (Eds.), Educational Leadership Preparation: Innovation and Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Ed. D. and Graduate Education (pp. 33–52). New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

Boske, C., & Tooms, A. K. (2010). Social justice and doing "being ordinary." In A. K. Tooms, & C. Boske (Eds.), *Building bridges: Connecting educational leadership and social justice to improve schools* (pp. xvii–xxviii). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Bowden, M., Billig, S., &, Holland, B.A. (2008). *Scholarship for sustaining service-learning and civic engagement*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Brown, K. (2004). Leadership for social justice and equity: Weaving a transformative framework and pedagogy. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *40*(1), 79–110.

Brown, K. (2006). Leadership for social justice and equity: Evaluating a transformative framework and andragogy. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *42*(5), 700–745.

Cahnmann-Taylor, M., & Siegesmund, R. (2008). *Arts-based research in education: Foundations for practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Clandinin, D. J., Connelly, F. M., & Chan, E. (2002). Three narrative teaching practices—One narrative teaching exercise. In N. Lyons, & V. K. LaBoskey (Eds.), *Narrative inquiry in practice: Advancing the knowledge of teaching* (pp. 133–145). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2002). Learning to teach for social justice. In L. Darling-Hammond, J. French, & S. Garcia-Lopez (Eds.), *Learning to teach for social justice* (pp. 1–7). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2005). New standards and old inequalities: School reform and the education of African American students. In J. E. King (Ed.), *Black education: A transformative research and action agenda for the new century* (pp.197–224). Mahway, NJ: Erlbaum.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1997). *The right to learn: A blueprint for creating schools that work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. Toms River, NJ: Capricorn Books.

Dewey, J. (1961). *Democracy and education*. Old Tappan, NJ: Macmillan.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Collier Books.

Dewey, J. (2004). My pedagogic creed. In D. J. Flinders, & S. J. Thornton (Eds.), *The curriculum studies reader* (2nd ed.) (pp. 17–23). New York: RoutledgeFalmer: (Original work published 1897).

Eisner, E. (2008). Art and knowledge. In A. Cole, & J. Knowles (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues* (pp. 3–12). London: Sage.

Eisner, E. W. (2002). From episteme to phronesis to artistry in the study and improvement of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *18*(4), 375–385.

Eisner, E. W. (1994). *The educational imagination: On the design and evaluation of school programs* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Macmillan.

Ellsworth, E. (2005). *Places of learning: Media, architecture, pedagogy*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Feagin, J., Orum, A., & Sjoberg, G. (Eds.). (1991). *A case for case study*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Gonzalez, N., Moll, L., & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities and classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Henderson, J. G., & Gornik, R. (2007). *Transformative curriculum leadership* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York, NY: Crown.

Kozol, J. (2006). *Shame of the Nation: The restoration of apartheid schooling in America*. New York, NY: Crown Publishers.

Kridel, C. (2010). *Encyclopedia of curriculum studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. *Educational Researcher*, *35*(7), 3–12.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African-American children*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Land, R. R., & Stovall, D. O. (Eds.). (2009). Hip hop and social justice. *Equity and Excellence in Education, 42*(1), 433–435.

Langer, S. K. (1953). *Feeling and form: A theory of art.* New York, NY: Scribner.

Langer, S. K. (1972). *Mind: An essay on human feeling*. Vol 2. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

Langer, S. K. (1982). *Philosophy in a new key: A study in the symbolism of reason, rite, and art* (3rd ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Larson, C., & Ovando, C. (2001). *The color of bureaucracy: The politics of equity in multicultural school communities*. New York, NY: Wadsworth.

Lopez, G. R. (2003). The (racially-neutral) politics of education: A Critical Race Theory perspective, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *39*(1), 68–94.

Malewski, E. (2009). *Curriculum studies handbook: The next moment*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Marshall, C. (1993). *The new politics of race and gender*. London: Falmer Press.

Marshall, C., & Gerstyl-Pepin, C. (2005). *Re-framing educational politics for social justice*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Marshall, C., & Oliva, M. (2010). *Leadership for social justice: Making revolutions in education* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Reyes, P., Scribner, J., & Parades-Scribner, A. (1999). Delta forces: The changing fabric of American society and education. In J. Murphy & K. S. Louis, *Handbook of research in educational administration* (pp. 183–201). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Scheurich, J. J., & Skrla, L. (2003). *Leadership for equity and excellence: Creating high-achievement classrooms, schools, and districts*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Schön, D. (1983) *The Reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. San Francisco, CA: Basic Books.

Shields, C. (2003). *Good intentions are not enough: Transformative leadership for communities of difference*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press.

Skrla, L., Scheurich, J. J., & Bell McKenzie, K. (2009). *Using equity audits to create equitable and excellent schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Sleeter, C., & Grant, C. A. (2009). *Making choices for multicultural education: Five approaches to race, class and gender* (6th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Springgay, S. (2008). *Body knowledge and curriculum: Pedagogies of touch in youth and visual culture*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Terrell, R. D., & Lindsey, R. B. (2009). *Culturally proficient leadership: The personal journey begins within*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Theoharis, G. (2007). Social justice educational leaders and resistance: Toward a theory of social justice leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *43*(2), 221–258.

Tooms, A., K., & Boske, C. (2010). *Building bridges: Connecting educational leadership and social justice to improve schools*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Trochim, W. (1989). Outcome pattern matching and program theory. *Evaluation and Program Planning, 12*(4), 355.

U.S. Bureau of Census (2010). 2010 Census data. Available at http://2010.census.gov/2010census/data/

Yin, R. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.

Zwicky, J. (2003). *Wisdom and metaphor*. Kentville, Nova Scotia: Gaspereau Press.