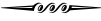


APPENDIX A

Research Behind This Book

 **W**e developed the framework presented in this book from two sources:

- A long-range, three-phase research project that began in the early 1970s
- Three decades of direct experience coaching, teaching, training, and consulting to leaders in organizations based in the United States, Canada, and Europe

This Appendix is divided into two parts. The first summarizes our three-phase research effort and cites the primary influences on our thinking about stages of leadership development. The second part describes the research methods we used in the intensive third phase. It also explains the reasoning behind our estimates of the percentage of managers at each level of leadership agility.

THREE PHASES OF RESEARCH

Phase One: Understanding Developmental Stages

Our initial exposure to leadership and to stage development psychology as fields of study came in 1972 when we took a course called “Toward an Action Science,” taught by William R. Torbert. Our experience in this course led to a graduate-level paper that synthesized existing developmental stage theories into an original framework that focused on the five adult stages that later became the focus of this book. The final version of this paper, completed in 1976, also incorporated a number of findings from Jane Loevinger’s then-new book, *Ego Development*, which was itself a powerful synthesis of previous research and theory on stages of personal development.

This paper also drew on a number of in-depth interviews we conducted with people who’d developed into what we now call the Catalyst, Co-Creator, and Synergist stages. In addition, several people graciously provided us with access to journals they kept during periods of intensive personal growth. At that time our primary focus was on what we now call self-leadership agility. The information we gleaned from these sources contributed a great deal to our understanding in this area.

This constellation of data, along with reflection on our own experience, led to the paper’s most original contribution: We described a distinct “level of awareness” underlying each of the five developmental stages described in the paper. We found confirmation for this perspective a year later when philosopher-psychologist Ken Wilber published his first book, *The Spectrum of Consciousness*.

Phase Two: Connecting Stages and Leadership

During the late 1970s, amid our graduate training and early consulting work, we conducted a new research project, using an in-depth interview technique called “modeling” to map the thought patterns that underlie the behavior of high-performing leaders and other professionals. However, it wasn’t until the early 1980s that we embarked on a research project that explicitly connected developmental stages and leadership effectiveness. This project was one of a larger set of studies conducted around this time, which established a positive connection between developmental stages and leadership effectiveness.

During the first half of the 1980s, a number of new books on developmental stages were published that deepened our understanding of the subject: Robert Kegan's *The Evolving Self*, James Fowler's *Stages of Faith*, and a number of more conceptual books by Ken Wilber.¹ But the spark for doing a new phase of research on stage development and leadership came in 1982, when we attended a graduate course on adult development taught at Harvard by Harry Lasker, who'd recently conducted the first academic study that looked at differences between managers at different stages of development.²

To assess the "ego development" stage of each manager in his study, Lasker used the Washington University Sentence Completion Test (SCT), a research instrument designed and painstakingly validated by Jane Loevinger and her associates.³ This study established a positive empirical relationship between stage development and effective leadership. Lasker also led training programs designed to help managers move beyond their current stage of development. These experiences gave Lasker a number of deeper insights into the inner psychology of Loevinger's stages, which confirmed and expanded upon our earlier research.⁴

In 1983, inspired by our exposure to Lasker's work, we received the training needed to score the SCT, and we conducted a six-month research project designed to further our understanding of the relationship between developmental stages and leadership effectiveness. Participants in the study were willing clients from the company called FSS in Chapter Six.

For this project, participants completed Loevinger's instrument, then we scored the responses and conducted interviews where we arrived at a mutual assessment of their developmental stage.⁵ Because each participant had attended our training program in collaboration skills and was also a coaching client, we were able to identify key differences in the ways that leaders at the Expert, Achiever, and Catalyst stages functioned in the action arena of pivotal conversations.⁶

In 1984, we were asked to conduct a research project at Polaroid Corporation, doing in-depth interviews with managers who'd attended a variety of personal development workshops. This study, which further advanced our understanding of the relationship between personal development and effective leadership, showed that a high percentage of managers exhibited new behaviors that led to measurable—and in some cases dramatic—financial benefits for the company.⁷

During this period Bill Torbert and his associates at Boston College began a program of intensive academic research that built on Lasker's initial inquiry.⁸ Taken as a whole, these studies form a critical mass of findings showing that leaders at more advanced stages of development, as measured by Loevinger's instrument, are more effective than their counterparts in carrying out a variety of leadership tasks. In 1987, Torbert reported these findings in *Managing the Corporate Dream*, the first book ever published on stage development and leadership effectiveness.

A Sustained Interlude of Practical Work

By 1980, we were coaching and consulting to leaders full time. During the ensuing decade, what we'd learned from Lasker, Torbert, and Kegan and from our own research found its way into our work with leaders. However, we felt that it wasn't yet the time to use an explicit stage development framework in our work with clients. Instead, we used the framework implicitly, and, as our practices evolved, we continued to learn and invent new ways to work with clients.

For more than twenty years, this is the approach we took to our work. Then, in the late 1990s, we noticed that interest in stage-development frameworks was starting to grow. Bob Kegan published *In Over Our Heads* in 1994. Two years later Don Beck and Chris Cowan published *Spiral Dynamics*, a framework of developmental levels based on the work of the late Claire Graves. By the year 2000, Ken Wilber had written or coedited seventeen books, almost all based on his evolving framework of developmental levels, and his ideas had become popular among a growing global network of leading-edge thinkers.⁹

Phase Three: A Burst of R&D

The idea for this book was conceived one afternoon in February 2001, when we discovered that we'd each been separately outlining the same book. As we continued to talk, an ambitious research project emerged. The project's primary aim was to complete the grid presented in the Introduction, so that leaders would have a practical guide to all five levels of leadership agility in the three arenas of pivotal conversations, leading teams, and leading organizational change. A secondary aim

was to answer a number of nagging questions we had about the relationship between stage development and leadership effectiveness.

We decided that this project would draw on three sources of data: a review of eight decades of research on nine developmental stages (the five covered in this book plus the four preceding stages); existing research on the relationship between developmental stages and leadership effectiveness; and data from 220 managers in the form of client experiences, in-depth interviews, and detailed action-learning journals. This study, which took four years to complete, resulted in many insights that advanced our understanding beyond anything previously written on the subject.

Stages and Levels

Our review and synthesis of previous research on stages of personal development benefited from a study of the stages prior to Expert as well as the stages from Expert to Synergist. (For an overview of our own stage descriptions with a chart comparing our stage development framework with those of others, see Appendix B.) Our descriptions of the five levels of leadership agility come primarily from our own research, but we've also drawn on the work of William Torbert (even borrowing his Expert and Achiever names) and on unpublished doctoral dissertations written by Christine Harris, Keith Merron, and Salathiel Smith.¹⁰

In addition, we've benefited from David Bradford and Allan Cohen's work on team leadership. Although they don't use a stage-development framework, their distinction between heroic and post-heroic leadership mirrors the distinction between conventional and post-conventional stages of development. More specifically, their Technician and Conductor correspond to the Expert and Achiever team leader, and their Developer spans the Catalyst and Co-Creator levels of team leadership agility.¹¹ In a similar way, we've benefited from the research-based distinction between "segmentalist" (Expert) and "integrative" (post-Expert) managers reported in Rosabeth Moss Kanter's *The Change Masters*.

RESEARCH METHODS

We now turn to the methodology we used during the third and final phase of research for this book.

Sample Size

The total number of subjects we included in our recent four-year research project was 604: 384 managers from four research studies reported in William R. Torbert's *The Power of Balance: Transforming Self, Society and Scientific Inquiry*,¹² and 220 managers who were clients, interviewees, or evening MBA students.

Data Sources

Other than the fictional scenarios presented in Chapter Two, all of the stories presented in the book come either from our work with clients or from in-depth interviews. Shorter examples are also taken from journals kept by interviewees or by practicing managers in evening MBA courses.

Interview Format

In-depth interviews were used in all three phases of our overall research project, each lasting between forty-five minutes to two and a half hours. We used two distinct interview formats—one designed to assess a person's stage of personal development and another to assess level of leadership agility in at least one of three action arenas (pivotal conversations, team leadership, and organizational leadership). In many cases, leaders participated in both kinds of interviews.

To qualify for a particular level of leadership agility within a specific arena, we needed to see solid evidence that a leader had reached the corresponding stage of personal development, and the story provided had to show evidence that the leader consistently employed a wide range of capabilities, consistent with that stage, in taking action.

Assessment of Developmental Stage

We assessed each leader's stage of development by using a well-tested research instrument designed for this purpose, supplemented either by a "clinical assessment," if the leader was a client, or by an interview. Prior to the third phase of our research, the instrument we used was the Washington University Sentence Completion Test (SCT). For the third and most intensive phase of our research, we used a slightly different well-tested research instrument, the Leadership Development Profile (LDP), developed by Susanne Cook-Greuter.¹³

How We Estimated the Percentage of Managers at Each Stage

To make a rough estimate of the number of managers at each stage of adult development, we relied on four research studies reported by Torbert, which assessed the developmental stages of a total of 384 managers at a full range of organizational levels.¹⁴ The percentages of managers at each stage are captured in Table A.1.

	Level of Responsibility				Total <i>n</i> = 384
	First-Line Supervisors <i>n</i> = 37	Junior and Middle Managers <i>n</i> = 177	Senior Managers <i>n</i> = 66	Executives <i>n</i> = 104	
Agility Level	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	Rounded Averages (%)
Pre-Expert	24	14	6	3	11
Expert	68	43.5	47	43.5	46
Achiever	8	40	33	39.5	36
Post-Heroic	0	2.5	14	14	7

Table A.1. Correlations Between Agility and Responsibility Levels.

To underscore the tentativeness with which we generalize from 384 U.S. managers to the entire population of managers, we decided to round the total percentage found at each level. In determining how we might most accurately round these numbers, we took into account our experience that, when leaders are interviewed, in a few cases their actual stage turns out to be a stage beyond what the SCT or LDP indicates. Taking this observation into account, we rounded the first three “total” percentages down 1 percent each. This brought the post-Achiever percentage to 10 percent. We calculated estimates for these three stages by assuming the same relative distribution within these stages that Susanne Cook-Greuter found for her sample of 4,510 individuals.¹⁵ The resulting estimates can be summarized as follows:

STAGE	PERCENTAGE
Pre-Expert	10
Expert	45
Achiever	35
Catalyst	5
Co-Creator	4
Synergist	1

