

# Integral Leadership Review

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## Notes from the Field

### Validating the Measurement of Stages and Their Practicability

*This is a series of emails posted on an integral listserv based in London. The first post is by a very gifted Principal Lecturer at the London Metropolitan Business School and a PhD candidate. She has been studying integral and adult development for some time. Nick Shannon is a consultant in the UK who is also the UK Asspcoate Editor and Bureau chief for Integral Leadership Review. Matthew Kalman has been a leading light of the London integral community and listserv since its inception. These messages are being used with permission. I wanted to share the kinds of questions people are raising about the integral map, adult development, and assessment. The point is, ultimately, that we have some great maps and a lot to learn about the territory.*

—Russ

#### *Helen Davis (London)*

I've been struggling with this one, and would much appreciate others' opinions and feelings: I don't think that we know enough yet about the various stages/levels to be able to identify and good leaders for society (or good managers for organisations, for that matter).

This is not to say that I don't think the stages model is useful at all. Wilber's book on psychology, *Integral Psychology*, shows quite logically how different therapies could work best for people at particular stages.

But the problem is – how does one know what level or stage a person, or indeed one's self, is at?

I have seen the view that we can slide up and down the levels in one day, and that seems to be my own experience in myself. I have also read that it is the highest level that one experiences that is the one to be judged by, though that begs the question: how often would I need to be experiencing seeing the world from that particular level to be deemed to be at it? There is also the theory that, although one moves up and down the levels, one has a centre of gravity in one of them. But how does one tell which one? Those who have ever taken any psychometric test know that the more often they do it, the wider range of different results they will have, even if repeated over a short length of time. Mood, situation, a recent event, etc., etc., all influence how we answer. But this of course is at the 'horizontal level' of personality traits, etc.

However, I have recently been trying to teach myself how to measure a person's level of ego development using the Loevinger sentence completion test. Many other such tests seem to use the same principles. The test seems to encounter the same problems as any of the horizontal tests, in that internal and external experiences at any time are simply not taken into account. It also seems to downgrade (i.e. attribute earlier levels to) very short answers, however insightful they might be. Russ Volckmann mentions a particular example with his own completion of the sentence "A good boss is..." He reports in an interview with Torbert that his own instinctive answer to this is 'no boss' which would be attributed to one of the earliest levels in Loevinger, Cook-Greuter and Torbert's own tests. In fact, (not referring to Loevinger's rules given to assign a level to this for a minute) one might attribute that comment to some-one at 'red' i.e. "no-one's the boss of me" or to any level of green or above because the speaker has an understanding of the importance of democracy and consensus, and how allowing employees autonomy often results in their best work. Advocates of these tests would argue that it isn't just down to one sentence, and that once each sentence is judged there is a complicated sophisticated procedure for judging the picture overall, but I can tell you from experience that this is very, very difficult to do. I'd be happy to concede that my cognitive may not be advanced enough to cope with this yet.

Which brings me to the problem of different lines of development, and one might score highly on Laske's test of how many dialectical thought forms one uses, which measures intellectual/cognitive capacity; but score at an earlier level on morality, or ability to empathise. Just speaking for myself, I have found it very frightening to work for a boss who would feature at a very high level cognitively, but who was devoid of feelings for the other creatures with which he shared the planet.

A further confusion is that Wilber seems to use the word 'cognitive' to mean general awareness, whereas a lot of the rest of us use the word 'cognitive' as synonymous with 'intellectual' or 'thinking'. He states that the level of cognition, i.e. awareness, necessarily needs to be at a certain level before any of the other lines can be judged to be at that level. This appears to be logical, but I have not been able to find a test or an indication for measuring the levels of awareness, only 'thinking'. The nearest I can find is whether one is egocentric, ethnic centric, world centric, or kosmos centric. And here I have to say that I have found many *organisations* who can talk world centric beautifully, while their leaders behave in the most egocentric way possible. Unfortunately, that behaviour often isn't discovered until later.

But even if one could accurately identify one's or another's level of development, is it possible, as Jaques claims to have done, to assign job levels to particular development levels? Is life not too changeable for that? How does this fit with the idea of 'flattening' organisations – i.e. reducing the levels of hierarchy?

Here I admit that when I first read Wilber I thought, wow, this is it, all we have to do is find people at 2<sup>nd</sup> tier and elect/appoint them leader. Yes, I know now that Laske **would** think that particularly simplistic thinking. But since then I've had a better chance to observe and find out more about people that are generally considered to be at 2<sup>nd</sup> tier and, without being too cruel or crude about it, I am rather unsettled that some of them might be in charge of anything!

I think research is definitely needed into the effects of increased power in people, whatever the level of development they're at when they get that power. I have known a number of people who I would have intuitively put at least at green when at one level of an organisation, but have 'reverted' horribly to red when promoted. When I ask others if they've ever experienced that phenomenon, they nearly always say yes. And I don't mean when your mate at work is promoted to be your boss, and suddenly distances herself. It hurts, but it's understandable. I do also have to admit to never having plucked up the courage to ask somebody who's done this nose-dive back into red what had happened! But does that mean that 'red' was always there, just pretending to be green? (I know that this has also been raised in the forum recently as well). Or perhaps more than a certain amount of power is always going to reduce people to red? If so, we do have to think much more carefully about our nasty habit, usually through apathy, of letting one person get too much of it (I'm thinking business leaders here as well as political leaders).

And I still don't think I've got my head around what it actually means to be second tier yet. The simplest description I've found of the first level in 2<sup>nd</sup> tier is recognition of the other levels. There's already been a long and informative debate on whether higher = better on this forum, but it seems to me that the most useful aspect of teal/yellow is that you can see what the other levels have added to how we are all made up, and the dangers each level presents. The good things that a leader would want to draw on and activate within his organisation/territory (the following is my own interpretation, which is still evolving and would benefit much from others' comments) might be the power to act from red, the necessity of obeying certain rules to avoid chaos from amber/blue, rationality from orange, fairness and kindness from green. But we also know that all those levels have a shadow side, to be avoided, and surely, that exists at 2<sup>nd</sup> tier too. The leader at 2<sup>nd</sup> tier has an ability to see and (hopefully) reconcile those earlier levels, but what shadow side is he or she himself carrying? Can we say that the shadow side of teal/yellow does not hold as much that is destructive as red, amber/blue etc., etc? (Might I hazard a guess from some of what I've seen that this shadow side might be the loss of one's sense of humour and a certain lack of humility??! Sorry! – that is perhaps rather unkind. And I'm not saying that everybody at teal/yellow gives in to this).

But, now we know that these levels exist, and they all generally have a dark side that eventually forces another level to evolve, why are we not doing more to find out what the dark side of 2<sup>nd</sup> tier levels might be, to avoid the worst? It might even speed up evolution, which would be a good thing for those who believe that 'later is better'.

But for myself, there are so many 'ifs' and 'buts' with using a person's level to assess their readiness for leadership that I have been thinking about what could be done instead. Personally, I think I would now look for behaviour which is compassionate i.e. kind; and which is rational; and involved a self deprecating sense of humour—a true humility and willingness to hear and think about and act upon as necessary their own weaknesses (i.e. not the self-defensive way in which I myself tend to use it). In a business, I would also look for a certain cognitive ability to do with understanding that business and its context, and ditto with a political leader as regards understanding that country's situation. But I don't think it's important how clever they are, or how much they understand—they should not be appointed without the kindness, rationality, and sense of humour. (I could go on to explore these attributes within the four quadrants model, but that isn't the intention of this piece).

I have no real idea why I've chosen these particular attributes! Perhaps it's something to do with my own horizontal characteristics, and level of vertical growth...Intuitively, I'd put myself mainly at orange/green, given the words I've chosen, perhaps with a later level of cognitive development.

But that's it, you see. I can only intuit this. I don't feel there's any real way of knowing this yet. I'm not advocating for one moment that the idea of levels and stages should be abandoned. I think it can help us all understand a lot of things in a very practical way -the conflict between fundamentalists and liberals, for example. But I think the four quadrants are much easier to use for practical purposes at the moment (I've used them here to make sure I got in at least four perspectives) and we need a lot more work done on the stages model.

### ***And my brief response — Russ***

I wonder if a key issue isn't the aspiration to measure, validate, and "know" with any level of finitude about these issues. If, indeed, these models are maps and not territories then, even Don's assertion that the spiral is within, is little more than a map.

For me, the real question is with the application. While we can use virtually any map to make hypotheses, suppositions, and strategies, it is in the application that we encounter the territory. This is why feedback from assessments is an awareness enhancing exercise but not a truth predicting process. The truth is within the territory, i.e., the truth of the "no boss" response can be found within me—and all you guys out there are just guessing, some with more accurate guesses than others, but it is still looking at me and my responses through the lens of the map. Another map might lead to a different supposition. (Which of the colors is lighting up now?)

None of this is to suggest that the maps aren't useful. They are what we have. Map is a concept that externalizes our sense and meaning making systems. That is important. For example, to what extent, when thinking of learning and development, do we think monologically and to what extent dialogically? The latter relates to the critical question of life conditions and stages being manifested at any point in time.

So help me out here, doyens of validation and measurement. What, exactly, is the truth that you aspire to and how does the methodology (and methods) a la Ronnie Lessem and Alexander Schieffer (*Integral Research and Innovation*) help you approximate it?

***Nick Shannon, Surrey—south of London (a very adept student and practitioner of Otto Laske's work; Principal Director at Management Psychology Ltd, three master's degrees, one from Oxford):***

There are a few of us who think they have an answer on this one that it is good enough, but not, of course, perfect. Jan de Visch sets it out in his book *The Vertical Dimension...*As does Laske (who you mention) in section IV of *Measuring the Hidden Dimensions of Human Systems, Vol2*.

Here is a brief summary of key points:

1. Leadership is not a property of an individual but is better thought of as the dynamic that occurs between people at different stages of development (no leadership without followers).

2. We can measure development adequately in two ways, socially-emotionally and cognitively (using cognitive in a restricted sense to refer to thinking and in particular a person's system of inquiry), but one can argue that other measures of development might also be relevant (e.g. spiritual/ethical?).
3. The best measure (yet) of social-emotional development is the subject-object interview (following Kegan) and as practiced by Laske, which measures stages (up to stage 5) but bear in mind that such measurement only yields a centre of gravity, with "risk" and "potential" indicators which show how a person is distributed across sub-stages, and therefore these are not on their own able to discriminate very adequately between people. People can regress from one stage to a previous one, but cannot jump a stage.
4. The best measure (yet) of cognitive development is the cognitive interview as practiced by Laske, focusing on the presence of dialectical thought forms. (This is a pretty bold claim but one which will ultimately be established empirically or not, as the case may be).
5. In organisations, a person's ability to "lead" or "manage" effectively (choose your own terminology) is dependent on the match between their "size of person" as measured in 3 & 4 above, and the "size of their role" as defined by the complexity of the work that the role entails. We can say that there are minimum requirements in terms of both social-emotional development and cognitive development for any specific degree of work complexity.
6. Following Jaques, we can say that organisations are stratified in layers of increasing complexity of work. How one measures the complexity of a role has been worked out by Jan De Visch quite comprehensively, but one can also use some simple rules of thumb.
7. Jaques established a maximum of 8 layers. However, not all organisations need the top 2 two or 3 layers, and not all need the bottom 1 or 2. So you can get by with less depending on the nature of the work to be done (I think there is some slight circularity here). The trend to reduce layers of management in organisations may have resulted in a concentration around 2 or 3 layers in the middle.
8. Tools such as Loevinger's Sentence Completion Test are too crude to be of much use in establishing the capability of someone to work at a particular level of complexity as is referral to Integral's/Spiral dynamic's levels (in my view). Also, one's level of development is largely "hidden" to oneself, and can only properly be assessed by someone else trained to do so.
9. People cannot be managed (or lead) (or assessed) effectively by people who are not capable of working at a layer of complexity which is at least equal and preferably higher than the layer they are capable of working at.
10. However, if the gap is more than one layer, a subordinate will likely not feel that they are getting adequate support/direction from their manager.
11. Irrespective of capability, a person may still have a dysfunctional behavioural repertoire that makes them ineffective in a leadership role. The degree of dysfunction experienced will depend somewhat on the cultural norms of the organisation.

Now, I know that not everyone will buy into the points above, but there are some significant organisations that are starting to do so, and personally, I think that trend will continue because the "competency" fad is being found to be inadequate most particularly at higher levels of management. And I believe a significant



number of global businesses do already follow Jaques principles in pretty much their original form with apparently some success.

***Helen Davis, London:***

Many, many thanks to Nick Shannon for his reply to my post. What a lot of lovely comments to take away and chew over and look into and read up on. My first thoughts however are as follows, using Matthew's technique of interspersing Nick's words with my thoughts and questions on them.

*1. Leadership is not a property of an individual but is better thought of as the dynamic that occurs between people at different stages of development (no leadership without followers).*

Agreed.

*2. We can measure development adequately in two ways, socially-emotionally and cognitively (using cognitive in a restricted sense to refer to thinking and in particular a person's system of inquiry), but one can argue that other measures of development might also be relevant (e.g. spiritual/ethical?)*

I'll come back to your first point when you look at them again below. As regard ethical development I remember a discussion at the London Integral Center meeting in July—the one at which you yourself presented—as to whether ethical development came under 'cognitive' or 'social-emotional'. I remember suggesting that it came under both—emotions giving rise to what one 'felt' was right, and then thinking through whether this was logical. But maybe it might be better considered as a separate line of development, one that is important in itself in that it's an essential element of living together peaceably and constructively.

*3. The best measure (yet) of social-emotional development is the subject-object interview (following Kegan)...*

When I first read the comment above, I recalled that I'd heard this technique mentioned before, probably by you, though can't recall coming across the actual mechanics in any of Kegan's books. So I went back to them to have a quick look to see what I'd missed, and got stuck in *The Evolving Self*. What a brilliant book! Could it be that my Holy Grail of an instrument that can measure overall awareness is here, i.e., the general level of consciousness that Wilber tends to refer to as 'cognitive'? You mention it in relation to social-emotional development, but I don't think it's restricted to that. Why do you think that it is? Also, could you elaborate please on why you think it's the best measure yet of social-emotional development? And, most importantly, I still haven't found how to conduct a subject-object interview, but it's been a long time since I read his books, and at the time I was more interested in the difference between the actual stage themselves than the means for measuring them. Could you point me in the right direction please?

*...and as practiced by Laske, which measures stages (up to stage 5) but bear in mind that such measurement only yields a centre of gravity, with "risk" and "potential" indicators which show how a person is distributed across sub-stages, and therefore these are not on their own able to discriminate very adequately between people. People can regress from one stage to a previous one, but cannot jump a stage.*

How have the phenomena in that last sentence been established, and who by? Has it been published anywhere?

- 4. The best measure (yet) of cognitive development is the cognitive interview as practiced by Laske, focusing on the presence of dialectical thought forms. (This is a pretty bold claim but one which will ultimately be established empirically or not, as the case may be).*

Why do you personally think this? You know Laske's system well, and must be acquainted with others, so how you came to this conclusion is of much interest. I'm presuming it's to do with increasing complexity being a measure of increased evolution? (Discounting the humble fern, which I'm told has more DNA than us...No, ignore that, it's a complete red herring!)

- 5. In organisations, a person's ability to "lead" or "manage" effectively (choose your own terminology) is dependent on the match between their "size of person" as measured in 3 & 4 above, and the "size of their role" as defined by the complexity of the work that the role entails.*

Yes, I'd go along with that, but both (role, and person) will be in a state of constant flux, so we'll be dealing with the 'average' or most predominant occurrence of either, if there is one. I'm talking from what I've observed in my own workplaces, and what various HR professionals have described to me. So maybe there's something in here about the value of stability when dealing with change in that organisations are encouraged to keep the role/person matches as constant as possible, once it's got it right.

- 6. We can say that there are minimum requirements in terms of both social-emotional development and cognitive development for any specific degree of work complexity.*

*Following Jaques, we can say that organisations are stratified in layers of increasing complexity of work. How one measures the complexity of a role has been worked out by Jan De Visch quite comprehensively, but one can also use some simple rules of thumb.*

*Jaques established a maximum of 8 layers. However, not all organisations need the top 2 two or 3 layers, and not all need the bottom 1 or 2. So you can get by with less depending on the nature of the work to be done (I think there is some slight circularity here). The trend to reduce layers of management in organisations may have resulted in a concentration around 2 or 3 layers in the middle.*

OK, Jan De Visch is now on my reading list. I'm not too keen on Jaques because he seems to be writing about organisations as machines, rather than the messy illogical organic processes they usually are.

- 7. Tools such as Loevinger's Sentence Completion Test are too crude to be of much use in establishing the capability of someone to work at a particular level of complexity as is referral to Integral's/Spiral dynamic's levels (in my view). Also one's level of development is largely "hidden" to oneself, and can only properly be assessed by someone else trained to do so.*

As regards that last point, I'm not so sure I agree. When I was training as a Psychosynthesis Counselor, the Institute didn't qualify anyone who had not developed a certain degree of objective self-awareness. A counsellor/therapist without such can do untold damage. I know everybody has blind spots though.

8. *People cannot be managed (or lead) (or assessed) effectively by people who are not capable of working at a layer of complexity which is at least equal and preferably higher than the layer they are capable of working at.*

Yes, that sounds logical, but only if it applies to both the cognitive AND social-emotional lines. Again, purely from observation, I have seen a number of people at more complex cognitive levels than their bosses, but who are managed quite happily and effectively by them, so long as they (the line managers) are socially-emotionally more advanced. However, from what I understand of Laske, he's not convinced about the social-emotional aspect? Or is Laske in fact also using the word 'cognitive' to mean 'awareness' generally? I didn't think he was.

9. *However, if the gap is more than one layer, a subordinate will likely not feel that they are getting adequate support/direction from their manager.*

Is that a common sense surmise, or has research taken place? Again, if it has, has it been published?

10. *Irrespective of capability, a person may still have a dysfunctional behavioural repertoire that makes them ineffective in a leadership role. The degree of dysfunction experienced will depend somewhat on the cultural norms of the organisation.*

Absolutely! And isn't that the crux of the whole matter? You analyse a post for the level of complexity it needs. You analyse your candidates for the post for the level of complexity they're at. You match them. Although in the length of time it takes to do this, the organisation, its circumstances, and the applicants themselves may have moved on. And even if they haven't, you still have no guarantee it's going to work out. So what else do you need to do to ensure you do get the right person in the right management role?

### ***Nick (London)***

Thanks for your questions, which I'll do my best to answer as follows:

2. I see ethical development as closely linked to social-emotional development, and influenced by it. And social-emotional development is influenced by cognitive so there is a link. but, I cannot reduce ethical development entirely to s/e. Here is my problem: at stage 4 it seems to me that people can get locked into a very self-serving notion of ethics (think malevolent dictator). They may acknowledge other people's views of ethics, even respect their view, but refuse to live their life by any standards other than their own. To the extent that their notion of ethics is clearly at odds with those of the society that they live in, one could argue that there is a problem with their ethical development. I'd welcome views on how others see this. I am sorry I cannot really comment on spiritual development, being under-developed in that area myself.

3. Sorry, but there is no holy grail! Laske has written up the s/o interview brilliantly in ***Hidden Dimensions Vol 1*** and teaches it by telephone classes. To my mind, a trained interviewer stands a much better chance of picking up the subtle nuances of language, and exploring what lies behind peoples expressions of their feelings, than any questionnaire. I would love it if someone can prove me wrong on this! You could, of course, devise an interview which picks up both s/e and cognitive development, indeed you can always hear both when people speak, but I'd say it is easier to focus on one aspect at a time.



4. The standard measures of cognitive development are basically tests of deductive logic where speed and accuracy is measured. However, as I mentioned at the salon, principles of formal logic alone are not enough to determine answers to complex real-world problems. The model of hierarchical complexity (Michael Commons) suggests several stages beyond formal operations (cf Piaget) but as far as I am aware has not produced any tools to measure such advanced stages, which appear to relate to systemic, meta-systemic, and paradigmatic thinking (however defined). On the other hand, Basseches notion of dialectical thinking and classes of thought forms has been converted by Laske into a viable measurement tool aimed at post-formal thinking. This model appeals to me because the underpinning metaphor of dialectical thinking is our experience of the natural world, whereas I believe (following Lakoff and Johnson) that formal logical thinking models are underpinned by our experience of our embodied self. I find it hard to think of thinking in terms other than that of metaphorical cross-domain mapping, i.e. thought must be based on experience (and not a priori) but I have to confess to being up against my limits here. I would love to know how “Third Tier” thinkers think, but suspect I would not understand the explanation, not being one myself!

5. This is a very interesting point. We could say that any “formalistic” notion of organisation (e.g., Jaques requisite) is inherently limited by the transformational nature of an organisation (being itself a living thing). However, I think it is okay to be a bit pragmatic and to argue that in order to take action, we have to make decisions, and thus it is okay to generalise a bit. In any case, I think one can make useful distinctions about the qualitative difference between the role of say a middle manager, a business unit Managing Director, and an enterprise CEO.

7. The test of your level of development is not what you think you are, but whether others agree. That said you can certainly have some insights.

8. The point is that the complexity of a role entails a requisite level of both s/e and cognitive development (in the narrow sense) for effective execution. However, a person could still be *happy* with their boss despite having a higher level of cognitive development than their boss. But their boss would not be adding value to the subordinates work, beyond some s/e supervision.

9. Jaques was pretty adamant about this, I think. DeVisch sees it as an important principle.

10. Well there are other psychometric questionnaires! Laske uses something called the Needs/Press which is interesting, but in my view flawed. You can do a lot worse than use the Hogan Development Survey (HDS) which is broadly based on the DSM 4 classification of psychiatric illnesses. Babiak and Hare have a questionnaire to detect psychopaths at work! For my money, all of these must be supplemented by very careful observation and interview.

### ***Matthew (London):***

—the very bright organizer of the London Integral listserve, occasional book review for Integral Leadership Review and an exceptional scholar of adult development:

I’ve been looking at the values development model of Brian Hall/Paul Chippendale just lately. If you imagine a sort of Maslow model of stages crossed with Spiral Dynamics—but also including 125 micro-values, not just the 8 major waves—then you’ve got the gist of it. (I’ll be posting some colourful values scans that use it soon!!).

What blew my mind a bit was Paul Chippendale's point that at the post-conventional, Level 6, collaborative 'New Order' stage, you could find either Gandhi or... Adolf Hitler!

I'd always presumed that Hitler was some glorified Purple (Blue?) meme ethnocentric pre-conventional type, but with added firepower and psychopathology.

Perhaps not...?

Re., Michael Commons, I'm fairly sure that his model of hierarchical complexity has an assessment tool that goes up to post-formal stages, as would offshoots of Commons' approach—e.g., Theo Linda Dawson's Lectical something-or-other.

I also don't think I've come across anything that suggests that Kegan's Subject-Object Interview is more reliable than Loevinger's 36 sentence stems to complete. I've seen a suggestion that the interview might represent optimal functioning, because of its interactive nature, and the Loevinger questionnaire might illustrate normal functioning at the time the form is completed.

I think Susanne Cook-Greuter has enabled Loevinger's tool to discern more sub-stages within Kegan's Level 5. I've heard that Kegan's interview can't discriminate within level 5. Is that true?

I suspect Commons' hierarchical complexity might be less helpful once one moves towards late postconventional or transpersonal stages.

How hierarchically complex would your thinking be if you were sitting there in 'Oneness'? Not very, I suspect... ;-)

*So, there it is, a snippet of a conversation on the London listserv. It demonstrates the stage(s) we are at in our use of the maps of adult development that are available to us. Clearly, our conversations are maturing and we have much to learn.*

—Russ

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