STAGES
Methodological Principles for Future Enaction

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Introduction

This paper begins in invitation from Tom Murray for this special edition of Integral Leadership Review, to provide alternative perspectives on the STAGES Matrix model. The perspective I am offering here is based on my recently completed theoretical PhD in psychological research methodology, accompanied by an enduring interest in developmental psychology, psychoanalysis, and data science. My background with the STAGES Matrix model comes via participation in the Generating Transformational Change (GTC) program in 2011-12, which was co-founded by Terri O'Fallon (who is no longer a principal with Pacific Integral, the same organisation). This was followed by engagement in several winter programs in Integral Polarity Practice with John Kesler and Thomas McConkie online since 2012, who both reference STAGES within IPP sessions (see conversation in this special edition). They have also worked closely with O'Fallon to continue to innovate the STAGES model. The background is given here both to describe my experience with STAGES, and to acknowledge the limitations of my expertise on many of the emergent subtleties of the STAGES Matrix model as currently taught by its primary representatives, Terri O'Fallon and Kim Barta.

The content of this paper derives from an interest in thinking through how the post-formal developmental levels described in STAGES could be applied to the very processes of researching and theorizing about human development, specifically, in psychology research. I feel a tension between the more complex construct-aware, context-aware, relationality-aware, and process-aware capacities pointed to by the STAGES 4th person-perspective (and higher), and the simplistic method of modeling development in terms of a single linear stage sequence—one which describes its outcomes without reference to the examiner, or study context. Note this tension exists for most developmental models in mainstream psychology, as well. Thus, the principal question pursued in this paper is:

> How could the capacities described by "4th person-perspective" offer deeper contributions
> to psychological theory and practice than is currently in seen linear stage-based
> developmental models in psychology research?

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The question perhaps seems fraught, at first glance; STAGES uses person-perspectives to exactly describe its levels of ego development. In what follows, we will work to disambiguate ideas about ego development levels from ideas about person-perspectives, drawing on the history of the ego development concept as founded in the work of Jane Loevinger. We will then explore how person-perspectives as a concept offers unique discursive resources (Chase, 1995) to psychology methodology literature. The question above is posed as important for psychology research, to the extent that 4th person-perspective offers perhaps the most appropriate way to account for the effects of social and cultural phenomena in the psychology research paradigm. The psychology research paradigm and its mainstream applications remain largely uninformed with respect to what 4th person-perspective methods of inquiry may entail. It is proposed in this paper that the greatest contribution that the STAGES Matrix model makes to psychology research may not necessarily be the refinement of categories of ego development levels, but may be best characterised by how methodology can be refined by taking into account 4th person-perspective - something rarely encountered in conceptualizations of "scientific" inquiry, in my experience.

In pursuing the question above, some tensions are drawn out for the STAGES Matrix. We begin by orienting to the STAGES model as described by the "three questions" of the STAGES Matrix, shown below.
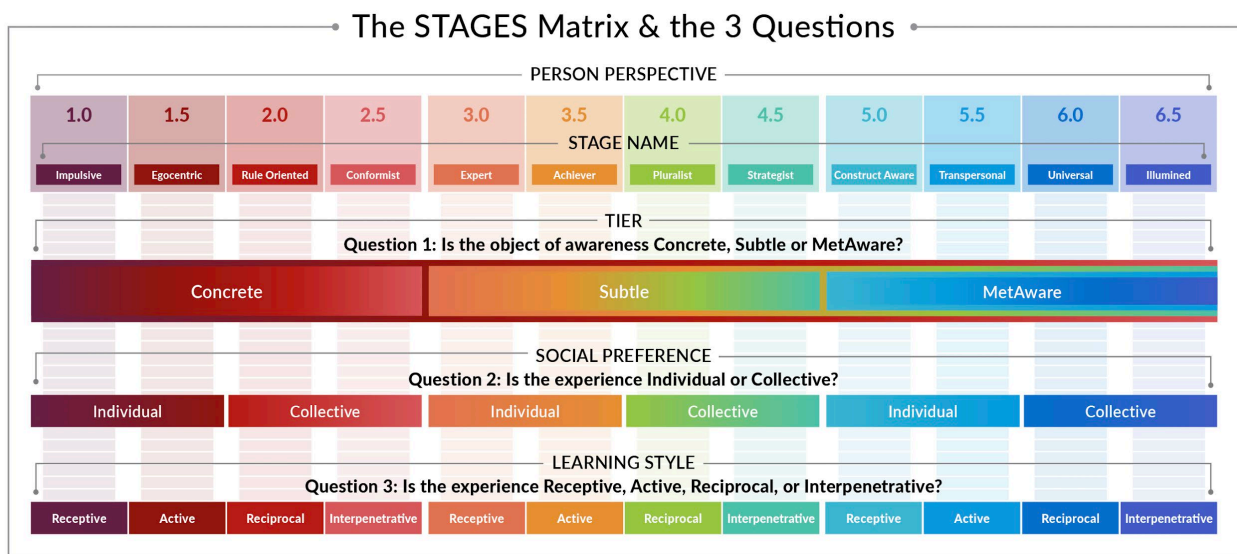

Figure 1. STAGES matrix Three questions. From: https://www.stagesinternational.com/about-the-model/.

There are three key principles that can be directly noticed in the above table. The first is a recurrence of patterns, particularly for the elements of Social Preferences and Learning Styles, with specific start and end points for these. The second key feature of note is the alternating swing between individual and collective in the Social Preference question. The final key feature of interest is an absence: a lack of an account of the embedded social and cultural context as an embodied being, which we must exist within, in order to have any opportunity for STAGES to unfold. This last point brings into view some indications for generative advancement with respect to the nature of assessment, for the STAGES Matrix. The sections that follow are ordered

accordingly. Firstly, we address some **philosophical or foundational questions** for STAGES, noting a reliance on pattern-making that accompanies this model. The mid-section orients to questions of **relationality,** specifically for the individual-collective polarity, shaped by literature on social meta-cognition and psychoanalysis. The final section takes as its departure point the concerns made clear in the first and second sections, and offers some insights on **methodology** for psychology research that makes use of sentence completion test data. We begin with historical and philosophical perspectives in personality psychology, as we consider the origins of ideas that found the STAGES Matrix.

Philosophical Perspectives

In what follows there is an effort to retain systematicity as a quality which is beneficial to psychological research, and in this section there is an effort to remain systematically *historical* in what follows. Rather than extending across the terrain of "a theory of everything", then, there is a tracing of the particularity of the beginnings of ego development theory in the work of Jane Loevinger. A recent paper from O'Fallon (2018), "STAGES: Everything is a perspective" identified building on the work of Jane Loevinger, by proposing a structural model that does not rely on content from participants to guide the structure of ego development theory. For O'Fallon, this is stated as important to allow for continuous updating of the sentence completion tests to socially and culturally relevant phenomena of the time:

Models that only use categories of content will continually have to update that content because it is constantly changing even though the perspective is structurally the same. Having models that have structural parameters can continue to score as the content changes. (O'Fallon, 2018, p. 20)

The shift that is articulated is one that steps beyond the taxonomic approach to characterising the levels of ego development pursued by Loevinger, later extended by Torbert and Cook-Greuter (see Kegan, Lahey, & Souvaine, 1998, and Appendix 1 for details). Loevinger collected data from a large number of participants, and sorted these into categorisations, based on theory developed by Harry Stack Sullivan from her early work researching authoritarian parenting styles. The groupings of phenomena that shape her account of ego development come directly from participants, and what she was observing as clusterings, around particular ego development levels, or worldviews.

What is proposed for STAGES is something different. The theory begins from a hierarchical and repeating structure for the construct of ego development, that can extend below the levels of linguistic abilities necessary to fill in the sentence completion tests that provide the assessment information for any one individual, and can extend past into higher levels as chartered for example in Wilber (2000, 2016) or Aurobindo (1990). What is preferenced for STAGES is orthogonality in structure, rather than the imprecise overlap of organic clusters grown from data gathered over time, as seen in Loevinger's categorisations.

Loevinger's approach to psychological research has been identified as consistent with constructivist realism (see Slaney, 2017, p. 185). For Loevinger, this meant that the data

collected by psychologists described traits that occurred in individuals, while psychological constructs were something that existed in the minds of psychologists, principally:

> Traits exist in people; constructs (here usually about traits) exist in the minds and magazines of psychologists. People have constructs too, but that is outside the present scope. Construct connotes construction and artifice; yet what is at issue is validity with respect to exactly what the psychologist does not construct: the validity of the test as a measure of traits which exist prior to and independently of the psychologist's act of measuring. It is true that psychologists never know traits directly but only through the glass of their constructs, but the data to be judged are manifestations of traits, not manifestations of constructs. Cronbach and Meehl and their colleagues on the APA committee appear reluctant to assign reality to constructs or traits. Considering traits as real is, in the present view, a working stance and not a philosophical tenet. (Loevinger, 1957, p. 642)

For Loevinger then, the construct of ego development had a logic and meaning mostly in the hands of fellow psychologists and researchers, built from the data that she collected from participants, informed by stage-type conceptions of Piaget (1932) and Sullivan (1953). Her perspective on traits is important for our considerations here as it appears that her conceptualisation of traits is as descriptive summaries useful for clinical intervention, not as internal causal psychological properties, of humans. With the structure for STAGES seen in the image above, there appears to be an implied characterisation of ego development that is closer to the latter rather than the former - it appears there is a causal engine assumed in the polar structures adopted, in the STAGES model. Loevinger on the other hand had built her account of ego development theory into what she self-described as a scientific paradigm, or disciplinary matrix:

> A scientific paradigm is shaped by its data and in turn shapes them. No simple Baconian program for data accumulation nor hypothetico-deductive program for disconfirmation of hypotheses encompasses that dialectic, still less a program based on factor analysis, multiple discriminant analysis, or random computer searches of data. There is a corresponding tension in our conception of people, not surprisingly, since scientists are people. Much as we have learned about how the structure of character evolves and is maintained, there will always be more. I do not count as failure but as an act of courage to admit that the heart of the matter is and always will be a mystery, opaque to the scientific glance. (Loevinger, 1976, p. 433)

Our question then for STAGES becomes one of whether the patterns so repeating gives psychologists and researchers a well-defined space, as scientist-practitioners (see Barlow, Hayes, & Nelson, 1984), through which we can understand something of personality characteristics, as developmental levels. Loevinger herself had aspirations to develop "a sub-discipline within psychology that inherits some of the wisdom of philosophical psychology, that unites the discoveries of psychoanalytic ego psychology with contemporary stage-type conceptions of personality, and that has its own research methods and sphere of applications" (Loevinger, 1966, p. 433). While STAGES in some ways appears as a continuation within the sub-discipline, aspects of its structure mark it as perhaps something different. One apt characterisation could be,

as a person-perspective construct. We'll talk more about how the notion of a person-perspective construct might benefit psychology and particularly psychology research methodology, below.

Ego Development Theory – The Deeper History

As described above, the roots of STAGES are found in Jane Loevinger's ego development theory (O'Fallon, 2018, O'Fallon & Barta, 2017). Ego development is described by Loevinger following reflection on psychoanalytically-informed psychology in the following way: "The ego develops as the person works to master his experience; yet what requires to be mastered and what is acceptable to him as effective in mastering depends on ego level" (Loevinger, 1966b, p. 441).

Loevinger articulates an account of ego development abstracted from the work of Sigmund and Anna Freud, stated in Piagetian cognitive development terms, with the idea that interpersonal schemas are internalised into intrapersonal schemas, according to the level of a person's ego development. Her account is distinguished explicitly from ideas about self-mastery, or self-improvement such as would be found in today's coaching paradigms, as in Loevinger's terms such a theory was merely self-referential, just announcing, that ego development does occur (see Loevinger, 1966b, p. 441). Rather, her proposal is that the interpersonal schemas become in some way part of the unconscious apparatus by which a person makes choices in living their lives, which are described by her as "symptoms."

Loevinger's (1976) later body of work (see Manners & Durkin, 2001; Loevinger, 1998) extends Harry Stack Sullivan's (1953) model of ego development as a self-system built via his research with young male schizophrenia sufferers. Sullivan's model had three components constructed from elements including: a) character development representing the combination of impulse control and moral behaviour; b) conscious preoccupations, including the kinds of things a person orients to in thought; and c) interpersonal style, representing attitudes towards interpersonal relationships. Loevinger (1976) adds a component for cognitive style, which represents the shift from conceptual simplicity to conceptual complexity at later levels. What follows then is an account of ego development that describes progressive redefinition of the self-structure contextualised by the social and physical environment (see Manners & Durkin, 2001).

The ego itself for Loevinger (1976) as conceptualised in ego development theory is a construct held in the minds of researchers that captures the structural unity of personality organisation, where personality is made up of traits[2]. Loevinger (1976) refers to ego as the "master trait," which holds any other possible developmental domain, for example worldview conceptualizations (Perry, 1970), moral development (Kohlberg, 1969, 1981; Piaget, 1932), and interpersonal understanding (Selman, 1980). For Loevinger, while there was an inner logic to the progression of change for personality (Manners & Durkin, 2001; Loevinger, 1976), she did not pursue explication of this inner logic (see Kegan et al., 1998). She maintained to the very end that the sentence completion test methodology provided insight into the function of the self or

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[2] Note that personality psychology as a field remains undecided about whether personality features have qualities that are inflexible over time, such as traits that we are born with, or whether personality is made up of contextualised responses to more immediate situations, which are states, see for example, Steyer et al., 1992)

ego in a way analogous to an immune system, protecting the person and their current frame of reference from experiences of cognitive dissonance or inconsistency (see Loevinger, 1998, p. 352) within a certain environment. It was in a way, less about structure, and more about responsivity to the cultural and social context that the individual found themselves in; emphasizing a paradigm that had been largely unarticulated within psychological research in Loevinger's era.

Ego Development - The Relevance of Context and Relationship

Loevinger's home for constructs as residing in the minds of psychology researchers, and less so in the immediacy of the lives of persons that make up populations, speaks to an aspect of psychological research often elided - the presence of the researcher as theorist and modeller, or sentence completion test scorer in assessment, in the account of the score that is given for individuals. To be scrupulous about this observation - in the tradition of psychology research journal articles in the broader field of psychology research, the researcher is not included in the report of the statistical outcomes that are offered as the scientific support for the structure of the psychological construct (whether it be a STAGES ego development construct, or something else).

Originally the aim of the omission was an attempt to remove researcher bias from the reporting of research outcomes, such that the study report reflected an unbiased and objective scientific outcome (see Barlow et al., 1984). The technique of not including researcher perspectives is not different from quantitative psychological research more typically of Loevinger's day, and remains not different from other psychology reports, today. The STAGES approach of leaving out the perspective of the researcher or the scorer is no different, in this respect then, from mainstream psychology. No account of the stance of the researcher is typically articulated, in the reporting of the outcomes of a study. What is more, no systematic account of the commitments of the scorer is made available to a person undergoing a STAGES assessment, where they would be given opportunity to understand for example the different social or cultural positionings that the scorer occupied, to know something about how this might shape the scoring given, in the STAGES outcomes.

This lack of presence of a researcher in quantitative reporting however is very different from reporting techniques in qualitative psychology research today, where an account of the researcher's perspective is included in enhancement of social trustworthiness and dependability of the research outputs, in terms of evidence in respect of research project validity, for findings (see for example, Shenton, 2004). What we know today, distinct from what perhaps was clear across the field of psychology of Loevinger's time[3], is that researcher bias necessarily shapes what is reported in respect of a psychological construct, and also has a role in each decision made about the statistical analyses which provide scientific information about the construct, as well as methodological determinations (see Nowland, unpublished thesis). What this implies is that the most ethical stance that a researcher offers to other practitioners and the broader community, one which reduces the quality uncertainty of results (Vazire, 2017) is one where full

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[3] Loevinger's own work with construct validity however provides some evidence that she herself had clear understanding of the problem.

transparency is adopted, with respect to philosophical commitments, for the construct in question.

The lack of inclusion of researcher perspectives points to a broader concern for the history of personality research, and one that is really relevant to research work that builds on Loevinger's ego development theory as STAGES does, transmuting the insights by including fixed structural elements with polar facets, as we see in the Matrix. In the era that Loevinger developed her theory, for the purposes of psychological research, there was no well-pronounced differentiation between the social realm and the cultural realm, for psychology, tracked in systematic ways in research methodology. What this meant was that psychological constructs were generally created, and then, replicated, without reference to the context of their development. In the language of STAGES, 4th person-perspective is simply not included in the data, and is barely attended to in the methodology, of psychology research (see for example, Poropat & Corr, 2015). To understand the difference between social, and cultural realms, what is needed is 4th person-perspective.

4th person-perspective is described in Angerer (2018) as "a focus on an observer, observing another observer, observing another self and other(s)" (p. 154). In the STAGES model this is available at 4.0 Pluralist and 4.5 Strategist, respectively. What this would mean was available in the scientific methodology of psychology was a systematised account of say, the ideological stance relevant for the scientist-practitioner who was recording observations about the implications of social and cultural practices implicit in the administration and scoring of a particular test or assessment between a researcher and a participant, such as the sentence completion test structure that is used to assess STAGES. The reason that this is important is that the worldview of someone else, as is proposed to be assessed via the STAGES model, is not assessed 'from nowhere' - it is assessed in a series of transactions between a researcher or scorer, and a participant. The meaning that is generated from a sentence completion analysis has to be culturally and socially embedded - the score can come from nowhere else but such a place. To the extent that the researcher or scorer themselves is as culturally and socially embedded as the participant, it would seem beholden on the researcher or scorer to account for this embeddedness in a systematic way which facilitates the interpretation of their score or assessment. The resulting score or assessment is a function of an interaction between the cultural and social backgrounds of each of the stakeholders - the researcher and/or scorer, the model developer, and then also, the participant. It is not peculiar to the participant, alone.

Social systems need to be differentiated from cultural influences, that are relevant to a cultural construct. The reason that this is important is that social systems will have much to do with *how* we observe a specific psychological phenomena - social systems can influence for example, the conceptualisation of intelligence as a function of an education system, or an attitude as a function of a political system. Social systems also connect to how we calculate something like a score for a psychological construct such as a STAGES score, for example using sophisticated statistical software that may make the method of calculation of the score somewhat obscure, to the person who is completing the psychological assessment. One risk with not including information about the social system is that the extent to which there are social system-determined processes at play in the outcomes seen for an individual assessment is not available, for scrutiny. An articulation of what components of an assessment are social system-relevant seems important for being as

thoroughgoing as possible in offering someone a perspective on what is notionally, their own worldview, as is an outcome of a STAGES assessment. 4th person-perspective facilitates the reporting of social system information, insofar as the way that the system interpenetrates with the social situation of the test itself is actually available for reporting.

Cultural systems on the other hand influence *what* we take into consideration when applying the label for a psychological construct. For example, a Western conceptualisation of the individual-collective binary may be vastly removed from an Eastern conceptualisation of the same phenomenon, where articulations of self-structure in each of these global villages involves different amounts of the presences of other people, in the conceptualisation (see Pauly, 1995). Where we have an Eastern individual completing a Western assessment which is scored by a Western assessor, the nuance that is relevant to the particular meanings of words as found within the originating culture may be largely unavailable to the assessor. Reporting of cultural background, by the model creator, by the assessor, and by the participant, creates the best possible opportunity that what is reported in the assessment actually is relevant to, the individual who is being assessed.

What was not the case in the era of Loevinger's work, and what we do not yet see in a standardised way for psychology research in our time, is a 4th person-perspective routinely accounted for, either in the methodological structure of a study, or in the records and data that is used, to assess individuals. Both methodology and data are still de-contextualised, with respect to 4th person-perspective. The context of research is consistently left out, of the methodology and data that we work with, in psychology, and psychometric practices relevant to reported outcomes. In the next section we explore some aspects of contexts which seem to be highly relevant to the STAGES matrix, and specifically focus on the relational context of development, with reference to psychoanalysis and the transactional model of development (Sameroff, 2009).

Context of Ego Development

In what follows we explore two avenues of enrichment for STAGES with respect to 4th person-perspective considerations. One is the extension of relational psychoanalysis and the transactional model of development that emerged in the decades following Loevinger's work, the second is looking to methodological advances for psychological and personality research based on the PhD research of the author of the present paper.

What is at stake in any ego development model must have some sort of relation with the autobiographical self, which itself is conjectured to have basis in autobiographical memory, which itself has been demonstrated to be a function of relational and family narratives (Fivush, 2019). More than this, there is a significant body of work in developmental psychology that describes how a life script is a function of a culturally shared schema, which determines how and in what way life events occur (Fivush, 2010). This schema is prescriptive, which means that individuals who deviate from the culturally-shared script are called upon to explain their life story, to account for their trajectory of development in culturally-relevant terms. Even in the upper reaches of development then, there is some constant connection for an individual to other as parent, others as kin, and the collective as social and cultural structures. To articulate something which is universal in its relevance, such as is implied at the broader stages of embrace

(see O'Fallon & Barta, 2017), but which is also able to be understood in a specific social and cultural context, one must rely on the signifiers that are relevant to the people of that society, and culture. We live in a time today where sharp attention is oriented to surface small differences that make a very big difference for the individuals who have inherited specific cultural and societal understandings of certain symbols, and who suffer a type of trauma when atypical understandings are introduced, such as is the case for indigenous communities (see Pauly, 1995; Clancier & Kalmanovitch, 1987). There is an opportunity to reflect, here, on how to represent 4th person-perspective pluralism with deep integrity, as relevant, to this time, and in a way which echoes forward, to future times.

What seems important, in an account of a construct such as STAGES, is a recording of the ideological, social, and cultural context for the *individuals* who undertake the STAGES assessment, as well as for the researcher or scorer, as referred to above. This is because the data must be interpreted with respect to the intersection of these instances. What is needed, then is an analysis of the ideological, social, and cultural contexts adopted in the STAGES construct, combined (perhaps, correlated), with the ideological, social, and cultural context of the assessed individual(s). What we have then is a more complete picture of what STAGES is able to tell us, about the construct of ego development in a contextualised picture, as it is reflected in the responses of individuals who live out their lives, in contexts. Ultimately what we're saying here, is that we're always situated within contexts, and today, we have the technology that facilitates a much clearer picture of how contexts shape human lives. The final section provides some insight as to how to account for contexts using technology, in a coherent and structured methodology for psychology research.

STAGES as Tracking "Meaning Making"

It is clear that there is an absolute essentiality to the encounter with the Other. If there were no encounter with the Other, the reflective dimension of consciousness would somehow remain an inert part of the in-itself. What activates it, what makes it present to itself as what it is, is the fact that another consciousness apprehends it as participating in the being of the Other. (Badiou, 2019, p. 30)

In this section we extend our vision for the evolution of Loevinger's ego development across the terrain of relational psychoanalysis and a transactional model of development. My understanding of the relational nature of psychological development is informed by work as a psychologist in a trauma clinic for children. The nature of the trauma experienced by the children presenting at the clinic was complex interpersonal trauma; the extent to which there are developmental implications from such trauma experiences is well-established in psychology literature (Streeck-Fischer & van der Kolk, 2000; Putnam, 2006). Research of ecological-transactional models that are relevant to such circumstances demonstrate the relevance of the social world and cultural context of events related to developmental challenges (Lynch & Chichetti, 1998). The intrinsic connection between development and relationship in context cannot be avoided in reference to this body of literature. With this in mind, it would seem that in any account of a construct such as ego development as relevant to children and adults, that the relational structures within which the individual functions are adequately accounted for, in any model of the construct or phenomenon.

In the literature of relational psychoanalysis, Mitchell (1988) proposes that, in founding psychoanalysis, Freud established the wrong unit of study for psyche, by orienting to individual minds. The more apt unit of analysis according to Mitchell (1988), is the relational or interactional field. This is particularly the case when we come to consider aspects of adult meaning-making in the context of a construct such as ego development. From our earliest days, we are continually in interaction with others and our environments, and our transactions shape us as we shape our relationships, and social and cultural contexts (Sameroff, 2009). Our experience is built from these elements, and our meaning is a reflection of the sets of correlations that occur for us as beings with the environments, societies and cultures we experience ourselves within. Nature and nurture are not dichotomous in this view, and social relations themselves, experienced through time by autobiographical selves, can be understood as shaping what come to be expressed in sentence stem responses that can be encoded as an ego development level - whatever the model of development that is at hand. The basis of experience in physiology means that different modes of expression are entirely possible beyond verbal language - an account of social relations makes possible an analysis of a developmental trajectory that is not merely founded in verbal report. De Waal (2009) notes that ethics emerge from the ability of mammals to relate to one another. Co-operation, familiarity, emotional connection and resonance all are qualities that emerge in relationship that do not in and of themselves depend on linguistic ability. We may need an understanding of fully evolved consciousness that does not rely on human linguistic skillsets, to evaluate the true universality of later perspectives. But what we can say is that there would be no development of these capabilities without transactions in a social and cultural context.

The import of the suggestion above about correlating fourth-person information for both the assessor or researcher, and the individual who is assessed is made clear in a quote from Mitchell (1988):

> Meaning is inherent in man's physiology, his biological equipment. Thus, the individual mind has a priori content, which seeks expression within the larger social environment, either in absorbing the culture, in learning public rather than a private language, or in taming and channeling drives. For relational-model theorists, as for the modern anthropologist and modern linguist, the individual mind is a product of as well as an interactive participant in the cultural, linguistic matrix within which it comes into being. Meaning is not provided a priori, but derives from the relational matrix. (p. 19)

Mitchell includes this, from Eagleton: "[o]ur experience as individuals is social to its roots; for there can be no such thing as a private language, and to imagine a language is to imagine a whole form of social life" (Eagleton, 1983, p. 60).

The relational matrix model has something to say about how repeating patterns such as the ones featured in STAGES come to be part of human life:

> The relational model rests on the premise that the repetitive patterns within human experience are not derived, as in the drive model, from pursuing gratification of inherent pressures and pleasures ... but from a pervasive tendency to preserve the continuity, connections, and familiarity of one's personal, interactional, world. There is a powerful

need to preserve an abiding sense of oneself as associated with, positioned in terms of, related to, a matrix of other people, in terms of actual transactions as well as internal presences. (Mitchell, 1988, p. 33)

The addition to the STAGES Matrix that is suggested via reflection on the relational model is one where the space between the individual and their broadening yet more intricate appreciation of the social context is nurtured. Relation can be mapped by model design, looking to the physiological basis of functioning. Relatedness can be mapped by constructs that assess intent, which orients more to the motivations of the individual, including for example, the motivation to hold some form of social contract to complete a sentence completion test. Relationality can be mapped finally by implication, where some proxy construct provides information about relational features - for example using person-perspectives, to map an individual's understanding of relationships (see Mitchell, 1988, pp. 33-35). What is important about a relational model is that you cannot logically account for the relationship, without accounting for the characteristics both nodes via which any relationship comes into being.

For human individuals, our existences are defined by the relationships we find ourselves inhabiting or are embedded within, as well as the relationships we may verbalise in a sentence-completion response. If variation in sentence completion responses can be in part mapped by changes in social, cultural and environmental changes, these nodes deserve representation of some sort, in perhaps some broader matrix within which the STAGES Matrix sits (see next section). It may eventually become very important to conduct such mapping as our environment begins to rapidly change, producing rapid social and cultural change, with it. Certainly our shared experiences with bushfires in my home country of Australia (in the summer of 2019) have lent us an understanding of the need for adaptive, reflexive environmental responsivity, enacted at all levels of the collective. In evolutionary psychology terms, for example, we know that imitation in a social ecology relies on both creating resemblances between beings but also on the availability of other mental representations which are shaped and limited by interaction with other cognitive systems and the environment (see Russon et al. 1998). To speak beyond the limits of what our earthly environment may present (see Cook et al., 2016), from meditative traditions we can also understand that the realisation of "suchness", for example, makes available to the meditator "the ability to see oneself and all other things of the world with "perfect clarity" just as they are in the context of their relations with one another" (Huntington & Wangchen, 1989, p. 82). What this hints at is that the highest realisations make available clear, precise and responsive *relational* data, and nothing else.

Musings on Methodology and Models, for STAGES

I have some of the same misgivings about reducing the variegated, multifaceted nature of personality development to a single continuum with a handful of milestones that Loevinger expresses. . . it reduces in a manner unwarranted by reality the complexity of personality. I wish personality development were as simple as that. (Jackson, 1993, p. 33)

As pointed out in section 2.0 above, the lack of an account of the perspective of the researcher is one of the features of psychology research, and STAGES as a model and as an assessment appears no different in this regard. This poses some amount of risk for a developmental model

which intends to be universal in its application, as O'Fallon (2018) indicates with the proposed articulation of structure by which sentence completion content can be assessed, in the STAGES matrix. It is understood in academic, but perhaps not yet broader circles, that scholars typically assume their own experiences in their contemporary culture as a baseline for deviant and normal development (Pauly, 1995). This can result in mistaken interpretations and assumptions, in the shared space between the researcher and the participant. It has been noted in academic literature for example that other cultures do not load adverse childhood experiences into their accounts of problems in dealing with life troubles or later-life developmental pauses (Hillman & Ventura, 1992). Also noted in the literature is the sense that not all childhoods produce the same social and environmental interactions, they cannot be presumed as similar (Narvaez, 2019). Perspectives matter, when it comes to inferences about the content of sentence completion test responses - no matter the extent of confirmation of inter-rater reliability. These perspectives are formulated within lives that are socially and culturally embedded, and which may not have much coincidence in view, even at higher levels of realisation where universals may be much more apparent in the responses provided by the participant.

For the Future

Such a proposal as the one made in the last sentence of the previous section returns us to the possibility of combining 4th person-perspective data from the researcher, and 4th person-perspective data from the individual. A recent research thesis from the present author worked to found a framework within which reporting of outcomes from psychometric analyses could be contextualised in light of disclosure from researchers regarding their ideological commitments, and social and cultural perspectives, as well as methodological assumptions. In the thesis this is argued as vital, as it is impossible to produce outcomes from statistical analyses of psychological constructs without subjective biases entering into the sets of decisions that are functional to producing such statistical analyses (see also Nowland, Beath, & Boag, 2019). Such biases may include for example beliefs about whether psychological constructs are measurable on a continuous ratio scale structure, as is necessary in performing Rasch analyses (see Murray, this issue). Collection of detailed 4th person-perspective data from the researcher and from the individual regarding, for example, the individual's experience of sensory differences, or distinct cultural, social, and environmental ecologies renders the data collected in the name of ego development interpretable in new ways. Nowland (unpublished thesis) proposed a set-theoretical structure to report such information, given that mathematical set theory is the most universal of mathematical languages, and that it maximised the opportunity to articulate something about the trustworthiness of the research outcome in qualitative terms, or in this case, the proposed STAGES level, for an individual who completes a sentence completion test. What was argued for was a network structure facilitating inference from the best systematisation, overcoming a number of limits associated with the 20th-century vanguard of inference to the best explanation. Ultimately what can be imagined with a coherent systematised collection of such data is a refinement of the STAGES model in light of new clarity with regards to how relationships, experienced by individuals, shape a shared space for perspective-taking, in all its possible guises. Modelling STAGES in this conceptual framework may have reflexive gains, as the conceptual framework is re-shaped with a vision of 4th person-perspectives, and as STAGES itself becomes thus also, changed. Inspiration may be derived from Varey (2015):

The formation of coherence generates a set of relational tensions. The continuation in a direction enables a feature of reliance in a set of coactions. The reciprocal tensions of coactions become locational around contributive relations. These locations of reciprocity become reliable as potentials for generativity. The recurrence of potentials enables future potentials as probable possibilities. The entrainments of the future potentials set the conditions for the formation of new coherences. This generative process is seen as contextually dependent, multidimensional and self-generative. The hypothesis formed is: The praxis of being enables future becomings. (p. 15)

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Appendix: Loevinger's Characteristics of Level of Ego Development

Characteristics

Level	Code	Impulse Control	Interpersonal Mode	Conscious Preoccupations	Cognitive Style
Impulsive	E2 (I-2)	Impulsive	Egocentric, dependent	Bodily feelings	Stereotyping, conceptual confusion
Self-Protective	E3 (Delta)	Opportunistic	Manipulative, wary	"Trouble " control	See above
Conformist	E4 (I-3)	Respect for rules	Cooperative, loyal	Appearances, behavior	Conceptual simplicity, stereotypes. clichés
Self-Aware	E5 (I-3/4)	Exceptions allowable	Helpful, self-aware	Feelings, problems, adjustment	Multiplicity
Conscientious	E6 (I-4)	Self-evaluated standards, self- critical	Intense, responsible	Motives, traits, achievements	Conceptual complexity, idea of patterning
Individualistic	E7 (I-4/5)	Tolerant	Mutual	Individuality, development, roles	Distinction of process and outcome
Autonomous	E8 (I-5)	Coping with conflict	Interdependent	Self-fulfillment, psychological causation	Increased conceptual complexity, complex pate terns, toleration for ambiguity, broad scope, objectivity
Integrated	E9 (I-6)		Cherishing individuality	Identity	

From the following source: Hy, L.X and Loevinger, J. (1996). *Measuring Ego Development* (p. 4). Mahwah, NJ:Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.