

INTEGRAL LEADERSHIP COLLABORATIVE

Interview Notes: **Zak Stein**



Zak Stein Interview Notes

- *Standardized Testing (ST) is currently a poorly built structure.*
- *How to redesign testing structure via integral psychometrics, taking all the right perspectives into account?*
- *Working on that in K-12, as well as adult. Multi-billion \$ industry for adults alone.*
- *Advances in modeling and measuring human development to build with integral human in mind.*

What is the significance of standardized testing in modern society - the way we measure these things impacts society?

- *Harvard dissertation focusing on ethical issues in ST. Human rights issue (Green?)*
- *Societies have basic structures and institutions that set the possibilities for what life can be like.*
- *The institutions that distribute opportunities, rewards, etc. are called the basic structures of society.*
- *ST has become in the last 50-60 years part of this basic structure of society, distributing opportunities and rewards, as anyone who's been denied admission to a university because of a test score.*
- *It's part of that question of 'distributive justice'.*
- *It's also shaping the lives of people, orgs, gov't, about who they're going to become. If you don't do the type of math that's rewarded by the math standardized test, you're not likely*

to become a mathematician, even though you might have strong mathematical capabilities that aren't among those tested.

- *It's about what constrains the possibilities, and about the agreements we have as a society to the shape of what each person's opportunity should be.*
- *There are many basic structures: legal, etc., and ST is one of them. So it's implicated in social justice and human rights.*

How are you connected to leadership issues? What have you learned about leadership development and developmental practices?

- *Leadership is a broad category- we've focused on leadership education, reforming measurement of leadership capabilities, good assessment of leadership skills.*
- *Contracted with US intelligence community who were looking to re-tool their education, across the board... all 16 intelligence agencies.*
- *Part of reforming leadership education is reforming the measurement of leadership capabilities.*
- *You can't reform how you teach leaders until you reform how you assess them and test them.*
- *We built some good assessments of many key leadership skills.*
- *So if you're thinking developmentally about leadership, you can't think about a holistic transformation of a leader from a stage 6 to stage 7 leader. It just doesn't happen. What you have are relatively related sets of leadership skills which are differentially developed. Not all leaders have spent the same*

amount of time and energy into their economic strategy as they have their interpersonal or ethical skills.

- *Leadership skills are differentially developed*
- *Created a "psychograph" to provide developmental profile in areas such as: vision, ethics, epistemology, decision making.*
- *Profiles are skewed because some skills are really, really good, far outstrip their lesser skills... off-balance.*
- *Leadership education strategies are tough to change. Didn't win gov't contract because of internal leadership bias that leadership cannot be taught. You either have it or you don't. Some aspects of leadership can never be taught, and of course, never measurable.*
- *Hard to argue against that... there are leaders with an intangible quality you can never measure. But to throw up your hands about it is not the best approach - rather, bring in a rigorous, developmentally and pedagogically sophisticated leadership program... maybe I'm bitter about not getting the contract...*
- *The way you measure leadership determines the way you teach it. Before there's a leader, there's a student. It's generally in leadership education that there needs to be a reform of key measures/metrics.*
- *Zak and DTS is working with Brett Thomas (at Stagen) on leadership education questions, and with consultants and orgs trying to reform their human resource management systems to make them more educationally robust.*

What is your keynote presentation at The Integral Leadership Collaborative Online Conference going to touch on?

- *Theme: how do you best use tests as a part of organizational learning? How do we embed developmental assessments in organizations so that they are as beneficial as possible to as many people as possible?*
- *Process: a) student learns from taking the test; b) coach/teacher/trainer learns about their students taking the test; c) policy-makers, managers, higher-ups learn about how these programs are going, by getting systems-level data from the tests; d) researchers learn by building a giant database of tests - multi-level learning in an organization.*
- *Metaphor of Human capital from an Integral prospective... how the 'flatland', reductionist way we've looked at human capital affects how we measure it.*
- *What would an integral approach to the measurement of human capital would look like?*
- *What's the difference between learning and development? What are the things you can do to promote learning at pretty much every level? What are level-specific learning strategies?*
- *Provide a general overview of the Lectical Assessment approach we use in leadership and with adults to promote multi-level learning in organizations.*

Given the perspective you may have about coaches and leaders, is there advice or invitation to consider?

- *Getting out of these "Growth to goodness" assumptions... something that's plagued my whole work since it began.*
- *Kohlberg addressed it explicitly, but it's hardly been addressed in the Integral community, as far as I can tell. Wilber doesn't mention it much.*
- *The idea that higher-stage growth equals better performance, is too simplistic to be true, and is basically false.*
- *It's incorrect to think that the "higher" you get, the "better" you are. Pretty much across the board.*
- *That flies in the face of most of the "ideology" around developmental thinking that says that the goal is to get to higher and higher stages... first-tier to second-tier. It's not that simple.*
- *You can lie at any level, or you can be good at any level. That's the first one that comes to mind. It's more complex than that... take for example the hundreds of people with PhDs - high level thinkers that you can read about in their speeches and high-level reports, doing "2nd tier" reasoning... and yet they're doing "evil" things.*
- *They can also make more errors, and can more often be wrong. The more complexity you see, the harder it is to make the right call. So there's a lot of misconceptions about what it means to "develop" and that "higher is better."*
- *A second point would be that variability is as important as consistency. When you're thinking about where a person's at developmentally, it's possible to say, "they're a 7" as in center-of-gravity of thinking. That can be useful for some purposes,*

certainly as a heuristic that might characterize some consistency in their performance... if you averaged their performance over a series of weeks, they'd basically be there. But that consistency in that "center-of-gravity" way of thinking is at least as important as looking at how variable they are. Looking at all the days where they're actually not operating out of the 7th level. Or all the different domains that they're not developed in... or the effects of stress, emotions, diet, on their developmental level.

- So don't think of people being "at" a level of development... think of people as occupying a developmental range, which sometimes can be quite broad. People can sometimes be three levels different from their "optimal" performance when they're doing things in an "unscaffolded" way.*
- So keep in mind that just because someone's taken a developmental assessment that's scored them at a certain level, that they're always performing at that level, all the time, in all domains. It's not true... there's tremendous variability. Patterns of Variability are more important when you're thinking about education, for example.*

Zak Stein

Zachary Stein has been involved with numerous empirical research efforts including a major leadership development project carried out for a network of federal government agencies and studies on graduate student's epistemological development at Harvard and John F. Kennedy University. He received his Ed.M. in Mind, Brain, and Education from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education in 2006. He is currently a student of philosophy and cognitive development pursuing a doctorate at Harvard. He is also the Senior Analyst for the Developmental Testing Service where he has worked for years employing cognitive developmental models and metrics in a variety of real world contexts. His research focuses on theoretical work in psychometrics, developmental assessment, and the philosophy of education. In recent years he has published in a variety of outlets on issues ranging from cognitive development and pedagogy to philosophy of education and interdisciplinarity. Zak teaches topics in developmental psychology and Mind, Brain, and Education with primary and secondary school teachers, management consultants, and leadership experts, in public and higher education, the federal government, and industry. He also serves as head Teaching Fellow for the Mind, Brain, and Education Ed.M program at Harvard. He has received numerous awards at Harvard including an Intellectual Contribution Award and a Faculty Tribute Fellowship.



Brett Thomas

Brett Thomas is the co-founder of Stagen, a Texas-based organizational consulting firm that specializes in Integral Leadership. He is the author and architect of the Stagen Leadership Academy's 52-week intensive *Integral Leadership Program* (now in its 10th year). Brett is a 20-year veteran in the field of human performance and organizational development having designed and facilitated hundreds of workshops and corporate training programs. Brett has logged over 10,000 hours coaching CEOs. He has published hundreds of pages of applied integral theory and has co-designed and co-delivered numerous international conferences and seminars on applied integral theory. Brett served many years as the Managing Director of the Integral Institute *Business and Leadership Center* and on the Editorial Board for the *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*. Brett currently serves on the boards of both *Integral Leadership Review* and *Integral Publishers*. He is writing a book with Russ Volckmann on the subject of Integral Leadership.

