Introduction and Overview: *Integral Review* Special Issue on the STAGES Model

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("*" Indicates peer reviewed articles.)

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Introduction

The STAGES model of adult development is a relatively new framework created by Terri O'Fallon, in consultation with several colleagues over the past decade (O'Fallon, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). STAGES is an extension of the ego-development framework formulated by Jane Loevinger and updated by Susanne Cook-Greuter, with elements inspired by Ken Wilber's AQAL model and Sri Aurobindo's model of psychospiritual development (Loevinger, 1979; Cook-Greuter, 1999; Wilber, 1995; Aurobindo, 1992). STAGES diverges from the earlier frameworks in two ways. First, it proposes a small set of underlying parameters (factors or dimensions) that give rise to, or explain, the progression of developmental levels described in the prior theories. Second, it uses an alternative scoring system – one based on these parameters. The

STAGES framework, as described in papers and seminars by O'Fallon and her colleague and brother Kim Barta, diverges from prior adult developmental frameworks in two additional ways. First, it includes a very specific model for "shadow work" (psychological health, healing, and repair). Second, and it includes a treatment of states and state stages that aligns it more closely with western transpersonal and eastern contemplative theories of human potential that speak directly to later stages of self-actualization and ego transcendence.

Though O'Fallon has a PhD and has worked within the US educational infrastructure, the STAGES model gestated and was born out of the modest petri dish of O'Fallon and a few colleague's work in human-potential workshops and her work with Cook-Greuter in developmental scoring – i.e., it did not evolve within a traditional academic context or with the assistance of traditional grant or corporate research money. Like almost all such theories created in pragmatic contexts, at first, it was simply a new conceptual framework – one among hundreds of models of human capacity and growth that could be used to inform leadership, parenting, personal growth, cultural change, etc. Unlike most such models, it had its roots in a model that had been rigorously validated in scholarly venues (i.e., Loevinger's lineage), and it was always O'Fallon's intention to validate the model empirically.

Within the past five years, three types of advancements have launched STAGES from its gestation into a new level of maturity: (1) through dozens of papers and workshops, STAGES has become increasingly well-known and is being applied in many contexts by hundreds of professionals; (2) O'Fallon and colleagues have completed a number of empirical and psychometric studies validating many aspects of the model; and (3) the STAGES model has been incorporated into about a dozen dissertation research projects, thus establishing itself (provisionally) in academic settings.

It is the latter two of these trends that motivated the creation of this special issue of *Integral Review*. Though STAGES is still a new model that requires additional validation, scrutiny, and evolution, it is notable that in a relatively short time, it has achieved enough to be able to fill a journal issue with descriptions of research and application projects. The timing seemed right to ask *Integral Review* to host a special issue for collecting these threads in one place. The contributors are listed below.

At the end of this introduction are *Notes on multiple interests and independent research*, which include a discussion of multiple interests and potential sources of bias in favor of the STAGES model in the editing of this issue. For this issue, we did reach out to several sources for alternatives to, and critical perspectives on, the STAGES model. The issue contains such offerings along those lines from Thomas Jordan, Roman Angerer, and Trish Nowland.[2] Though the majority of articles herein are supportive of STAGES, this special issue will serve as a milestone or foundation upon which others can offer additional critical and alternative

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[2] At this early stage in the evolution of STAGES, it is difficult to find critical perspectives that are also well informed. A well-intentioned critique by Cook-Greuter et al. was published in the November 2017 issue of Integral Leadership Review, along with a response from O'Fallon et al. that concluded that 9 of the 10 points of critique were based on misconceptions about the STAGES model or its formation. However, that exchange also led directly to the more nuanced conversation between Jordan and Murray that appears in this issue.

perspectives. In addition, as is indicated in some of the articles herein, research on STAGES, more than differentiating it from other ego-development frameworks, supports (or allows of the evaluation of) the entire lineage of ego development and sentence completion test (SCT) projects.

Contents of this Issue

For those new to the STAGES model, an introduction to the model can be found in this issue in Barta's *Psychological application of the STAGES model*. Other papers in this issue by Barta give an indication of the range of application fields for the model, specifically psychotherapy, parenting, love and relationships, and organizational shadow. Foundational writings on the STAGES model exist in O'Fallon (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). The most complete description of the STAGES model is the 20-page brochure *The Stages Matrix Roadmap*, downloadable from http://bit.ly/stagesroadmap.[3] Moreover, foundational material on the psychometric validity of the SCT can be found in Murray (2017). Finally, a summary of validity research to date on the STAGES SCT assessment is found in this issue (Murray).

Below is a summary of this issue's contents.

Foundations of the STAGES Model: Theory, Application, and Research

1. **Terri O'Fallon**, *States and STAGES: Waking up Developmentally.* Here O'Fallon articulates her theory of the relationship between states and stages in human development.

2. **Tom Murray** and **Terri O'Fallon**, *Summary of STAGES validation research*. This paper gives an overview of empirical research to validate the psychometric validity of the STAGES assessment instrument, some of which is published in full elsewhere.

3. **Kim Barta**, who works closely with O'Fallon to refine, evolve, and teach the STAGES model, has written seven pieces that describe the STAGES model and how it can be applied in the domains of: psychology and psychotherapy, personality typologies, parenting, love and relationships, developmental lines, and organizational shadow. We combine these into one paper with seven parts. Within this special issue, the first paper serves as the best introduction to the STAGES model itself within this special issue.

Dissertations and Research using the STAGES Model

4. **Abigail Lynam**, *Principles and Practices for Developmentally Aware Teaching and Mentoring in Higher Education.* This article offers a review of the application of adult development theory and the STAGES model to teaching and learning. It includes the results of research on the impact of learning about adult development for faculty and students in a graduate program, additional research on the meaning-making and

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[3] This document is also available on the STAGES International website at https://www.stagesinternational.com/about-the-model/.

perspective-taking of educators through the stages of development, and practical insights and principles for teaching and mentoring developmentally.

5. **Gail Hochachka**, *The scenic route: A developmental approach emphasizes the importance of human interiority in transformative approaches to climate change.* This paper summarizes two research projects that apply adult developmental theory to study how people make meaning of climate change. Approaches to climate change policy, mitigation, and education focus predominantly on exterior (techno-managerial) concepts of accommodation and adaptation; and of the few that include consideration of human psychological and cultural interiors, almost none apply maps of human adult meaning-making (or ego-) development. This body of work aims to introduce that critical factor into the climate change dialogue, and in doing so, deepen and clarify the sense in which the term "transformation" is applied in educational and policy work. The first study described uses a modified version of the STAGES text analysis method to evaluate the developmental level of reflective texts produced by Central Americans living in rural contexts. These texts are reflections upon photographs taken by workers as part of a "PhotoVoice" action research project. The second study described is an in-process (incomplete) analysis of text from within a standard STAGES SCT that was modified so that one-fifth of the items were related to the climate change theme. In both studies, Hochachka discovers how individuals at various developmental levels understand what climate change is, how it affects them, and what should be done about it.

6. **Natasha Mantler**, *Women's Authentic Leadership Development*. The goal of this research was to study women's conceptions and experiences of leadership and the authenticity of leadership. It looked at relationships between (1) ideas about leadership and authenticity; (2) conventional biases and stereotypes about gender and leadership; and (3) the individual's assessed developmental level. The larger contributions relate to (1) understanding of the social construction of authenticity and (2) augmenting women's leadership development programs and consequently preventing further entrenchment of stereotypes. Stratified sampling was used to select 10 women from a larger pool of women leaders who had previously completed a developmental STAGES assessment. These subjects were interviewed, and the interviews were transcribed and analyzed using grounded theory methods. The results indicate that women experience and understand authentic leading and leadership differently throughout the stages of development, becoming more complex with ever-widening perspectives and understanding, initially intellectual, then more embodied.

7. **John Churchill** (with **Tom Murray**), *Integrating adult Developmental and Metacognitive Theory with Indo-Tibetan Contemplative Psychology*. Churchill is a seasoned teacher in the lineage of contemplative practices outlined in the Indo-Tibetan Mahamudra and Dzogchen traditions. His dissertation work constituted an effort to integrate western adult developmental psychology with Indo-Tibetan Buddhist contemplative psychology. Indo-Tibetan contemplative psychology has distinct theory and practice that explores the depths of consciousness, metacognitive awareness, and realizations of emptiness well beyond the mindfulness paradigm used in most contemporary "contemplative science" research. This paper is a collaboration between

Churchill and Murray to summarize the aspects of that longer dissertation paper that are of relevance to this special issue. The paper shows how contemplative psychology already contains a similitude of all of the major themes from modern developmental psychology, and it illustrates how components of the STAGES developmental model both align with the important dimensions of the traditions and how it can be used to further elaborate contemplative psychology.

8. **Antoinette Braks**, *Leadership Coaching Leads to Later Stage Development*. This paper explores a multiple case study based on the effects of a developmentally informed, transformative leadership-coaching methodology. Results, using the WUSCT assessment, indicate that after eight 90-minute coaching sessions over 12 months, 83% of the case study participants shifted a full stage, mostly from 3.5/Achiever to 4.0/Pluralist, while the other 17% shifted two stages, from 3.5/Achiever to 4.5/Strategist. The paper provides a thematic analysis of eight factors related to the STAGES model that expedite later-stage development in leaders and distils an emergent Vertical Development Theory.

9. **Jason Miller**, *Finding Truth Within: Exploring the Importance of Reflective Practice in Deepening Self-Knowledge*. This research studied the relationship between developmental levels and reflective practices intended to lead to deeper self-understanding. It assessed 18 director-level leaders working within a state healthcare organization who were enrolled in an eight-week leadership development program that included reflective practices. Shortened versions of the STAGES SCT, journaling, and survey questions were employed. A strong relationship in the predicted direction was found between developmental level three factors: (1) the extent to which the subject engaged in the reflective activities (2) the self-knowledge they gained, and (3) the types of content they reflected upon.

10. **Lisa Buckley**, *Hope Examined Through a Developmental Stage Perspective*. This article is a short summary of a PhD research proposal.

STAGES Model New Research

Moving from the application of the STAGES model to researching the model itself, in addition to the "Research Summary" article above, we include several specific empirical studies (and see our first major study published in *Heliyon* journal in March 2020, mentioned in the summary article).[4]

11. **Terri O'Fallon**, *STAGES Child Research: Preliminary Report*. This paper gives a short glimpse at in-progress research using a new inventory designed for assessing developmental levels of children, which was administered to 53 children ages 4-13. It is the first study applying the sentence completion method to young children (performed using transcriptions from face-to-face verbal interviews).

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[4] "The Validation of a New Scoring Method for Assessing Ego Development Based on Three Dimensions of Language," by O'Fallon et al., 2020:
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2020.e03472.

12. **Tom Murray**, *Investigating the Validity of the Ogive Aggregation Method, Including the Use of Rasch Analysis, for the Sentence Completion Test and the STAGES Model.* This paper is a detailed report of a research study aimed at using item response theory and related Rasch modeling to extend the validation of the STAGES model from the prior focus on survey-level statistics to the level of per-item analysis.

13. **Terri O'Fallon and Tom Murray**, *The STAGES Specialty Inventories: Robustness to Variations in Sentence Stems*. This paper describes (1) six "specialty inventories" in development, (2) studies demonstrating internal consistency of the new stems, and (3) a general discussion of the robustness of the SCT to innovations in stem items and length.

Other Uses of the STAGES Model

We include one paper here on other applications of the STAGES model, but we mention a number of other use cases not represented as papers in this issue (see "Other research and applications" below). In the STAGES research summary paper, we mention three other areas of use: **Marj Britt's** *Called by Love* ministry, the *Generating Transformative Change* program, and a computer-based automated scoring application.

14. **Trish Nowland**, **John Kesler**, **and Thomas McConkie**, *Integral Polarity Practice and the STAGES developmental model*. Nowland offers a reflective overview and commentary on an online dialog featuring John Kesler and Thomas McConkie talking about the relationship between Integral Polarity Practice (IPP) and STAGES, with Nowland and Tom Murray as co-participants. Kesler is a theorist and activist in the field of interrelated internal, cultural and organizational/societal flourishing in a developmental context. Kesler developed and teaches IPP, a practice methodology that combines elements from voice dialogue, Genpo Roshi's Big Mind Process, polarity theory, and developmental psychology. Kesler has been in close collaboration with O'Fallon for about a decade, and the evolutions of their two models have strongly inter-informed each other. McConkie, a highly respected mindfulness teacher in his own right, is the only other person yet to be certified to teach IPP. The 90-minute dialogue, which can be found at http://bit.ly/stagesippvid (audio version at http://bit.ly/stagesipp1), is wide ranging, as summarized by Nowland. Nowland also includes reflections on her participation in IPP seminars and practice groups.

Alternative perspectives

We have three contributions that give critical or alternative perspectives on the STAGES model.

15. **Roman Angerer**, *Luhmann's Life Work and Tier Patterns: The Analysis of Differences and Contingent Patterns*. This work is a deep grammatological-developmental analysis of the major texts authored by Niklas Luhmann, one of the most important social theorists of the 20th century, who was a German systems theorist working at the intersection of sociology, social theory, philosophy, and cybernetics. Angerer draws from developmentalists and philosophers, including Hegel, Aurobindo, Peirce, Wilber,

Kohlberg, Fischer, and Cook-Greuter, to propose a mapping between grammatical structure, specifically word case (the grammatical functions of nouns and pronouns) and developmental altitude. The methodology is both complicated by and enhanced by the fact that Luhmann wrote in German, which has a richer case system than English. The analysis maps the progress of the complexity of Luhmann's writing (hierarchies in content and grammatical style) in an "Archeology of Knowledge" that reveals nested repeating patterns through the sequence of post-autonomous developmental levels. The grammatological analysis allows for fine-grained developmental categories that subdivide the 9–12 developmental stages defined in ego development theories. Angerer performs a qualitative and logical analysis of Luhmann's writing to propose a necessary sequence of language properties. He arrives at a sequence of levels with characteristics (and orderings) that differ somewhat from that prescribed in the Loevinger tradition, and specifically by O'Fallon's STAGES model, especially for the post-autonomous levels. These findings provide new tools for the critique, and ultimately the evolution, of ego development theories.

16. **Thomas Jordan** and **Tom Murray**, *Deconstructing Developmental Constructs: A conversation.* This article reports on an email dialogue between Jordan and Murray on aspects of the STAGES model that have come into question. The conversation focuses on the highest stages, including discussions of: whether any single-sequence holistic developmental model, such as STAGES, can capture the multiple related capacities that might develop independently; and whether the Metaware tier of the STAGES model (5.0, 5.5, 6.0, 6l5) includes the complex reasoning associated with 4.5/Strategist, or allows for a bypass of 4.5 into a more "spiritually sounding" world-view.

17. **Trisha Nowland**, *STAGES - Methodological principles for future enactions.* Nowland notes some uncertainties inherent within linear stage-theories such as STAGES. She inquires into how can the capacities of 4th person perspective, as described in the STAGES model (and in other developmental models), can be more explicitly (and recursively) applied to the processes of STAGES assessment-scoring and STAGES theory-creation. The article suggests that developmental assessments need to include information about the perspectives and possible biases of the scorer. This is in order to be compatible with modern qualitative research methods that explicitly (transparently) describe the researcher's social and cultural background, context, and philosophical/ideological/methodological commitments (or assumptions) – as are intended to improve the "social trustworthiness and dependability" of the reported results. Nowland also discusses the centrality of one's embeddedness within a matrix of relationships in describing human nature and human development; and suggests models such as STAGES could benefit from a more explicit treatment of these relational structures.

Other Research and Applications

In this issue's "Summary of STAGES validation research" article, we include a section called "Face validity: STAGES applications" that describes a number of uses of the STAGES model

that are not represented in this issue's articles. These uses include five additional dissertation and thesis projects that use the STAGES model:

> **Eric Reynolds**, "Next-Stage Organizations: A Transdisciplinary Case Study." The goal of this research was to study the relationship between individual and organizational development and transformation by ascertaining how a Founder/CEO's development informs that of their organization – particularly in leaders or organizations characterized by the post-formal/post-conventional logics that seem necessary to navigate the complexities of contemporary leadership challenges.

> **Jani Attebery**, "Regenerating Soil, Soul, and Society: Garden-Based Sustainability Pedagogy for Incarcerated Adult Learners." (Completed PhD research.)

> **Jimmy Parker**, "STAGES of Organizational Development." This paper reflects on the state of the art in assessing development at the organizational level and describes the advantages that the STAGES assessment has in that domain. Parker is working on a PhD research project that will apply these ideas.

> **Ron Hurst**, "Merging Characteristics of Median-Stage Ego Development: When Does Self-Initiated Reflection Begin?" (PhD dissertation proposal.)

> **Steve Schapiro and Abigail Lynam**, "Transformations in ego development and intercultural sensitivity in graduate students." (A soon-to-begin longitudinal study of PhD students in a human-development and organizational-development program at a US graduate school.)

As mentioned in this issue's article entitled "The STAGES Specialty Inventories: Robustness to Variations in Sentence Stems," "specially protocols" are being developed in a number of areas, most of which will lead to research projects. These protocols include (1) six specialty inventories that have had their reliability validated psychometrically based on leadership and organizations, love, education, psychological reflection, climate change, and a children's SCT and (2) several in-development (not yet validated) inventories based on relationships, religious beliefs, spiritual growth, money, hope, dementia, ethics, and parenting.

Notes on the Global Context

This is the first issue of Integral Review to be published after the start of the Covid-19 pandemic—less than two months after it became a clear international concern. As I write, it is all anyone seems to be thinking about, for good reason, and it did not seem proper to release this issue for publication without mentioning it. The givens of our world are now put into a stark uncertainty, and it is impossible to imagine the context within which the reader, two weeks or two years form now, will interpret the articles this issue contains, as they were all submitted over the last year, before any of this was imagined. Will academic articles in journals still have any relevance? Will there be a free and accessible Internet delivering them? I must make an earnest if feeble attempt to set the offerings of this issue within that context—knowing that in such times

any gesture to carve relevance or import from the field of uncertainty is tenuous at best, foolhardy at worst.

STAGES, as a theory and as a body of teachings promulgated by O'Fallon and Barta in their workshops and writings, is, more than any other adult developmental theory, explicitly concerned with the psychological shadow work of "cleaning up," with "waking down," with spirit and soul, and with the health and integration of the earlier levels of development within each of us. All of the major theories touch on this territory, but the STAGES body of work uniquely emphasizes this aspect to balance the "waking up," and "growing up," and increased complexity discussed in all developmental theories.

The pandemic highlights these things about our world: the degree to which our social systems are fragile and interrelated; the degree to which people depend upon each other; and how much stands in the balance in people being able to access the simple resources of compassion, care, tolerance, trust, generosity, flexibility, and openness—in times of great uncertainty and stress. Such times highlight the need for complexity or sophistication in our meaning-making, *and* for putting complexity aside to allow the simple directives of the heart and the senses to guide our responses. It is my hope that this issue focused on the STAGES model will be helpful in guiding theoretical innovations and practical implementations of adult development as they search for the right balance and integration of the "ascending" growth-related approaches and the "descending" healing-related approaches. Surely wisdom about the interplay of complexity vs. simplicity in human cognition is one of the tools we will need to meet each other on the other side of any of our current global crises.

Notes on Multiple Interests and Independent Research

For disclosure of multiple interests, it should be noted here that the editor of this issue has close professional and business ties with O'Fallon. Though the bulk of my scholarly writing and empirical research within the broader integral-developmental community is without any direct compensation, I have been hired as a research scientist and paid for one-tenth of my research and development work related to STAGES. Nevertheless, I perform nine-tenths of that work as an enthusiast for adult developmental science, and for the STAGES model. In addition, any such work has a potentially positive impact on my own business and consulting profession (www.stagelens.com). Therefore, the issue you are reading was compiled in a context of implicit and explicit bias in favor of the STAGES model. As a long-time research scientist who has also published in the areas of epistemology, appreciative critique, and the philosophy of method, biases from my enthusiasm for STAGES are strongly modulated through my role as a scientist and critical analyst.

Two converging global trends in scientific discovery are worth mentioning here. First, the objectivity of the scientific method, even in the once-thought-pristine halls of academia, is under intense critique for many reasons that the reader is probably familiar with (see Latour, 2005; Ioannidis, 2005; Bhaskar, 1975). Subtle bias of multiple types is seen to creep in at every corner; while exactly *how* disabled that leaves the scientific method is debated. Second, more and more important research seems to be conducted outside the walls of traditional academic or government organizations, often in contexts linked to business interests. The needs of running a

business, or even the needs of promoting one's ideas in the mimetic "marketplace" of scholarship, are often in tension with the need to be objective in scientific research and reporting. Indeed, these tensions are ubiquitous in scientific research in general (Walker et al., 2015). Scholars within the "integral diaspora" (a term coined by Bonnitta Roy) are particularly likely to be "independent scholars" publishing without compensation.

Though outside-the-box funding introduces many sources of bias – as is well known by those working within integral-developmental scholarship and within any area that appears "fringe" from the perspective of conventional academic and institutional world views – the most innovative work often gestates well outside the walls of traditional institutions. We can acknowledge that, aside from bias that might come through the commercial entwinements of funding sources, even in *labor-of-love projects* (which to date account for 90% of all research efforts in STAGES research and development) the motivation that leads one to spend significant time on an unpaid project implies a type of enthusiast's bias.

Thus, in STAGES research, I do (and other authors may as well) acknowledge that there will be tensions between the objective reporting of scientific "facts" and the desire to promote, publicize, and extol the value of the STAGES model. One antidote for bias is a rigorous empirical study, such as the psychometric analyses we report herein. As the scientific method is not without its sources of bias, we ask the community to "keep us honest" in this regard through critical appraisal and frank feedback. From an integral, trans-rational perspective, we eschew simplistic notions of "objectivity" and "proof" to address the practical nuances and tradeoffs, and see these tensions in terms of ongoing processes and "polarities to be managed" rather than "problems to be solved." This requires ongoing feedback from many types of stakeholders and ethical oversight from outside parties. Many articles in this issue were peer reviewed, which defends against bias only to the extent that the community of reviewers is unbiased, which is an ideal never completely realized.

We can use our own models to note that these issues in scientific inquiry are developmental in nature. Any second-tier, post-rational, or post-metaphysical (Murray, 2019) approach to science implies a nuanced treatment of the indeterminacies and biases that operate on personal and transpersonal levels in any inquiry into the truth (and see Nowland's article in this issue addressing related issues). I include this subsection on multiple-interests because I believe that published science can no longer pretend to be "objective." This is well established in qualitative research methods, but quantitative studies less frequently try to be transparent about potential sources of bias. It has become de rigueur in qualitative, "critical," and "postmodern" scholarship to, for example, reflect on how one's identity status (gender, race, socioeconomic, cultural, etc.) might lead to biases. Perhaps a next and more difficult step is to include a bit more specific and personal sources of bias; and to include all such reflections on the "indeterminacy" of conclusions, in quantitative studies as well.

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