The Growth Edge process is a collaboration between the interviewer and the client to explore the ways in which the client characteristically makes sense of the world. The process reveals the growing edges of the client’s insight into her own way of being, her relationships and her work. It also generates ideas for broadening and deepening that insight.

The process commences with a Subject-Object Interview, a free-flowing, client-centered discussion in which the interviewer aims to see the world as much as possible from within the client’s own perspective. While being listened to at a deep level is in itself satisfying, clients frequently report that they also think about issues in their lives from a new perspective during and after the interview.

A Growth Edge feedback report is then prepared and discussed during a second session designed to explore the implications of adult developmental concepts for the client’s own meaning making and to develop ideas for ways in which the work might be taken forward. This report is for the exclusive use of the client (and, if applicable the coach).

In this report, find:
• Your Growth Edge Report, which offers a description of you on your developmental journey, and makes suggestions for how you might think about moving forward;
• A developmental description so that you can deepen your knowledge of these key concepts;
• Your Growth Edge transcript
<Name>

Developmental band:

Socialized mind with movement toward self-authored mind

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example A</th>
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| Client name finds herself in a very common space in adulthood—being accustomed to making meaning from a socialized frame, but beginning to see that this is becoming problematic and that there may well be a way that will serve her better. In the socialized way of making meaning, Client name is firmly rooted in a world where others' opinions figure prominently and fundamental values drive her decisions, largely without question or examination. However, this way of making meaning is increasingly resulting in her feeling torn between what she thinks is right and what others are telling her they expect of her, and as a result, she’s finding herself in a somewhat stuck and confused place.

Client name is held quite strongly by the particular stories she has about herself, which are in turn driven by the values she holds dearly----values mostly linked to the idea that earning the trust of others is paramount. To earn trust, one must do things like: never let others down, always follow through on what you say you’ll do, be in control, figure out how to solve hard problems, show up to help others in some way. However, because these values, so critical to how Client name makes decisions, are all defined at least in part externally to her, she finds it difficult, even excruciating, when they begin to conflict with one another or with new important others’ opinions as they enter the scene. With her treasured values ever more in conflict,
she's noticing that they are often now getting in her way rather than supporting her as they once did. This is particularly true in her work environment where she was once rewarded for being in control and anticipating problems, but now is told that this way of being is somehow deficient. And she is finding it difficult to make sense of this new reality.

While Client name is frequently torn by the various voices (including her own) whose points of view seem in conflict with one another, she is clearly capable of making her own decisions when it comes to solving a client’s problem or even how to navigate a difficult interpersonal situation. The torn-ness she describes feeling with regard to how others want her to be and who she believes she is, may be in some ways be the result of the increasing tension between her commitment to outside value systems and her emerging self-authored voice. Client name’s commitment to herself stories about control and trust may ironically be thing that holds her back. It may be that by beginning to question her current assumptions about what makes her a valuable human being, Client name can open up new possibilities for a more self-authored definition of who she is and very possibly create a space in which she feels less torn about who she should be and what she should be doing.

Example B

Client name finds himself in a very common space in adulthood—mostly making meaning from a socialized frame in which others’ opinions and ideas figure prominently but at the same time beginning to notice how that in some ways feels limiting. Client name is held quite strongly by the opinions and values of the people closest to him (mostly his family). He is quite clear that much of what he does in life, especially things that involve some sort of “achievement,” he does at least in part to better the lives of his loved ones, to make them proud of him. This striving to make his loved ones proud is one of the honorable hallmarks of the socialized world. Client name also seems to ascribe a good deal of value to concepts like prestige, options, and achievement (being able to do things that not everyone can do). All of these drivers are at least to some degree defined externally to Client name.

At the same time, Client name demonstrates time and again that he can take on difficult challenges and, quite independently and competently, achieve his goals. The torn-ness he describes feeling with regard to his two primary professional pursuits (flying and being a successful entrepreneur) may be in some ways the result of the increasing tension between his commitment to outside value systems and his emerging self-authored voice. Client name’s commitment to doing the right thing at all times (not squandering opportunities, making the lives of those around him better, always living up to
his commitments) may ironically be one thing that holds him back. It may be that by beginning to question his current assumptions about prestige, success, commitment, and doing the right thing, Client name can open new up new possibilities for a more self-authored definition of who he is and very possibly create a space in which he feels less torn about the options before him.

Example C

Client name finds herself in a very common space in adulthood—standing at the edge of a socialized world where things are relatively well-defined, while at the same time knowing that the ways in which she’s defined herself are no longer working fully. She is looking over the edge to a new place where she might have more agencies to define the rules of the game for herself. At the moment, she finds herself torn between two definitions of herself, wondering if there’s a way that she can find a “happy medium,” and not feeling terribly hopeful that there is such a place. The solution she’s lived with for some time now is one in which she accepts and lives with a degree of discomfort, largely because she can’t see another way.

This very torn space where Client name seems to find herself at this point is often the very place from which significant transformation occurs. The old way isn’t working but is known and oddly comfortable. What lies beyond seems risky, even scary, precisely because it is unknown. It seems clear that Client name is an extremely accomplished woman who has taken a number of risks in her life in search of adventure and change. She has undertaken challenges ranging from emigrating when she was a teenager to earning a business degree to becoming the youngest partner at her firm. No doubt more such accomplishments lie before her. It may be, however, that her most meaningful upcoming challenges will be not so much about, “what do I do next?” but “who and how will I be in whatever I do next?”

Example D

From a meaning-making standpoint, I noticed three consist patterns in our discussion.

- First, the transcript is punctuated at nearly every turn by the sound of seeking, of a deep hunger to know more and to make sense of the world in ever changing ways. You seem to feel almost involuntarily drawn to knowing more and searching for new ways to understand your world. While this has been a good part of the source of your success and happiness in life, it does seem to have a significant hold on you. The question is whether you want it to, or if you’d rather have hold of it.

- Second, again and again you describe yourself, others, and your ideas in rather “fixed,” ways that have the sound of “this is how I am
(or am not),” almost as if you had no agency over how you show up in the world, or, rather, that how you show up in the world is the result of “the way you are.” This is not to say you don’t make choices, but you repeatedly refer to yourself as being this or being that way. You demonstrate the tendency to talk in similarly fixed ways about other people, practices, ideas, and even values. You are truly a learner, and at the same time, you seem to have fixed ideas about what is good, bad, worthy, and not worthy.

- Finally, when asked how you know a thing, you most often refer to outside sources of “knowing,” such as books, authors, speakers, organizations. Your seeking seems to take the form of learning as much as you possibly can through expert sources.

It is mainly these patterns that lead me to think that you are mostly making sense in the socialized form of mind at the moment. For an adult of your age, this is absolutely normal and expected---it is relatively rare to find someone your age making meaning significantly beyond this space, and it is not totally uncommon to see people at your stage of life still partially or fully making meaning in the self-sovereign form. You show absolutely no evidence of having even one toe in the self-sovereign form of mind, as you appear to take full responsibility for your actions, you affiliate with ideas and people outside yourself, and you speak in abstractions that would be completely out of reach for someone in the self-sovereign meaning making system.

I also see glimmers of a movement to a self-authored meaning making system, as evidenced by your beginning to wonder whether you could be ok in a world where you aren’t always serving a higher purpose, or the way you dealt with your anger with your dad. The journey to the self-authored meaning making system, consolidating your own views about the world, about yourself, and developing the capacity to hold those self-authored views and have compassion for others’ ways of being at the same time, will be an important one. Consolidating your self-authored mind will create a solid foundation upon which you may eventually move beyond, to a world where seeking universal knowledge and understanding will start from a place of your own beliefs rather than resting on what could be a shaky foundation of others’ beliefs.

In the two sections below, I’ll explore in more detail these three themes, how they may be at least in part connected to your current form of mind, and what might be next for you. In the final section, I’ll explore three habits of mind, which may be helpful as you think about the what’s next question.
An inflection point where both socialized and self-authored mind are fully alive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example A</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At this point in her life, <strong>Client name</strong> seems to be wrestling with the pain associated with letting go of the habits of mind associated with the socialized frame while beginning to see glimpses of ability to celebrate her self-authored way of making sense in the world. She has an internally generated and often clear sense of what is important to her, but is still heavily influenced by the old socialized way of measuring her ideas and actions. <strong>Client name</strong> is conscious of the pulls toward a former socialized mind, can clearly see its influence on her life, and knows that it no longer works for her. She seems to be searching for a way to celebrate her self-authored meaning making system rather than continuing to try and measure it by a standard that no longer works. Because she is stuck smack in between the two meaning making systems, the struggle often appears to be quite painful. <strong>Client name</strong> often refers to the concept of value. When asked how she measures value, the answer often refers to an external source (mother, friends, universal board of trustees). At the same time, she describes a couple of historic examples of when she made difficult decisions that did not gain the approval of these important external people in her life (e.g., leaving her recent partner, going on public assistance in order to free up time for her daughter and her studies), simply because she knew for herself what she had to do. Further evidence of the very torn place where <strong>Client name</strong> resides, firmly between socialized and self-authored, is the way in which <strong>Client name</strong> does things, looks for external confirmation, gets it, and still feels empty. Were <strong>Client name</strong> able to find her sense of value and joy internally instead of looking at outside forces, she might be able to make decisions with more certainty and comfort.</td>
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<th>Example B</th>
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<td><strong>Client name</strong> finds herself in a very common space in adulthood—with one foot in the socialized world and the other in the self-authored world. In the self authored world, <strong>Client name</strong> frequently refers to her “strong sense of self,” which she defines as knowing who she is and knowing what she thinks is the right thing to do and the wrong thing to do. Clearly, <strong>Client name</strong> has demonstrated time and again that she can solve problems, fix things that are broken, and make good decisions. She has helped transform underperforming teams into well-respected, even envied, work groups. In this</td>
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way, there is no doubt that she is able to form and hold points of view that are fully self-authored.

At the same time, Client name is still very held by to the opinions of those whom she believes to embody one of her very strongly held values (expertise, competence, experience, role). Not only is she held by the opinions of the people whom she perceives to embody those treasured values, she seems to be held by the very values themselves. She measures herself quite rigidly by the standards of those values and the people who embody them in her mind, so much so that it seems to be difficult for her to even imagine a world in which she didn’t find a way to overachieve against them. Again, these standards and Client name’s ability to overdeliver against them has been the foundation of her very impressive record of successes thus far.

Often, when people live with one foot in one world and one in the other, they are held to their earlier form of mind (in this case, the socialized form of mind) by some key tether—something that holds them from moving forward. This is some key piece of their sense of themselves that they rely on to know who they are. In this case, Client name’s amazing ability to solve problems and know all the answers is perhaps one thing that holds her back. If one of the big questions Client name is now asking is something like “what’s next and have I gone as far as I can against the measures to which I’ve held myself, then it seems likely that Client name might benefit by expanding her definition of who she is...her very sense of self. Were Client name able to look beyond the part of her which holds a socialized meaning making system as defined by the values mentioned above, she would likely be more able to let go of her old measurement system and begin to build on her emerging self-authored way of being in the world, ultimately relying less on the “praise” she so often refers to needing and instead, expanding the universe of things of which she is currently capable.

Moving away from socialized mind while being stable at self-authored mind

Example A

At this point in her life, Client name seems engaged in consolidating her self-authored frame of mind. She has an internal and self-generated clarity about what is important to her. Acting on that clarity is not always easy, but Client name is conscious of the pulls toward a former socialized mind and celebrates her sense of courage and independence in a self-authored place.
One of the challenges for *Client name* is to maintain her internal standards (about things like respect, seeing and honoring others’ perspectives) while not losing her own voice as she applies those standards in her life; this might be seen as holding some of her self-authored values more lightly. There is a sense in which *Client name* is sometimes held by her adherence to the very values that have made her the open, caring, and thoughtful person on which she’s built her foundation for success thus far in her life. Were she able to broaden her definition of “respect” to allow that this doesn’t necessarily mean honoring other people’s value or needs above her own, this might release some of the remaining tethers to the more socialized mind and allow her the freedom to trust her internal voice more consistently.

In this report, we sketch out what the interview suggests is becoming the central core of *Client name’s* sense-making, the self-authored form of mind, along with the significant tethers that continue to hold her in a place where she has trouble trusting that voice.

**Example B**

At the time of this interview, *Client name* was embarking on a new phase of his career—the beginning of his own company. As he thought about who he was becoming, he reflected on the transitions—in his career and in his worldview—that had brought him to this place. While *Client name* most solidly makes sense of the world through a Self-authoring form of mind, there are pieces of his story of the transition from the Socializing form of mind that are still quite alive for him. This has implications both for his consolidation to the Self-authoring form of mind and also to any decisions he might make about future growth.

**Stable at self-authored mind**

**Example**

At this point in her life, *Client name* seems engaged in consolidating her self-authored frame of mind. She has an internal and self-generated clarity about what is important to her and how she wants to be in both her personal and her private life. The assessment that she is probably making sense at this form of mind is grounded in two major pieces of evidence from the interview.

- The demonstration **clarity of purpose and belief, apparently self-generated**, as well as the willingness to take a stand for those beliefs even in the face of considerable risk.
- Demonstration of **the ability to take multiple perspectives**.

Both of these are hallmarks of the self-authored mind, and *Client name* demonstrates the ability do them again and again in the interview.
Example of Taking a Stand
There are examples throughout the interview of Client name being clear about what she thought was the right thing to do. These range from knowing that her pregnancy has to come first, to standing up for the underperforming associate on her team, to being willing to take a stand for what she thought was an unfair performance review of herself. Her reasons for thinking these things are important seem not to be driven primarily by concerns about outside validation or reputation in a way that would change how she saw herself. When pushed and given choices in the interview, Client name consistently talks about her way of making meaning as one that is internally driven.

One example is when I asked her about why it is unpalatable for her to have to answer to a person to whom she doesn’t necessarily have respect, she responds:

A quote from transcript

The above seems to suggest that Client name is both clear about her own ability to bring what is necessary to the work but also that she sees the complexity in the situation. It isn’t black and white. There are many other examples of this kind of thinking in the interview.

Example of Taking Multiple Perspectives
While Client name is sure about her own opinions and beliefs about a number of things, she is not fused with them. She is able to get enough perspective on her own way of thinking to allow her to imagine and even consider the perspectives of others.

The most profound demonstration of this perspective taking capacity is in her description of how she handled the situation with her underperforming associate.

A quote from transcript

Even when she is most angered (as by her own unfair review), she is able to imagine that other people have their reasons for making the decisions that they make.

Areas for growth
Related to the two themes above, there are, as always, opportunities for growth!

• While Client name has a clear, consistent, and self-generated point of view on how the world should be and she in it, there seems to be an
element of very hard work, almost of “I’m different” in it. In short, it feels a bit like a suit of armor rather than a light, comfortable cloak. It is typical of someone who is relatively new in a developmental stage to experience it this way. Having fought hard to get here, it seems natural to be firm in it. At the same time, this takes a lot of energy and has the effect of (perhaps) alienating people who experience the firm stance as possibly inflexibility, even status-consciousness!

- **Client name** is extremely facile at imagining that others often have perspectives different at her own. She can even describe what those differing perspectives might be. What she may not find so easy is to actually *hold* the perspectives of others and consider them as possibly having validity alongside her own. Mostly in the transcript, she describes the perspectives of others as *at odds* with her own, as though it were necessary to choose between them. While it may seem indecisive or even wishy washy, the ability to consistently hold seemingly paradoxical perspectives side by side, welcoming differences as a source of learning and growth, becomes ever more necessary as the situations a leader faces become increasingly complex.

- Finally, although there is little concrete evidence of a trailing socialized mind in the transcript, there are tiny hints of it in the way you describe your reactions to the poor review. Mostly, what you seem to care about is the fact that the review is a roadblock to your being able to do things you want to do (like L2 or being staffed on certain studies), but it might be worth asking yourself if there’s any bit of the low’ish rating that affects how you see yourself. No one likes to be disconfirmed, but to the extent that disconfirmation *defines* your self-understanding, you might find you’ve got deeply embedded stories that may be worth taking a look at.

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**Tether at socialized mind, stable at self-authored mind and potential growth at self-transforming mind**

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**Example**

At the time of the interview, **Client name** had just spent 46 days in a row working 16 hour days, getting her agency back on track after personal and financial betrayal from a close colleague she brought in to the agency. She finds herself having lost the joyful trusting person and boss she is accustomed to being, and is not sure how to find her way back to trusting herself and others.
In this interview, *Client name* shows up primarily as making meaning from the self-authored mind. This is evident in the way she looks to herself and both takes responsibility for what has happened on her watch, and creates and drives forward her own agenda for how to remedy the situation.

While operating from the self-authored mind is *Client name*‘s strongest and most consistent way of making meaning, this interview reveals that there are places where she is being pulled back to an earlier, socialized mind in her meaning making which is acting as a tether for her. This is evident in her struggle to take a more complex or nuanced view of responsibility and role expectations for the crisis at work.

Considering a more complex view might free *Client name* to more objectively choose what to take responsibility for, where to share the load, and give herself some breathing room. It isn’t clear from this interview whether *Client name* is still consolidating the self-authorization mind and therefore has some socializing mind still shaping her meaning making, or whether her lack of sleep and state of trauma are causing her to revert back to an earlier way of making meaning which is not commonly found during times of less stress. Either way, understanding this way of making meaning and how to work with it may give *Client name* more options to recover the self she has lost.

The interview also turns up hints of where possible future growth towards the self-transformational mind might open additional doors for *Client name*, should she choose to go in that direction. This is evident in her stretch to hold the paradox of both trusting people and holding them accountable at the same time. While this feels “pie in the sky” to her at the moment, developing this capacity if she should choose to might open the way to bring back trust in herself and her peers while also holding people accountable. It also might allow her to value the benefits of the parts of herself she dislikes, while inviting her joyful self to share that space. To the extent that *Client name* may still be consolidating her self-authorizing mind, or operating from a traumatized and sleep-deprived place, this possibility for growth may be more appropriate down the line, rather than an immediate option.

*Moving away from self-authored mind and moving toward self-transforming mind*

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<th>Example A</th>
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<td>Right now, <em>Client name</em> straddles three different meaning-making forms of mind. Her most comfortable world is the Self-authored mind, where <em>Client name</em> has a perspective on her position, her choices, and her own emotions. She has pulls backwards towards the socialized mind, especially when it</td>
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comes to the opinions of others—and the long list of “shoulds” in her life. She is also looking ahead, though, into the self-transforming mind, as she imagines a new way she can integrate parts of herself into a new whole. At the time of the interview, Client name was struggling with questions about what success really means, and how she’ll know when she reaches it. She is also struggling with questions about whether her position—which holds every external trapping of success—is actually the position she wants. Her deepest desire is to find a way to make a real difference in the world—in, perhaps a creative or artistic way. Perhaps most importantly, she needs to turn around the fact that she is “losing [her] smile.”

Example B

At the time of this interview, Client name was most centrally trying to figure out how to “de-center [ex ED]” and also, in some ways, to de-center herself, to remove herself from the center of all decisions and bring the group together to make decisions and chose future directions. Her meaning making system during this interview is most fully at the self-authored form of mind, where she seems most comfortable. With this mind, Client name understands boundaries and makes and shifts them as she wants to, understands and takes responsibility for her emotions and choices. There are also backwards pulls into the socialized mind, especially in the domain of friendships, where Client name has a more difficult time holding on to those boundaries, and sometimes finds herself uncomfortably enmeshed with other people. She is also looking ahead into the self-transforming mind, as Client name imagines a new way of having connections and ideas.

Issues Client name raised as challenges:

- Role clarification as ED.
- New way of dealing with conflict (“I hate anger, and I hate fight….But I gotta get over that”)
- Shortening the self-improvement to do list (“Given the time I have left in the world, I want a shorter list.”)
- Legacy issues (“I think about death a lot”)
- Losing the “fire in the belly” and searching for it (“there’s something else, and I don’t know what it is”)
- Being present in the moment

**DESCRIPTOR (e.g. trailing, leading, solid):** Socializing Mind
General description the socialized mind:
(from Jennifer Garvey Berger's book: Changing on the Job: Developing Leaders for a Complex World)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key strengths</th>
<th>Key blindspots</th>
<th>Central areas of growth</th>
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<td>At the socialized form of mind, a person’s strength is her ability to take on others’ expectations for good performance. She can be reflective about the issues involved and perhaps name and value the perspectives of others. She is loyal to the idea, group, or organization with whom she identifies—so loyal that she subordinates her own interests to the interests of that group.</td>
<td>A person with a socialized mind lacks the ability to untangle divergent perspectives or resolve conflicting viewpoints; she cannot mediate between the perspectives of important others. Similarly, she cannot yet mediate between her own internal competing identifications, so that when her role as Good Daughter conflicts with her role as Good Employee, she is likely to feel stuck and unable to find an appropriate course of action.</td>
<td>As she moves toward the self-authored form of mind, she will benefit from opportunities to move away from external theories or rules of leadership and to reflect on overarching principles and values which can help her resolve the conflicting perspectives of others. She will grow to see that no one theory, group, or organization is infallible, and she will develop a more individual and nuanced set of beliefs and loyalties.</td>
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[illustrative quotes]

Example A written by Jennifer

This form of mind seems to show up for client name as a relic, a “little girl” who visits her and wants others to love and take care of her but doesn’t own up to that. This is classically the way people show up from a Socialized form of mind, but it drives client name crazy because she has the sense that this is so much less than who she knows how to be (which of course is true). Because development works more like rings in a tree (with each encompassing the ones before) rather than a caterpillar-to-butterfly transformation where the old is lost for the new. But that doesn’t mean client name has to like this little girl. She says, A quote from transcript

The history of where the little girl came from is an earlier time, when client
name was younger and had less control over her life: A quote from transcript

When I ask what client name would lose if the little girl were to go away, she answers: A quote from transcript

Later, she points to the way she would have to let go of her father’s voice to fully give up this part of her: A quote from transcript

Example B written by Carolyn and Jane

Throughout the interview, client name describes himself as being torn between his dream (flying) and the more “sensible” endeavor of dedicating time to the business he recently started, constantly weighing the value of one over the other.

A quote from transcript

Although “torn” is a relatively common feeling for most of us, because those in the socialized space are generally torn between competing external voices, it can be difficult, even painful, to resolve the torn-ness. When faced with choices that seem to support two opposing value systems (in this case dream/fun/just for me vs. prestige/accomplishment/financial success), people in this place can feel quite pulled in two. The torn-ness comes up in many aspects of client name’s life, sometimes causing quite a lot of discomfort.

A quote from transcript

Making his business work is a dream that appears to be rooted primarily in an external measure, driven by the concept of prestige and by what he thinks would make his loved ones happy and/or proud of him. Again, most human beings want at some level to do right by their loved ones, to make them proud. This is part of the human condition. In the socialized space, however, the opinions of these others are not just important, they form a powerful part of the lens through which we see ourselves, how we measure ourselves. client name refers repeatedly to how the opinions (or perceived opinions) of his loved ones generates his idea of what’s acceptable to do in the world.

A quote from transcript

Although it is the opinions of his loved ones that carry most weight for client name, the impact of external measures is broader than just that. For example, when talking about his success at fixing the TV, he says
A quote from transcript

Here client name quotes a book he recently read that captures his approach to prioritizing among seemingly competing demands on his time.

By letting go of things that don’t have that return, it allows you to focus more energy on getting through the dip on the thing that does have the bigger return. So, I guess it’s a matter of prioritization. It’s like invest in the thing that gives you the most bang for your buck…

One of the challenges of starting an entrepreneurial venture from the socialized world is the lack of clear guideposts that benchmark progress and success each step of the way. The world feels more satisfying to someone in the socialized space when they have the opportunity to be recognized and lauded for their accomplishments, and have clear measures for success each step of the way.

Finally, there’s a way in which client name seems to regard opportunities as things that are externally generated, things that it is somehow his obligation to seize and not squander. On several occasions, he implies that opportunities are fleeting, as though he has little or no agency in their existence.

A quote from transcript

Example C written by Jennifer, Patricia and Carolyn

Most of the places in the transcript that have pieces of the Socialized mind are memories of previous times. In the present tense, client name doesn’t seem to see the world through a Socialized lens. These previous stories of Socialized pulls, and the prevalence of stories of the transition out of this space, however, lead us to think that there is still some power in the Socialized mind—not so much because client name makes sense of the world in this way, but because his focus is on resisting these pulls so strongly. Here are some examples:

A quote from transcript

The ideas about “the A team” seem particularly strong, and these ideas often have a more Socialized sound to them (although there are places where the A team ideas sound Self-authoring):

A quote from transcript
This version of the “A team” sounds like it’s coming from a Socialized place when the evaluators of who gets to decide who is on the “A team” are all external (there aren’t internal guides that help Client name decide). While this isn’t universally true in the way client name describes the “A team,” he does describe it this way more often than with a more internalized decision-making process:

A quote from transcript

**Key points.**

[what are the biggest points about this form of mind for this client to consider?]

Points to consider when writing the report:

- While there are pulls in this direction, in this interview these pulls were backwards tugs rather than the shape of her current meaning-making system.
- Habit. In terms of how we measure ourselves, habit is a powerful force. Ways of making sense of who we are that were formed in our formative years are etched in quite deep grooves in our minds, and so we tend to go to them reflexively.
- Energy. With a trailing socialized mind, it sometimes takes extra energy to maintain boundaries, etc.
- Allergy. We are often allergic to the meaning-making space we are moving away from. People who are leaving behind the socialized mind are often especially frustrated and impatient with people who are still there. As the socialized mind is the most common in adult life, there will be no shortage of frustrations.
- Loss. Fully leaving any order of mind behind means a loss of something and it is helpful to watch for what people in this space have to give up before they can move into a more self-authored form of mind.
- Fear. Sometimes backwards tugs towards the socialized mind by people who are nearly at the self-authored space can be experienced as confusing or frightening to people in this space.
- Responsibility. Client name clearly takes some responsibility for his own choices, his own emotions and reactions. In the fully self-authored place, he will also begin to author and fully own the beliefs that drive his decisions.
- Boundaries. The self-authored world is about knowing your boundaries and being clear about them. In most cases, these boundaries become natural separations which take no effort to maintain. Client name has clear
boundaries around what is acceptable and worthy, but he is still working to develop boundaries about who creates his feelings of success.

- **Voice.** This form of mind is often about trusting the self without being overcome by doubts or needing to validate from outside the self. *Client name* is striving for an inner voice that he can trust.

- **Strength.** There is a strength and autonomy that comes at the self-authored place that is very consistent with the requirements of leadership. *Client name*, for example, is clear about how what he wants to achieve and what's important to him. What remains unclear is through what frame he is coming to these goals---it seems to be at the transition point between socialized and self authored.

- **Certainty.** For some, their certainty about theories, rationales, and products can limit their view and their potential influence.

- **Role clarity.** This form of mind centers around issues of responsibility and the role clarity. Those with socialized forms of mind can have quite clear and immutable notions of what a good daughter/wife/boyfriend does, for example, or what a necessarily proper response might be.

- **Benefits.** The strength of this form of mind is its iron-clad attachment to particular ideals and goals.

- **Comfort.** We get comfortable in the meaning –making system in which we have spent a great deal of our lives. Even when it no longer works, it’s what we know, and it, therefore, gives us comfort. Even as we begin to develop new ways to make meaning, we feel comfortable in the one we know, and it is therefore, hard to consider abandoning.

- **Connection.** The socialized mind is connected and relational, and the experience of relationships at this point is consistent with many of society’s messages about love and connection. Even though there are different ways to be just as connected in the self-authored space, these are less well-described and may be harder to imagine a way into.

- **Definitions of success.** The central conditions of this form of mind are often around issues of responsibility and what defines success. Those with socialized forms of mind can have quite clear and immutable notions of what a leader does, for example, or what a necessarily proper response might be.

- **Challenges.** The major challenge of the socialized form of mind is that as the rules of the road shift, the person with a socialized framework for understanding the world has less flexibility about creating or recreating the rules of the road for herself. In a shifting context without clear and compelling leadership, the socialized mind can be quite uncomfortable.

- **World view.** At the socialized form of mind, people generally do not have the sense that they create their worldview; rather, they usually see the world as just the way it is and do not understand their own power to
change it. It can be very liberating for people with a socialized framework to develop a stronger sense of their own “authorship” and thus get “permission” to reframe their view of the world. Things begin to open up for those with a socialized mind when they begin to actively question their assumptions about the world and begin to reshape their worldview.

- Contrast. It’s important to note that these socialized examples stand out in contrast to the rest of the interview; this is not the form of mind that Client name seems to be using most of the time. However, the strength of the emotion around this leads us to believe that this is an active tether holding Client name back, and that working through it might be freeing for Client name.

**DESCRIPTOR (e.g., leading/ growing/ solid/ future):** Self-authored mind

**General description of the self-authored mind:**
(from Jennifer Garvey Berger’s book *Changing on the Job: Developing Leaders for a Complex World*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Strengths</th>
<th>Key blindspots</th>
<th>Growing edges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Those who with a self-authored mind are likely to have a clear sense of personal mission that can be extended to the organizational realm. Similarly, they have the ability to hold on to many different perspectives and make an informed decision that takes competing perspectives into account but is driven by their own sense of mission or values.</td>
<td>People with a self-authored mind can have an attachment to their own mission that can become inflexible. This person may also have trouble dealing with the most complex situations, such as cross-cultural or cross-functional leadership, or any tasks that require her to examine her own system of values or principles and call them into question.</td>
<td>This person will benefit from seeing the way her own personal theories and practices of leadership are limited and expanding her images to include other—even competing—theories and practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[**[Illustrative quotes]**](#)

**Example A written by Jennifer**

Those with a self-authored form of mind take responsibility for their actions and are self reflective about what they’ve done and what impact that’s had on others. *Client name* says:
A quote from transcript

Client name can see the way she gets pulled into old patterns (especially around old events like birthdays) and she is recreating (authoring) a way for her to find another way through. She says,

A quote from transcript

There’s a paradox in the growth from the Socialized to the Self-authored form of mind in that people who have a more self-authored perspective can say more clearly (“cleanly,” Client name says) what they want and can be both relational and also looking out for their own needs:

A quote from transcript

Example B written by Carolyn and Jane

The most prominent glimpse of an inner self-authored voice is around Client name’ pursuit of the dream of being a commercial airline pilot. Of all the things he describes in the transcript, this is the one that deviates most clearly from the external measures through which he measures the rest of himself. He says

A quote from transcript

Those with a self-authored form of mind take responsibility for their actions and are self reflective about what they’ve done and what impact that’s had on others. The transcript contains plenty of evidence that Client name takes responsibility for his own actions in terms of not blaming others. What it shows less is a degree of self-reflection that would suggest Client name believes he has the ultimate say in what he does and believes. Although he’d like to have more of an internal guide, one which he can fully trust, to guide his decisions, he’s not fully there.

A quote from transcript

He may be striving for a place in which he could actually say something more like (here we are offering an illustrative statement that comes out of a more self-authored form of mind)

A quote form transcript

Client name holds himself to a quite strict code of conduct regarding what is
acceptable to pursue in life, what constitutes prestigious, what is noble.

A quote form transcript

It may be Client name' unquestioning adherence to these definitions of success that ultimately holds him back from the freedom to make internally generated choices and begin to move to a more fully self-authored place.

At many points in the transcript, Client name talks about a level of sacrifice beyond which he will not go in his pursuit of a dream that doesn't exactly meet his framework of success. When asked if he can imagine a world in which a successful business person can also be free to pursue a passion for flying, he replies

A quote from transcript

In a fully self-authored place, Client name will likely be able to imagine a world that is more “both-and” rather than “either-or.” It might look something like this (again, our illustrative take on what a more self-authored form of mind might say)

A quote from transcript

Developing the self-authored voice is about maintaining the honorable values and relationships developed in the socialized place while forging a new relationship to them, one freer of the judgments that can stand in the way.

Example C written by Jennifer, Patricia and Carolyn

Many of the stories in the transcript are stories of transition to this place, which shows the importance of the transition—although a past event—in the present. Here are three different stories, all with this same tone:

Quotes from transcript

And there is evidence in the transcript of a current Self-authoring space, as Client name is self-reflective about his sense making and self-evaluative about the quality of his work:

A quote from transcript

And another example along those same lines:

A quote form transcript
Key points:
[what are the biggest points about this form of mind for this client to consider?]

Points to consider when writing the report
- People in this space are self-directed, self-guided, self-managing.
- Responsibility. Client name clearly takes responsibility for her own choices, her own emotions and reactions. This is one of the hallmarks of the self-authored mind. People in this space are self-directed, self-guided, self-managing.
- Boundaries. The self-authored world is about knowing your boundaries and being clear about them. In most cases, these boundaries become natural separations which take no effort to maintain.
- Voice. This form of mind is often about trusting the self without being overcome by doubts or needing to validate from outside the self.
- Strength. There is a strength and autonomy that comes at the self-authored place that is very consistent with the requirements of leadership.
- Certainty. For some, their certainty about theories, rationales, and products can limit their view and their potential influence.
- Assumptions to watch. Some people can assume that others have these same characteristics and should be able to also be self-directed, self-guided, etc., which (given the large numbers of adults who are not yet at the self-authored space) is generally inaccurate.
- Clarity. A clear belief system here is as likely as the clear belief system in the socialized mind; you would just have a different relationship to your beliefs. You would be able to see them, and see those of others as well; this might be described as seeing multiple perspectives and holding your own more lightly,
- Legacy. As you think about what you’d like to put “between the commas,” you are crafting a sense of what you want to be most known for—a key task at the self-authored form of mind.

**DESCRIPTOR (e.g., potential/ emerging): Self-transforming mind**

**General description of the self-transforming mind:**
(from Jennifer Garvey Berger's book *Changing on the Job: Developing Leaders for a Complex World*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key strengths</th>
<th>Key blindspots</th>
<th>Areas of growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The self-transforming person's strength</td>
<td>Because we do not yet know of a form of mind beyond the self-transforming, it is hard to know what</td>
<td>Those at this order are constantly working to grow, to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
is his ability to see connections everywhere. He is able to look at an issue from multiple sides and see the ways that the different perspectives overlap.

his particular developmental blindspots might be (this doesn’t mean that he doesn’t have any—just that we haven’t discovered them yet). What is clear, however, is that because this order of mind is so rare, these people have few peers who make meaning in similar ways. It also may be difficult for those who see the world through other forms of mind to fully understand the perspective of the person with a self-transforming mind, so his ideas may feel overwhelming, confusing, or just wrong.

question their own assumptions, to understand and cope with greater and greater amounts of complexity. Because of this, the world is a constant source of growth.

[illustrative quotes]

Example A written by Jennifer

_Client name_ has one foot in this form of mind, and I’m guessing this is where Big Self lives as well as the relationship to the Divine (there is a conversation to have about stages and states here). Her sense of this world is of the most connected, paradoxical place. The transcript is full of examples, but some are:

Quotes form transcript

Example B written by Jennifer, Patricia and Carolyn

_Client name_ is quite interested in this space theoretically, but is not at all convinced of the merits of this developmental space in actually being a leader who gets things done. As Client name consolidates in the Self-authoring space and finds that the backwards pulls require less and less energy to stave off, he may (or may not) choose to investigate whether this space would be an interesting one for him.

A quote from transcript

Again, issues of “the A team” are interesting to trace, because it’s obviously an important concept that Client name simultaneously holds in different minds. Sometimes the A team is defined by others in a more Socializing way; sometimes it is defined by Client name in a more Self-authoring way, and in the passage below, it is held more lightly as a process and not a particular place, in a more Self-transforming way:
A quote from transcript

This process orientation doesn't only work for thinking about the A team. It doesn't come up often for Client name, but sometimes his focus is on the particular process of his life instead of about specific goals or outcomes. This is more self-transforming:

Example C written by Jennifer

Client name is beginning to seek integration of other pieces of herself that have not gotten as much attention, and she wants them all to work together.

Example D written by Carolyn

You seem to be quite interested in this space theoretically, and you are engaging in practices that could well propel you there over time. Remember it is uncommon to find someone even moving into this space before mid-life. Your meditation practice, your striving to hold things more lightly, and the consistent questioning of your assumptions are all practices that will be a support to your development.

Just for illustration, I'll offer one example of a place in the transcript where I tested for evidence of the self-transforming mind and what I heard was solid evidence of Self-authorship.

When you talked about the benefits to your New York/not New York ambivalence. You were easily able to name benefits to the ambivalence (savoring the city in a "don't know how long I'll be here" way, wearing NY somewhat lightly) and also the costs (only getting ankle deep in things, not taking on a full leadership role internal and external to your company) but you
seem to see those things as different sides of a coin, in some ways even mutually exclusive. The Self-transforming mind would be more likely to hold these apparent opposites as more integrally connected, each one creating and enabling the other. From a self-transforming meaning making system I might expect to hear something like “I’m not sure I’d describe them as benefits, just as I wouldn’t describe the not so good things as costs---the good parts create the bad and the bad parts create the good. They’re all connected. How would I know the joy of being in New York if I didn’t know at some level that it was fleeting? It’s in the uncertainty that I have both joy and sadness. And if I were to leave, the joy and the sadness would be there as well but the particular places of sadness and joy might shift”. In that space, connections are everywhere. Of course, people in this place can make decisions and choices, but they spontaneously see connections, not differences.

I think that as you continue to loosen the strength with which you hold the assumptions mentioned in the previous section, you may find that opens you up to more possibilities and further enable your developmental journey.

**Key points.**
[what are the biggest points about this form of mind for this client to consider?]

Points to consider when writing the report:

- *Client name* seems curious about this direction but does not so far see the benefits to him in this—this makes sense as his energy is engaged in consolidating his Self-authoring mind, and because the benefits of the Self-transforming space are unknown.
- There is evidence that you could be beginning a move in this direction.
- While it’s not entirely clear that your current role is pushing you (or supporting you) in this direction, it seems to me from your transcript that your “smile” may lie in this direction.
- Lonliness. As *Client name* points out, there are few people here and so there is less company in this space than in the other developmental spaces. The transition to this space is experienced by many as lonely.
- Integration. This space is about integration and accepting all of the pieces that make us human. This means finding the benefits of the lowering the boundaries, even in times when those boundaries might appear protective.
- Paradox. This is a space where certainty diminishes
- Paradox. This space is both protective from sharp betrayals like the one *Client name* has suffered recently and also simultaneously more open to them.
• Choice. *Client name* may want to make an active decision about whether to pursue this growth at this time—and honour the legitimate decision that perhaps now is the wrong time to grow in this direction.

**Habits of mind for \(<\text{client's}\)> consideration**

Below are some habits of mind, offered for \(<\text{client's}\)> to consider. These are transformational habits of mind: as she tries them, they may change the way she sees the world. Often, they’re things she is doing already, and she is just encouraged to do more of them, to make them a practice in her day, to make them a part of her reflecting on her own reactions.

**Ask different questions**

**Take multiple perspectives**

**See systems**

Examples to consider when writing the report:

**Socialized mind with movement toward self-authored mind**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ask different questions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Quotes from transcript</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These kinds of questions, common throughout *Client name’s* transcript, are driven by her need to control future outcomes and the regret that arises when something she tried to control didn’t turn out as planned. If *Client name* could replace these should questions with more self-reflective questions, she would likely experience less regret and more personal growth. Instead of “why didn’t I do that?” she might ask “how important was it really?” For the sake of what am I rehashing this? If there’s something to learn from it, what is it?

*Client name* asks herself another type of question that is also likely keeping her stuck.

*A quote from transcript*  

*Client name’s* transcript highlights a number of implicit rules that seem to
drive her. While these rules are visible to her, she does not explicitly question them. They include implicit rules like: *In order to be a worthwhile human being, I need to be someone who is supremely reliable and who gets stuff done well all the time. The way I can ensure that people trust me is to always show up for them and do whatever is needed to fix the situation in front of us.* Client name also seems to have somewhat of an *I am different* story about herself, which she also does not question much in the interview. Regarding these rules and this story, she mostly asks herself questions like *can I do what it takes to conform to the rules without losing myself? Why is it that I have to be like them in order to fit in?* The problem with these kinds of questions is that they necessarily lead to either/or choices, leaving little space for expansive possibilities that include all of who she is.

By asking different questions of herself, *Client name* may begin to question the underlying assumptions which comprise the story she has about herself. She might ask questions like *what do I really want and why do I want it? What do I get out of being different? How is my story of differentness holding me back? How might I be able to hold the parts about me that make me special but not have them hold me? Do I actually have to choose between being like them and living my values?* These are the questions that will help *Client name* “get to the bottom of” those stuck, torn places when they arise and will ultimately serve to expand her possibilities rather than limit them as *Client name* advances in her career. Maybe the most important question is not *how can I be like them?* but, rather, *how can I bring the best of me to the table and expand what is possible for all of us?*

**Take multiple perspectives**
The question of *Client name*’s ability to take multiple perspectives was discussed at length above in both the “socialized” and the “self-authored” sections. The only thing to add here is this. It may well be that explicitly seeking to imagine and hold a range of other perspectives, particularly about how others might actually have a different story about her than the one she has about herself, could free *Client name* from the story that seems to hold her. Over time this might create a meaning making system that allows for both differences and similarities simultaneously. This ability to hold both would likely result in her feeling less isolated in her differences, less torn by the choices she perceives she has to make, and more ready to become the kind of leader she wants to be.

**See systems**
*Client name* is obviously smart and successful, and the way she has been in the world has worked well for her. It may be that to improve on this, she
needs to look not at the individual ideas and assumptions she makes about her world and her next choice, but the patterns of assumptions and choices she is making. One important hallmark of the self-authored world is its ability to look across particular events and move the ideas into very different contexts. What does Client name learn in one context that she could apply in another? Are there places in her life where she’s found an ease that she doesn’t seem to be able to find in others? And what can she learn from those places that she can apply to the areas where there is less ease? As she makes connections and sees patterns across different contexts, relationships, etc., she will be both increasing her learning and also increasing her development in ways that may currently seem elusive.

Seeing events as parts of patterns and systems will also be extremely helpful to Client name as he continues on her leadership path.

Example B

Ask different questions

On the one hand, Client name has put significant energy into pursuing a dream that appears to be internally generated; on the other, his strict definition of success leaves him feeling torn about doing that and leads him to stop short, imposing limits on himself regarding how far he’ll take his dream when its pursuit comes in conflict with his more “noble” goals. When asked if he could imagine a way to have his flying dream and have his business, he replied

A quote from transcript

In fact, Client name talks of “sacrifice” throughout the transcript, nearly always in the context of having to give up something he wants in order to do the thing he deems acceptable to those around him or to the world in general.

To the extent that Client name’ current definition of success is holding him back from the freedom to fully pursue his internally generated goals, he might benefit by asking different questions of himself. Currently, he focuses on questions like, “How can I make others proud of me?” and “How can I balance all of my available options in order to pass with flying colors while also managing to maintain at least a minimum level of what I consider to be fun but somewhat frivolous?” These questions, while humble and selfless, may derive from a meaning making system that is externally created and appears to remain largely unquestioned.

Client name might begin to ask himself whether his definition of success in
the world is unshakable truth or whether there might instead be some room for reinterpretation. For example, questions like “what is prestige and who gets to define it? Is there room for a personal definition of success that could include the things that I now refer to as somewhat frivolous or foolish?” Regarding the pressure *Client name* puts on himself to do things that make his loved ones’ lives better, he might ask himself, “How do I know that this is the thing that will make them happy? What is the possibility that they would be proud of me even if I didn’t live exactly by the standards I perceive them to hold? Why does making them proud make me happy?” Perhaps the ultimate question for *Client name* is something like “can I trust myself to be a worthwhile person when I’m not under the pressure of these external standards?”

**Take multiple perspectives**
Throughout the transcript, *Client name* indirectly imagines how others may perceive or be affected by the things that he does. From the get go, he’s imagining how the airline would perceive him if he were to just not show up or fail to keep his commitment to be available. His conclusion is that the airline would likely end the relationship eventually and that some sort of bad blood would be left. *Client name* also imagines how his family members would view him if he did or didn’t achieve success, and even muses on how business people would view him if they knew he was spending time flying while he’s trying to start a business. For example, when asked what would happen if his mother weren’t proud of him, he appears unable to even give language to that possibility.

*A quote from transcript*

While able to imagine others’ views of him, *Client name* appears to be imagining them through the lens of his own values rather than stepping outside his own perspective to wonder what the world might look like for someone who is not him. Were he able to set aside his own perspective and open up to the real possibility that others don’t necessarily think as he does, it might provide a degree of freedom that he does not now experience.

**See systems**
*Client name* spends a good part of the interview talking about opportunities---how when they present themselves, he must seize them; how they come and then may be gone forever; how they are blessings. Again, while beautifully humble and probably often true, this way of looking at the world may also be limiting to *Client name* as he grows in his life and in his work. While clearly none of us has perfect control over what happens to us let alone the world
around us, there is a distinct lack of personal agency in the way Client name describes his life’s events unfolding. Were he able to see life’s events as being part of a system, a set of patterns about which he not only has some foresight but also some influence, it could be that he could better pick and choose which ones he pursues and when. With regard to Client name’s perspective on the flying dream

*A quote from transcript*

If Client name could maintain the humility and gratitude from which this perspective arises, and at the same time be more prone to notice how he actually does play a part in his successes, he might begin to feel less at the mercy of opportunities coming his way and trust more in his ability to create them. He might not feel so limited by what he is presented with if he could see things (good and bad) as coming not in completely unpredictable and uncontrollable waves but in more noticeable, iterative, and sometimes repeating patterns.

Seeing events as parts of patterns and systems will also be extremely helpful to Client name as he continues on his leadership path.

**Example C**

**Ask different questions**

*A quote from transcript*

Client name’s transcript highlights a number of implicit rules that seem to drive her. Mostly, they are not visible to her explicitly and so she does not question them, but they seem to include things like: People who look or act different have a harder time in life. People who don’t continue to pursue development get stagnant. I have to look and act like my peers in order to be part of the team. I can’t move every three years in search of adventure and excitement. She also seems to have a very strong I am different story about herself, which she also does not question much in the interview. Regarding these rules and this story, Client name mostly asks herself questions like how can I conform to the rules without losing myself? How do I find a balance when the various rules conflict? What can I do to fit in even as I am so different? The problem with these kinds of questions is that they necessarily lead to either/or choices, leaving little space for expansive possibilities that include all of who she is.

By asking different questions of herself, Client name may begin to question the underlying assumptions which comprise the story she has about herself. She might ask questions like what does different even mean to me? What do
I get out of being different? How is my story of differentness holding me back? How might I be able to hold the parts about me that make me unique but not have them hold me? Am I different compared to some external measure or am I just a person who is unique in the world just like everyone else? These are the questions that will help Client name “get to the bottom of” those stuck, torn places that when they arise and will ultimately serve to expand her possibilities rather than limit them as client name advances in her career.

This sort of new question might come in extremely handy relative to her current job, where she is much younger than many of the Board members and is highly conscious of wanting to be part of the team. She says

A quote from transcript

Maybe the question is not how can I be like them? but, rather, how can I bring the best of me to the table and expand what is possible for all of us?

Take multiple perspectives

Client name acknowledge that other people have perspectives different from hers. She seems to see other perspectives, though, mostly as they relate to her own.

A quote from transcript

Client name also seems to want assurance that she is not alone in her perspectives. For example, regarding the “Who am I?” question that is present for her right now, she is keen to remind herself that she’s in good company.

It may well be that explicitly seeking to imagine and hold a range of other perspectives, particularly about how others might actually have a different story about her than the one she has about herself, could free Client name of the story that seems to hold her and over time create a meaning making system that allows for both differences and similarities simultaneously. This ability to hold both would likely result in her feeling less isolated in her differences, less torn by the choices she perceives she has to make, and more ready to become the kind of leader she wants to be.

See Systems

Client name is obviously smart and successful, and the way she has been in the world has worked well for her. It may be that to improve on this, she
needs to look not at the individual ideas and assumptions she makes about her world and her next choice, but the *patterns* of assumptions and choices she is making. One important hallmark of the self-authored world is its ability to look across particular events and move the ideas into very different contexts. What does *Client name* learn in one context that she could apply in another? Are there places in her life where she’s found an ease that she doesn’t seem to be able to find in others? And what can she learn from those places that she can apply to the areas where there is less ease? As she makes connections and sees patterns across different contexts, relationships, etc., she will be both increasing her learning and also increasing her development in ways that may currently seem elusive.

**Example D**

**Ask different questions**

*A quote from transcript*

Your transcript highlights a number of implicit rules that seem to drive you. Some of these, you seem to be able to see, but mostly they are not visible to your explicitly and so you do not question them. Some of these that I noticed seem to include things like: *I must seek universal knowledge, I must be intellectually stimulated at all times, I can’t be like everyone else, people treat each other in particular ways, this good, that bad.* You also seem to have a very strong *I am different* story about yourself, although you do question it a tiny bit. Regarding these rules and this story, you mostly ask yourself questions like *how can I fully live by these rules? What can I learn more of and from what sources?* The problem with these kinds of questions is that they necessarily lead to more of the same, to making choices that conform to these rules. In the transcript, you did not touch on many ways in which your various sources of external reference come into conflict with one another, but I suspect they do sometimes and that conflict will be increasingly present.

By asking different questions of yourself, you may begin to question the underlying assumptions that comprise the story you have about yourself. You might ask questions like *What do I get out of being different? How is my story of differentness holding me back? What do I really believe in and why? If I had no external sources to check with, how would I know what is true and not true?* This is not to in any way imply that you would in some way be better off if you stop seeking, it just may shift the relationship you have to the “seeking” and it to you. In the more self-authored place, it will be something you choose, rather than it choosing you.

**Take multiple perspectives**
As mentioned above, you are able to acknowledge that others have perspectives different to your own.

*A quote from transcript*

The thing you will continue to grow into is the ability to actually *hold* others’ perspectives without feeling like you have to choose between theirs and yours. Following on from the example above

*A quote from transcript*

So you are clearly thinking about it and moving toward it, but not completely there yet.

It may well be that explicitly seeking to imagine and hold a range of other perspectives, particularly about how others might actually have a different story about the world than the one you hold, could free you of the story that seems to hold you and over time create a meaning making system that allows for both differences and similarities simultaneously. This ability to hold both would likely result in you feeling less isolated in your differences and potentially less constrained by the story that currently leads you down a particular path. This is not to say that you would necessarily choose a different path, but you would be able to if you so chose.

**See systems**

You are obviously smart and successful, and the way you have been in the world has worked well for you. One important hallmark of the self-authored world is its ability to look across particular events and move the ideas into very different contexts. You seem naturally to be a connection generating machine, looking for "universal connection" everywhere. What may be next for you, beyond connection and patterns, is to begin to see systems, especially in your own life. How do the different pieces of your belief systems fit together and how might they be balancing and reinforcing each other? How do the "rules" you impose on the system of your life impact the outcomes you are able to get? If you expanded the boundaries of the system of your life, what might that enable? As you grow toward consolidating a self-authored mind, what might be some key leverage points? What are the *patterns* of assumptions and choices you are making. I encourage you to view this report as an attempt, albeit from a very short snippet of your life, to illuminate some of those patterns and connections in system of how you make meaning. If that system is even a little clearer to you than it was prior to this experience, you now have different choices, can apply pressure to
different leverage points, that will support you as you continue on your journey.

An inflection point where both socialized and self-authored are fully alive

Example A

**Ask different questions**

It is clear in the interview that *client name* is constantly asking questions of herself, examining her own behaviour and seeking to understand her internal life. She is able to describe herself as living with uncertainty and ambiguity in many circumstances even if she finds it painful. Some other questions might also help. Can *Client name* more often ask questions like “how can I see what I’m doing, the choices I’m making, as valuable to me in their own right?” “Can I also view my broad range of abilities as a success at living fully instead of as a failure to perfect one thing?” *Client name* is able to see how other people who are important to her see her abilities and choices as valuable, and is able to wonder how she herself might be able to come to see it as valuable.

* A quote from transcript

More asking herself how she can do that will be helpful in her move toward fully self authored meaning making.

Other related questions might include “How can I be kind to myself in this moment? Is there room for uncertainty about whether I’m doing the ‘right’ thing and joy in the fact that I’m doing this thing that I myself authored?” Another related question might be “How can I see the opinions of others as useful benchmarks, but at the same time completely separate from how I feel about myself?” This is a journey upon which *client name* has already begun.

* A quote from transcript

When she has identified her own version of helpful and transforming questions, she can find the practices which keep them alive. It is important that the questions become loving prompts from the self-accepting part of *client name’s* self.

**Take multiple perspectives**

*Client name* demonstrates the ability to intellectually see that others’ perspectives aren’t necessarily the truth. She is clear that there should be a clear distinction between her own perspective of herself and others'
perspectives of her (and, indeed, her perspective on others’ perspectives, which isn’t always the same).

A quote from transcript

A growth point for her, however, will be to be able to get up on the balcony and see her own perspective of herself and her perceived others’ perspective of herself from one vantage point, as possible different sides of the same coin instead of as one of them having to be right. Indeed, she could benefit from doing this with her own conflicting perspectives on herself. Is there a way they could all be true? How would that be to live in a world where she recognized and accepted and loved them all?

See systems

A quote from transcript

Client name could benefit from looking at the patterns that repeat themselves in her life and asking questions like, “what do I get out of this?” In the above example, she describes a pattern in which she takes on a huge challenge, works hard, prepares, learns, and then when it comes to the “day of the race” she betrays herself in some way. When asked by the interviewer what she gets from failing and focusing on her faults, she replies quotes from transcript

Example B

Ask different questions

It is clear in the interview that Client name asks many questions of herself. The types of questions to which she is most prone are those like “what can I do to demonstrate my value?” and “what signs can I point to so that I can confirm my value?” When she doesn’t get the confirmation she’s looking for (either external or internal), questions such as “how could I not have known that answer?” come into play. These are questions that help Client name to feel comfortable in her role as she currently defines it...that of being a person who can take masses of complex data and quickly distil insights.

If she wants to move beyond that place, the place where she knows where her world begins and ends, Client name will have to begin asking different questions of herself. Regarding the reliance on outside confirmation of her value, she might ask questions such as “What does the praise and other outside validation really do for me? How does it limit me? Are there other ways I can know that I’m valuable that come from within?” She might also want to begin questioning the standards by which she measures her own
worth. Is competence everything? How might the strict adherence to competence and role ultimately limit her as a growing leader?

**Take multiple perspectives**
On a couple of occasions, *Client name* is able to articulate another’s perspective. Particularly with regard to the colleague that came up with the unrealistic timeline and then didn’t deliver, *Client name* could describe a perspective that he probably had which was different from her own. She may be limited, however, by her tendency to implicitly assume that others must surely abide by her own strict standards.

A quote from transcript

Also

A quote form transcript

This assumption that the world (at least the professional one) is about living up to these kinds of standards without exception, may cause *client name* to be blind to both her own shortcomings as a leader and to the possibilities that might result from the ability to see a world in which there are multiple definitions of success.

**See systems**
Toward the end of the interview, *Client name* begins to talk about how that “uncertain space” with which she’s so uncomfortable is becoming ever so slightly more tolerable as she grows in her career. When asked whether her getting better at being in uncertainty is largely the result of there being more and more of it in her life, she replies

A quote from transcript

*Client name* does not seem to see the appearances of these “uncertain spaces” as coming in any sort of a predictable way. Rather, she sees them as random, unwelcome events that eventually she figures out and fixes to the point where she’s certain again. If Victoria could begin to notice the patterns of events that lead to these places, she might be able to better anticipate them and actually see them as events to be leveraged rather than obliterated. At the age of 33, she has leveraged her intelligence, high standards, and incredibly hard work to the point where she finds herself in a place in her career that most people would hope to achieve at best, by mid-life. It’s possible that her reliance on external guideposts by which to measure her value is a function of the fact that her confidence hasn’t caught up with her achievements. Whatever the cause, if *Client name* is to push
ahead in her career, she will have to begin to take a more complex perspective on the problems that come her way. Perhaps they can’t all simply be “fixed” through intelligence and persistence. Often problems that seem quite distinct are actually just parts of a more complex system, and there are no easy answers. By being able to approach leadership dilemmas from a systems perspective rather than “solving” problems, Client name’s will ultimately be a far more effective leader.

Moving away from socialized mind while being stable at self-authored mind

Example A

Ask different questions

It is clear in the interview that Client name is constantly asking questions of herself, examining her own behavior, the patterns of change which she sees, and seeking to understand her internal life. Client name is clearly able to see and describe the ways in which she sees certain beliefs at play in her life, particularly around the importance of showing respect for others, maintaining self control, and avoiding conflict (especially the public kind).

A quote from transcript

The three powerful beliefs show up very clearly in the above statement. There’s a way in which Client name seems to believe that expressing her point of view to another person, if it can be construed in any way negatively, violates the principle of respect and may cause conflict. And if there’s conflict, she may be faced with the possibility of losing control over her own emotions.

If Client name is to begin loosening the hold these powerful beliefs have over her, she must begin looking them in the face and asking some important questions. How does my need to maintain control limit me? What possibilities can I imagine for myself if I were to notice, even embrace, the strong emotions I sometimes feel? Can I imagine a way in which I could be both direct (even sometimes what today I would call critical) and respectful at the same time? Can I let go of the idea that if I disagree with another person, then we’re somehow in conflict? Can I imagine being in conflict and still being respectful and not over-emotional? The good news is that there is already evidence in the transcript of Client name doing this, as in the case where her young son was involved.

A quote from transcript

Perhaps Client name could draw on the strength she demonstrates in her
“mom” role as she builds her internal voice in other areas of her life.

**Take multiple perspectives**

At one point in the interview, *Client name* describes respect as being about

* A quote from transcript

The transcript shows extensive evidence of *Client name*’s ability to take the perspectives of others; a growth area for her might be in taking that strong habit of mind and turning it on its side just a bit. *Client name* seems prone to imagining the most positive of possible perspectives that the other might have and then systematically placing it above her own. Were she able to more consistently give her own perspective at least as much weight as the other’s (as she imagines it), it seems likely that there would be more room for her internal voice to flourish. *Client name* might try reaching for the perspective of someone whose authority she is placing above her own, putting herself in their place and asking *if I were in their shoes, would I necessarily think that my needs should be placed above *Client name*’s?* This habit might, over time, lessen the power of others’ perspectives and even enlarge her breadth of vision. To the extent that she can hold their views, she will have greater resilience.

Additionally, if *Client name* were to get in the habit of imagining multiple perspectives that the other person might hold, it’s possible that no one of them would carry so much weight, and that she would be able to elevate her own perspective at least to the level of importance she gives to theirs. The greatest challenge here may be for *Client name* to more frequently hold multiple perspectives about herself; for example, *what other way can I see myself in the world other than a person who doesn’t make waves? Can I imagine myself as a person who stands up for what she thinks is right, even if my views run counter to someone else’s?*

**See systems**

* A quote from transcript

In the transcript, *Client name* describes a pattern (a pattern she would like very much to break) in which she often lets other people’s views or perspectives prevail over her own, particularly when she is interacting with a person whom she respects (mostly because of his or her role, experience, or perceived expertise). While she is fully aware that this pattern exists, she might benefit by beginning to notice the patterns of her own reactions when
she’s faced with people who fall into these categories. What, exactly, does she do to directly get in the way of more confidently speaking her own voice? What are those behaviors protecting her from? This system of self protection is the likely culprit standing in her way of change, of moving to a place where her internal voice consistently and effortlessly wins out over the external measures that tell her she should subsume her own voice.

Example B

**Ask different questions**
Throughout much of the interview, *Client name* describes with some certainty his definition of what’s right and wrong, good and bad.

*A quote from transcript*

At other times, although he still seems to have a fairly clear definition of right/wrong, good/bad, he talks about actively asking himself questions to see how he’s doing against those definitions. In response to the interviewer’s question of “How do you judge how you're doing?” *Client name* responds:

*A quote from transcript*

There are even instances where *Client name* talks about having little certainty about what constitutes definitions of the world.

*A quote from transcript*

What’s not entirely clear is when and why *Client name* looks at the world with complete certainty and when he doesn’t. *Client name* seems to see himself as being on a personal growth journey and can talk about the fact that the world is anything but a place of certainty. At the same time, there seems to be a strong pull back to the comfort zone of certainty about what is good/bad, right/wrong, and what it means to be successful in the world. Certainty is less and less likely the more complicated a form of mind a person has—because as his perspective gets more broad, his sense of possibilities expands and his sense of certainty diminishes rather dramatically. *Client name* is clearly right, though, that certainty (especially in a Self-authored way) is quite consistent with our views of successful leadership. If *Client name* becomes interested in exploring the Self-transforming space (which he may quite rightly not be interested in doing), he will find that those times he feels most certain about something may be those times when he can ask himself questions to try to unsettle the certainty (and really try to unsettle it, instead of simply testing it to confirm the certainty or come up with a different, also
certain, solution). This is a path to growth, but it’s also a path to a less certain world. This choice is Client name’s to decide about.

**Take multiple perspectives**

Perhaps developmentally the most important multiple perspective for Client name to take is the perspective of someone who sees the world through a different developmental place. It may be most difficult for him right now to be understanding of and compassionate about those with a less Self-authored form of mind, and he would likely benefit—as a consultant and as a manager—from realizing that any frustration he might feel with others may be as much about his own growth and development as about theirs.

Additionally, Client name is developing a clear sense of where he wants to go with his new venture. He might find it useful to put himself into the shoes of various key stakeholders and look at his new venture from their perspectives. He could draw up a list of key people who may well be either influential on or influenced by the new venture, and then work his way consciously through the list, stretching that muscle which puts you into another person’s shoes and sees the world from there. This makes good business sense generally, but if Client name were interested in exercising something of the Self-transforming muscle, he could then look and see what pieces of himself those external perspectives draw on and notice the ways his reactions to others mirror his reactions to different parts of himself.

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**Stable at self-authored mind**

**Example A**

**Ask different questions**

Throughout the interview, Client name demonstrates her ability to see people and situations from multiple angles, to grasp the complexity of human situations. She implicitly wonders things like *how is it that people can make decisions like that without sufficient evidence? What is the right thing to do in this situation given the complexity of the people involved? How can I do the right thing for me and my family and also demonstrate my genuine caring for the people I mentor? What are the nuances here?* These are questions that, again, demonstrate Client name’s ability to get distance from and take perspective on her own decision-making process and understanding of situations. The thing that is missing from most of her questions, though, is what I would call a deep curiosity, a seeking to truly understand what might be going on for other people even as their actions differ hers in such a seemingly significant way. As an example, when she talks about the myopic way in which people situations are sometimes handled at Client’s Work Place, she says
**A quote from transcript**

The above statement implies a degree of certainty about the rightness of her position that not only would collaboration be difficult, but it would take tremendous energy to defend. More curious questions might sound something like: *how is it that this person is seeing so differently from the way I do? What might I be missing? What’s at stake for her? Is there learning in this for me? How might this reshape my thinking?*

The fact that Client name demonstrates the ability to be self-reflective is an indicator that she has the capacity to ask these different questions.

**Take multiple perspectives**

Client name is clearly able to take the perspectives of others, and yet, as mentioned above, she sometimes has trouble holding them simultaneously with her own; because of her certainty about her values and convictions, she has a tendency to judge those perspectives rather than hold them. By practicing holding multiple perspectives, especially in cases where her own values are most at stake, Client name may not only be perceived as more open and less “status-conscious,” but she will create the space and the freedom to expand her way of seeing and knowing to include perspectives which might previously have appeared mutually exclusive. This is the very definition of leading through complexity.

**See systems**

At one point in the interview, when asked whether she might see anything good in the seemingly bad situation of the bad review and her resulting anger, Client name was able to see that there was learning in it, that perhaps if things hadn’t gone wrong, she would never have begun to question the pace at which she was working. Clearly she is able to see connections in her own life the might not necessarily be obvious at the surface level. What I wondered as I spoke with her and as I read the transcript was whether she was aware of (or even curious about) how the various events that she described (taking a stand for her health and lifestyle, standing up for the associate, and her reaction to her own bad review) might be part of a larger pattern. What might be the underlying stories or assumptions that drive these events? What might be the common fears or beliefs that lead to similar reactions or ways of making sense of situations? And how might these be connected to the challenges she currently faces (establishing her reputation as a competent, but not status-conscious, knowing how to set boundaries for herself, fighting against the firm’s tendency to pre-judge people without...
adequate objective information). It’s worth taking a look at these.

Moving away from self-authored mind while moving toward self-transforming mind

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ask different questions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The two central questions I saw in the transcript are: What does success look like for me? And What do I most love and want to spend the next portion of my life doing? It is my suggestion that you keep those questions alive and active for you, and really gather data for yourself about them. Not in an answer-driven or problem-solving way, but simply to keep those questions alive.</td>
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| **Take multiple perspectives** |
| You have ideas about external measures of success, external ideas of “shoulds.” Whenever one of these notions comes up for you, I suggest you try a practice of turning to the issue and examining it from other perspectives to see how else you might come to understand “shoulds” or what other measures of success there might be—ones that please you and ones that displease you. As you gather a bigger universe of possibilities, you are likely to be able to notice the things that draw you most strongly. |

| **See systems** |
| This is a key growth point for you. You clearly have the capacity—and the practice—of getting up on the balcony above your particular situation. Now if you could imagine yourself on the balcony of the balcony—looking down at the way you do things, the way others do things, and noticing the interconnections between those things. As you find things you think of as dichotomies or opposites in some way, you might look at the system that creates those as opposites and see if you can find the relationship between them (the way one side of a pole creates the potential for the other side of the pole). |
Complexity of Mind in Leadership: An introduction
Jennifer Garvey Berger

Introduction
As the world grows more complex, those in organizations want their workforce to be able to handle complexity, ambiguity, uncertainty and change. But coping well with such issues is not simply a skill anyone can acquire, it is a way of seeing and living in the world. Our ways of making sense develop over time as we increase our capacity to take broader and deeper perspectives on ourselves and others, view authority in new ways, and see shades of grey where we once saw only black and white. Understanding the ways we grow and change as adults is fundamental to organizational development and leadership because it affects everything a person is able to think or do. Currently, however, developmental capacity is a kind of diversity that is so hidden that almost no one recognizes it.

This Growth Edge report emerges from cutting-edge ideas in a relatively new field that explores the way adults grow and change over time. These theories in general—and most specifically Robert Kegan’s theory—which most strongly informs our work—offer both a snapshot of developmental possibilities and also the mechanism that will help you move to a place of greater complexity of mind if you should choose to do so. In this way, the report is both the arrow that says “You are here” and also a map to get you to the next place if you choose.

Over the course of our lives, there are five distinctly different “forms of mind” through which we might potentially develop. The movement from one form to the next can take years or even decades, and involves transforming from one way of seeing the world to the next. Such transformation is different to learning new information or skills. New information may add to the things we know, but transformation changes the way we know those things. Transformation is about changing the very form of the meaning-making system—making it more complex, more able to deal with multiple demands and uncertainty. Transformation occurs when we are newly able to step back and reflect on something and make decisions about it from a new, broader perspective. Transformative learning is about changing the way we know not just what we know.

The mechanism of transformation is moving more and more of what is unseen and unexamined in the way we understand the world—those things which are implicit—to those which are seen and can be examined—those things which are explicit. Our unquestioned beliefs about the world are held implicitly, and those beliefs shape our experience of the world and the possibilities we perceive. As we begin to question our beliefs, ideas, theories, etc., our more
explicit stance opens new possibilities and allows us to deal with greater and greater levels of complexity. Like taking off a pair of colored glasses so that, instead of looking through them, we are able to look ‘at’ them and thereby understand and gain control over their use. The most profound example of a move from implicit to explicit is when gradually, over time, entire meaning-making systems move from being hidden to being seen. This shift means that what was once an unselfconscious lens through which the person viewed the world now becomes something that can be seen and reflected upon.

As you make use of this map, however, it is important to remember that while people become more complex with time, there is no form of mind that is inherently better than any other form (just as a more complex idea is not necessarily more valuable than a simple one). People can be kind or unkind, just or unjust, moral or immoral at any of these forms, so it is impossible to measure a person’s worth by looking at his or her form of mind.

**Forms of Mind**

For the purposes of this report, we will describe the five central forms of mind of the lifespan: the Childhood mind, the Self-sovereign mind, the Socialized mind, the Self-authored mind, and the Self-transforming mind. Although research suggests that most adults see the world through a Socializing or Self-authoring form of mind, we provide brief descriptions of each form of mind to set a context and to emphasize the rhythm of the movement. And, as we describe these five central forms of mind, we also know that much of our lives are spent in the spaces in-between each of the forms—on our way from one place to the next. Because of this, we briefly describe the process of moving from one form to the next.
The Childhood Mind (only seen in children)

To a young child, the world is a magical and mysterious place. With this mind, children don't know that things in the world retain the same qualities over time. When they look out of an airplane and see how small people look, they believe the people actually are small. When water is poured from one container to a differently-shaped container, and the quantity of the water looks different, they believe the water actually has grown (or shrunk), and no amount of persuasion will convince them otherwise. They believe they can slip down the drain in the tub because they can't hold themselves as different from the water which slips away. Children with this mind need to be reminded of the rules over and over, because they can't hold the ideas in their mind for very long; the rule that existed yesterday about drawing on the walls might not seem to apply today—or might apply to the walls in the kitchen but not the bedroom.

The Self-sovereign Mind (seen in early adolescents and some adults)

When people learn that objects stay the same no matter what their own relationship is to the object (e.g., when I walk away from the car and it looks smaller, the car isn't actually shrinking), their world becomes less magical and more complex. They discover that they have beliefs and feelings that also remain constant over time (e.g., I love chocolate but hate mashed potatoes; I'm good at math even if I can't do this problem). This insight lets them know that other people have opinions and beliefs that remain constant, too. Their concrete understandings let them know that a rule yesterday is probably a rule today, too. If the rule feels problematic, their orientation is to worry about the consequences of breaking it or to figure out how to get past the rule if it is in their way.

While they are aware that others have feelings and desires, they cannot hold both their own perspective and the perspective of another at the same time. Mostly other people's interests are important only if they interfere with the interests of the person with a Self-sovereign mind. Apparently altruistic acts are usually done either out of a fear of retaliation or loss or because it costs them nothing to act altruistically in this instance. People with this mind may appear extremely rule-bound, following along with various philosophies or mandates because of the possibility of external rewards or punishments. They might appear self-centered and might see others as helpers or barriers on the road to get to their desires.

The Socialized Mind (commonly seen in adults)

Theoretical description. People can begin to enter the socialized mind order during adolescence, and the evidence shows that many people live much or all of their lives at this order. In the socialized mind, people no longer see others as simply a means to an end; they have internalized one or more systems of meaning (e.g. their family's values, a political or national ideology, a professional
or organizational culture). As a result, they have developed the ability to be guided by the norms and standards of their meaning system(s). They are able to think abstractly, be self-reflective about their actions and the actions of others, and be devoted to something that’s greater than their own needs. It is as if, in their growth from the self-sovereign mind, those with a socialized form of mind have welcomed a Board of Directors into their decision making and now have the ideas or voices of important other ideologies, institutions, or people with them as they make their decisions.

The major limitation of this mind is that, when there is a conflict between important ideologies, institutions, or people, those with a socialized form of mind feel torn in two and cannot find a way to make a decision; there is no sense of what I want outside of others’ expectations or societal roles. If, for example, someone with a socialized mind has internalized—and now holds as his own—one of the ideology of his MBA program (e.g., that really reflecting on a case and playing out alternatives will give a better outcome) and has also internalized some part of the ideology of his new organizational context (e.g., that the work world runs too quickly to pause for reflection), he will likely feel stuck if he has the opportunity to give his opinion about what steps to include in the running of a particular project. He may turn to others to tell him how to best resolve this conflict, and will be increasingly bewildered if there is no consensus about the resolution or if others counsel him to decide for himself, telling him that there is no one right answer.

Although they themselves do not experience it this way, those with a socialized mind do not have an independently-constructed self to feel good about; their esteem is entirely reliant on others because they are, in many ways, made up of those around them. A student operating from a socialized mind may not know whether he has successfully mastered a particular concept until he sees his grade on a test; an executive operating from this mind may not know whether a particular meeting was successful or not until her colleagues tell her it was. A manager operating from a socialized form of mind may try to please everybody and, in doing so, find it hard to take decisive actions.

With a socialized mind, people tend to be excellent followers of strong cultures because they have internalized the ideas and philosophies of others and work out of their loyalty to a larger group. It is not fair to assume, however, that these people are necessarily chameleons who change their ideas and philosophies to fit in with the dominant ones as they move from place to place; instead, there are particular ideologies, institutions, or people to which they remain loyal and with which they remain identified. Someone whose surround supported a very earth-conscious, vegetarian lifestyle might himself be very uncomfortable if he spent much of his time around a group of carnivores, but might not find himself changed by those opinions at all. Indeed, he might
become more certain of his choice in the face of opposition as he drew clear and unmistakable dichotomous lines between his way and the wrong way. This is because the pulls to these cultures of embeddedness can often help those with a socialized mind look very ideological and sure of themselves as they strongly defend a particular right way of doing things. And the contents of these cultures are not connected in any way to any particular order of mind. A person could be firmly embedded in a socialized way in a conservative or liberal culture, in a progressive or traditional philosophy.

An example of the Socialized mind.

Charlie was a retired Army officer in his early 50s who was hired to direct the IT division of a financial services company. From his first days on the job, some of Charlie’s direct reports joked that they could not walk into a room without feeling like they should salute before asking their question. Although Charlie was not an expert in the field of technology, the VP who hired him was impressed with his leadership style and felt that he could improve a division that many considered sloppy and without a good work ethic. Charlie agreed with this assessment, explaining that he felt he could lead any troops to victory, and whether that was in a peacekeeping mission or in a mission to keep the computers up and running did not matter much to him. Filled with ideas about what needed to happen, Charlie implemented a strict series of work-order changes and clear work flow design procedures. Some of the employees complained vehemently about these changes, but Charlie persevered; he had told the people who had hired him that this would be a tough transition for some of the staff and that he would cut all the ‘deadwood’ he could. And Charlie seemed to be right; soon those who remained were following the new regulations, and the mess seemed to settle down, and soon the internal customers were marveling at how well IT was performing.

Then, more than a year into Charlie’s tenure, frustrations began to mount. Those who had been grateful to Charlie for his ability to get the IT support to fix a printer or install the right phone lines began to forget the difficulties of IT in the pre-Charlie days. Now they reminisced about the good old days of IT when you could request a software program without filling out six different forms, and where an out-of-date laptop was replaced without hassle. And while other companies seemed to be moving forward and using technology to create a more knowledge-driven workplace, it seemed that Charlie treated technology as a simple tool like a pencil and not as new way to think about doing business. More and more people became frustrated with what they sensed was Charlie’s lack of vision; it seemed he only wanted to implement mandates from his superiors and did not want to create new ways to influence the technology needs of the organization. Charlie ignored all such criticism, explaining that his manager consistently told
him he was doing a good job, “And if your commanding officer says you’re doing it right, you’re doing it right and you don’t change it!”

This leadership style is absolutely sufficient in situations where the tasks are clear and well-defined, and where the hierarchy is obvious enough that a leader who does not know what to do in an unexpected situation can simply turn to someone with more authority who will have the right answers. In the example above, Charlie found that his work in the military was a good enough fit with his new position so that he could make direct transfers. The upper-level managers in his agency were clear enough about what they wanted him to do so that he could carry out their orders in ways that felt familiar to his background and well within his capacity. His problems began when client groups (in this case the internal customer) wanted more from him. They were not satisfied that he was following the rules of the game; they wanted him to rewrite the game, invent a new thing. Charlie did not have the technical expertise to find a sophisticated new guidebook (on using IT to create new forms of corporate community and new wisdom sharing) so he relied on his own manager who was happy getting the technology in working order and was not pushing Charlie to develop a vision (which, in fact, Charlie could not yet develop).

The Self-authored mind

Theoretical description. The self-authored mind seems familiar to those who work with adults because it matches many stereotypes about the way adults are supposed to be in western culture at the turn of the millennium. The most surprising thing about this mind, in fact, is that there are so many adults who have not yet reached this level of complexity. While we have images that this is the place called “adulthood,” research suggests that adulthood is, for many people, the journey to this place.

Those with a self-authored mind have achieved all that those with a socialized mind have, but now they have created a self that is the author of its connections to the ideologies, institutions, or people which they were previously written by. The perspectives, opinions, and desires that they held implicitly—and therefore which controlled them—when they had a socialized mind are now explicit, and they can make decisions about them and decide which pieces to hold on to. They are now able to examine those various rule-systems, opinions, and expectations and are able to mediate among them using an internal set of rules and regulations—a self-governing system. These are the people who “own” their work, who have articulated their personal theories, who are self-guided, self-motivated, self-evaluative, self-correcting. The Board of Directors that was welcomed in with the socialized mind becomes augmented as the self-authored person herself becomes the Chair of the Board.
This does not in any way suggest that those with a self-authored mind necessarily abandon the previous ideologies, institutions, or people that were so important to them when they had more of a socialized mind. Instead, they transform their relationship to these ideologies, institutions, or people. For example, a leader with a socialized mind might be strongly identified with a particular theory of leadership—one that he learned in a particularly good leadership development program—and colleagues may see him as a kind of unquestioning devotee of the program. As he develops a self-authored mind, he may find that he has more questions about that theory and about his previous status as a kind of unquestioning devotee of that particular theory. He may decide after great reflection, however, that he does believe in his previously-held theory and that his questions are adequately answered by the robustness of the theory itself. Others around him might still even think of him as a kind of devotee, but they are less likely to accuse him of being “unquestioning.” They may find him more persuasive about the theory rather than less because he now has a more complex understanding of it and will sound less like he is giving a party line.

As is true with every qualitatively different form of mind, the gains one makes from a previous form also describe the limits of the new form. The gain of the self-authored mind is that the person has a self-authored system, a way to generate larger goals, principles, and commitments that transcend any one particular culture of embeddedness. The limit of the self-authored mind is that the self-authored system itself remains implicit, and while a person might make additions or alterations to the system, it takes particular energy to simply keep the self-authored system in good working order. A leader at this form of mind may become rigidly attached to a particular set of ideas about the way people should be or the way the organization should be structured, and it may be hard for her to consider a new paradigm of leadership.

An example of the Self-authored mind

Samantha, who saw the world through her self-authored form of understanding, was a middle-manager in a small financial services company. She was hired by a manager she thought was wonderful, and he and Samantha had been very collaborative together. They didn’t always agree—as she often said, she saw things her way and he saw things his way—but they always worked through their differences in ways that arrived at the best outcomes. After a company reorganization, though, Samantha found herself with a manager whom she found overly rule-bound. Instead of encouraging her to have different opinions and work through the differences together as she had done in her previous position, Samantha’s new manager, with a socialized mind, wanted
them to think alike from the very beginning and seemed frustrated if her opinion was different from his. He seemed to think that if she were thinking about things in the right way (which equaled his way) then she would come to the same conclusions he had.

Samantha’s employees mostly valued her enormously; they thought she had a coherent vision for the group and that she could keep track of the day-to-day details it took to implement that vision. Part of that vision was about letting her employees have lots of control over their own work—as long as they were contributing to the overall shared mission of the division. Some of her employees, though, seemed at sea when Samantha asked them to think of her as a resource and not as a boss. “But you are our boss!” they told her. “How can we be sure we’re on the right track if you won’t tell us how you want us to do things?” Samantha tried to reassure them by explaining that she trusted them to find their own particular path towards the end goal they all shared, but they continued to want her input in ways that felt too dependant to her. With her needy (socialized) employees and her controlling (socialized) boss, Samantha, once a star-performer, became less and less effective and began searching for a new position.

In this case, Samantha’s self-authored system is both the cause of her success and also her difficulties. Her clarity about her leadership system means that she can use it with confidence and across situations, and she can explain her rationale clearly. It also means that when her leadership methods don’t work (as is the case for some of her direct reports), she might tweak her methods, or she might just try harder to get those same methods to work. Until she can give up trying to find exactly the right method that will work in all situations, she will be held by the weakness of a self-authored mind.
The Self-transformational mind

There are very few adults who have a fully self-transformational mind, but more are in the process of moving from the self-authored to the self-transformational. These adults have learned the limits of their own inner system—and the limits of full identification with any one inner system in general. Instead of viewing others as people with separate and different inner systems, those with a self-transformational mind can look across inner systems to see the similarities that are hidden within what used to look like differences. These adults are less likely to see the world in terms of dichotomies or polarities. They are more likely to understand and deal well with paradox and with managing the tension of opposites. They are also more likely to believe that what we often think of as black and white are just various shades of gray whose differences are made more visible by the lighter or darker colors around them. While they still make use of their self-authored Board of Directors, those with a self-transformational mind now recognize the inherent frailties of such Boards. They are more likely to consider the advantages not just of other opinions (which the Board might entertain) but of entirely different forms of governing systems. They may realize that their internal system itself contributes to their inability to perceive a wide enough field of alternatives.

An example of the Self-transformational mind

José, an EVP at an oil company, was widely-respected because of his intelligence, his ability to manage people effectively, and his clear vision about what he wanted the world to be like. Throughout the years, he had felt his vision becoming clearer and had worked to find staff members who could share and add to that vision. A few years ago, though, José had begun to notice what seemed to him to be his own inability to believe in his single-minded goals any longer. He found that instead of advocating strongly for a single position, he began to see the validity in all the positions around the table. And it wasn’t just that his convictions were weakening; instead, it was as though the distinctions between his goals and other peoples’ goals had dissolved; even when their goals were quite different, he had a harder and harder time knowing which one he believed in most strongly. He found himself questioning his assumptions about the way the world worked, noticing what assumptions others were making, and understanding the ways those assumptions shaped their ideas about right and wrong. As he noticed these connections, he began reshaping his own assumptions to make them more inclusive.

As he developed, people began to be drawn to him in different ways. Instead of having only his employees come to him to tell them what to do, people all over the organization seemed to be coming to him for guidance or help in other ways—to get his perspective on an issue, to have him help them see where
others were coming from. José really liked the new ways he and his colleagues were interacting, and he found himself less tied to organizational structures and opinions than ever before. He was also finding that he was less troubled by the daily irritations that used to bother him. Now when he felt irritated, he looked to himself to see where the problem lay, and he found that he was becoming more and more interested in the various reactions—even negative ones—which he found himself having. Even his negative reactions seemed a sign of his interest and vitality, and he began to appreciate his quick angry response (because he still had the temper which had troubled him throughout his career) as a key that there was some important assumption or value that was being challenged.

Still, with all that was good in his position and all the increased interaction with colleagues throughout the organization, José was finding himself more lonely than he had felt before. While he was able to offer help to colleagues throughout the organization, he found that there were few people in whom he could really confide, and while he constantly tried to unearth and question his own assumptions and the assumptions of others, there wasn’t anyone who helped him do that work. A bigger issue, though, was that José was noticing a major change in the separation between the persona he’d bring to work and the different persona that he thought of as his home-self. He was feeling like those boundaries—which he once fought hard to create and maintain—were detrimental to his work in some way. Somehow it felt as though he was only bringing part of himself to his job, and that meant that he couldn’t really be with his work in the way that he’d most like to. He felt as if his whole sense of the work world more generally was shifting and he was not quite sure what was going to take the place of his old images. Now, when José was at the top of his career, he couldn’t find a place for himself anywhere. Sometimes José felt really sad about that, but sometimes it felt very exciting. It was amazingly liberating to be able to escape from the world he used to know and to forge his own path to a new place.

If Einstein was right when he claimed, “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them,” organizations’ need for those with a self-transforming mind is clear. As the world becomes increasingly complex, those with self-transforming minds are going to be pivotal inside organizations. Given the tiny percentage of the population who has even begun to enter into the self-transforming stage, it is unlikely that any organization will have many people at this form of understanding. This is a particular problem because as the world gets increasingly complex, supporting leaders who can manage the complexity and ambiguity around them will be increasingly important; organizations need these leaders more than ever. From this perspective, the good news is that the aging of the baby boomer population and the longer productive work lives people are
living now mean that there may be more self-transforming minds in organizations than ever before.

The movement in between

Growth from one form of mind to another is measured by indicating how far along a person is in the journey from one form to the next. Like the process of aging, development is slow with the movement from one form to the next taking years or even decades.

When people are firmly anchored in a specific form of mind, they tend not to have much of a sense that they could be making meaning differently. In their first steps toward the next place, they may have just a vague sense that something is missing or something is beginning. This early part of the journey can be either exciting (as in “I can see that there’s something new on the horizon and I can’t wait to figure it out”) or scary (“I can see that the way I have been understanding the world is insufficient and yet I can’t find another way to understand it”).

As people continue to move from one form to the next, they find themselves in a place we consider fully “Transitional” where they use both forms at the same time. Often these different ways of making meaning coexist peacefully as they rely sometimes on one meaning making system and sometimes on the other. From time to time, however, the very fact that there are two meaning-making systems becomes problematic as people feel torn between their old ways of being in the world and their new ones.

Finally, people leave behind the previous way of making meaning almost entirely, and that former way shows up as hints or pulls backwards. This backwards falling can sometimes make those at this stage appear allergic to or afraid they could be pulled back to the previous meaning-making place.

A final caveat

Many people take exception to the idea of using a hierarchical model to describe the development of adults. It is a common critique that naming differences as a function of “capacity” is limiting and potentially dangerous. Our assumption is slightly different, but that slight difference changes our perspective enormously. Instead of seeing the ways that discussions of adult capacity are limiting, we see the ways that understanding different capacities can be supportive and liberating. This is not a stagnant typology of complexity; instead, it is dynamic, and it suggests that capacity grows and changes in important ways over time.
People often ask us whether we really believe that there is not some kind of a value judgment we are making as we use a hierarchical model as a lens through which to think and talk about others. They ask us whether we feel uncomfortable about judging adults in this way. To the contrary, we think that understanding the sense another person makes of the world is the most respectful thing one person can do for another, and we believe that understanding the developmental nature of this meaning-making opens up new possibilities for conversation and support. We believe that the idea that adults develop over time (rather than simply gaining weight and losing hair) is incredibly hopeful, and we believe that the more any person knows about his or her journey, the easier the upcoming road may be.

For further reading:


Biographical Notes:

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Jennifer Garvey Berger is an educator, coach, organizational consultant, and scholar who has been using, teaching, and writing about the SOI in a wide variety of contexts for nearly a decade. She worked directly with the Harvard scholar, Robert Kegan, who developed the SOI and the theory behind it. A partner at Kenning Associates and an assistant professor at George Mason University, she has trained and consulted about the SOI with coaches, consultants, and scholars in North America, Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. She has written extensively about professional development, coaching, and how forms of understanding affect our lives and our work. She has a masters degree and a doctorate in learning and teaching from Harvard University.

**Paul Atkins**
Paul Atkins is an Associate Professor in Organisational Behaviour and Leadership at the School of Management, Marketing and International Business at the Australian National University. He is an executive coach and organisational researcher whose main interests are in the areas of wisdom, learning, coaching, systems thinking, emotional intelligence and leadership. He has published widely in the fields of management, artificial intelligence, applied psychology and organizational behaviour. Paul holds a PhD in Psychology from Cambridge University. He is a registered psychologist and member of the Australian Psychological Society and the Academy of Management. He has taught managers in various organisational topics including managing people (organisational behaviour), business ethics, organisational change, decision-making, research methods and psychological assessment. Paul has worked extensively with organizations to improve human systems. His particular love is working with leaders to develop their strengths and capacities.