

The Evolution of Integral Futures

A Status Update

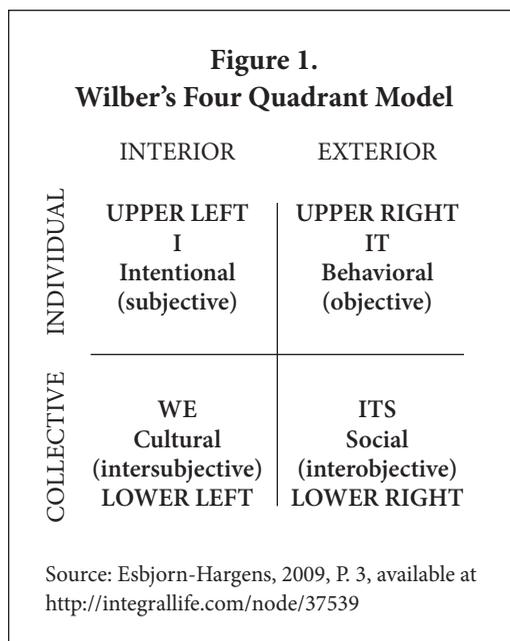
By Terry Collins and Andy Hines

Integral Futures is an approach to futures studies that adapted Ken Wilber's Integral Theory to futures practice. Integral Theory is not exclusively the domain of Wilber, but he is its leading exponent and was central in popularizing the idea. The domain is expanding with new voices and ideas increasingly contributing to the conversation. A key concept underlying Integral Theory is to include as many perspectives, styles, and methodologies as possible when exploring a topic.¹ There are several excellent overviews of Integral Theory for those new to the topic. But for our purposes here, a brief characterization will suffice.²

Integral Theory suggests that four irreducible perspectives (subjective, intersubjective, objective, and interobjective) should be consulted when attempting to fully understand any topic or aspect of reality.³ These four perspectives are represented in a four-quadrant model.

The four perspectives embodied in each quadrant are summarized briefly below:

- *The upper left Intentional (subjective)* is the individual's interior world, which can only be accessed via interpretation. The concerns are indi-



vidual motivation, changes in people's values, perceptions, and goals, and the meaning of life.

- *The upper right Behavioral (objective)* is the individual's exterior world, in which individual behavior can be observed. The concerns are changes in the ways people act externally; e.g.,

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voting patterns, consumer behavior, reproductive practices, etc.

- *The lower right Social (interobjective)* is the collective exterior world, often referred to as the physical world, or the world of systems and infrastructure. The concerns are objectively measurable changes in natural and constructed external environments.

- *The lower left Cultural (intersubjective)* is the collective interior world of the shared meaning of groups, as expressed in the culture. The concerns are shared collective structures, such as changes in languages, cultures, and institutions.

While there is a great deal more to Integral Theory, the four-quadrant model is at its core. What distinguishes an Integral approach is that it considers the subjective experience and integrates it along with the objective, intersubjective, and the interobjective. Effects in one quadrant influence the others. The theory suggests that solutions that include a balanced consideration of all four quadrants will typically lead to more successful outcomes. It gives practitioners a meta- or high-level framework that avoids reductionism—i.e., collapsing the interior experience of individuals and cultures into the tangible and measurable exterior realm. It also guides practitioners to take the broadest possible range of perspectives into consideration.

Integral Theory has been applied to many disciplines besides futures. Its origins in futures can be traced to Richard Slaughter's 1998 article "Transcending Flatland," though integrally informed work may have been taking place earlier.⁴ In its just-over-a-decade existence, Integral Futures ideas have gained sufficient attention to engage the thinking of a significant part of the field. Some practitioners and academics today are raising questions or taking issue with some claims falling under the Integral Futures rubric. A small survey (summary appended)—conducted as part of the Master's Project upon which this paper builds—found that about half of the practitioners

surveyed have attempted to apply Integral Theory in their futures practice to some degree. It is likely, however, that this percentage skewed high, as those with an interest in Integral are more likely to have responded than those not using it.

The primary benefit of Integral Futures so far has been to provide a perspective or framework for comparing various futures theories, approaches, or methods. Applying the integral model to futures thinking helps encourage a holistic approach that incorporates multiple points of view.

The Integral Futures model holds a second benefit: It is a source of methodological innovation for practitioners. There is currently debate about whether its strength is greater as a perspective or a methodology. Some commentators suggest that it may not be a method at all. Peter Hayward (2008) says, "The integral approach is, at its essence, perspectival rather than methodological. That is to say that method alone will not evoke the integral perspective but rather that integrality in methods is enabled by taking integral perspectives."⁵

These potential benefits and debate are at the core of the evolution of Integral Futures. Three phases of its evolution are identified and explored:

1. The Perspective Phase: Focus on the theory and initial applications
2. The Methods Phase: Attempts to apply Integral Theory to futures practice in the form of methods
3. The Sense-Making Phase: Debate and some controversy

Figure 2 expands on these three phases by noting key milestones in each.

1. The Perspective Phase (circa 1998 to 2004)

The Perspective Phase involved introducing Integral Theory and exploring ideas for how it might be applied to futures studies. The piece that

Figure 2. Timeline of Integral Futures

| Phase | Year | Author | Publication | Contribution to Futures |
|--------------------|------|--|--|---|
| Perspective Phase | 1998 | Richard Slaughter | Transcending Flatland | Foundational Theory |
| | 2001 | Joseph Voros | Reframing Environmental Scanning: An Integral Approach | Refreshes Environmental Scanning |
| | 2003 | Andy Hines | Applying Integral Futures to Environmental Scanning | Four-Step Integral Scanning Framework |
| | 2004 | Richard Slaughter | Futures Beyond Dystopia | Questions for Applying the Integral Perspective |
| Methods Phase | 2005 | Mark Edwards | The Integral Holon: A Holonomic Approach to Organizational Change and Transformation | Organizational Development |
| | 2005 | Mark Edwards and Ron Cacioppe | Seeking the Holy Grail of Organizational Development: A Synthesis of Integral Theory, Spiral Dynamics, Corporate Transformation and Action Inquiry | Organizational Development |
| | 2005 | Nancy Landrum and Carolyn Gardner | Using Integral Theory to Effect Strategic Change | Strategic Change |
| | 2005 | Peter Hayward | Resolving the Moral Impediments to Foresight Action | Individual Development and Ethics |
| | 2008 | Mark Edwards | Every Today Was a Tomorrow: An Integral Method for Indexing the Social Mediation of Preferred Futures | Framework for Global Social Development |
| | 2008 | Chris Stewart | Integral Scenarios: Reframing Theory, Building from Practice | Deeper and Richer Scenarios |
| | 2008 | Peter Hayward | Pathways to Integral Perspectives | Awakening Individual Capacities Through Development |
| | 2008 | Joseph Voros | Integral Futures: An Approach to Futures Inquiry | Development of Paradigms for Inquiry |
| | 2008 | Josh Floyd | Towards an Integral Renewal of Systems Methodology for Futures Studies | Integral Futures in Systems Studies |
| | 2008 | Chris Riedy | An Integral Extension of Causal Layered Analysis | Assessing Futures Tools |
| | 2008 | Richard Slaughter | Integral Futures Methodologies | How Integral Can Be Used to Enhance Futures |
| Sense-Making Phase | 2008 | Josh Floyd, Alex Burns, and Jose Ramos | A Challenging Conversation on Integral Futures: Embodied Foresight & Dialogues | Individual Practitioner Development |
| | 2010 | Various | “Response” Special Issue, Futures (42) 2010 | Response to Integral Futures “Special Issue” |
| | 2010 | Sohail Inayatullah | Epistemological Pluralism in Futures Studies: The CLA-Integral Debates | Response to Chris Riedy critique |

“began it all” was Richard Slaughter’s 1998 “Transcending Flatland.”⁶ It suggested how the ideas of Ken Wilber (1996), as detailed in his seminal work “Sex, Ecology, and Spirituality,”⁷ could be useful to futures studies. After introducing the idea, Slaughter continued his exploration and provided the intellectual leadership that fueled the spread of the ideas. He felt that Integral Theory provided an opportunity to move beyond what he saw as an over-reliance on empirical thinking, particularly in American futures studies. He suggested that futures studies had emerged out of a generally reductionist framework with “dogmas” of economic growth, nature as a resource, and cultural hegemony. He sees this framework leading to an unsustainable future, and is hopeful that Integral Futures thinking can help futures studies get outside the reductionist problem and bring in other perspectives, worldviews, and alternative methods that will enable it to contribute more holistic and workable solutions.

He suggested the following questions as a means for applying the Integral perspective:⁸

- Which worlds (quadrants) are germane to the study, and what are their key features?
- Do we fully understand the distinctions between the frames of reference they represent?
- Do we understand the different “ways of knowing” that apply in different quadrants?
- Have we balanced inner/outer and individual/collective, or are there omissions and biases in our coverage?
- Do we have access to adequate sources of information in non-empirical areas?
- Do we have a sense of “what we don’t know,” and hence what needs to be looked at more carefully?

The perspectival emphasis in this phase saw the Integral perspectives applied across existing futures methods. It also suggested a model for improving the practitioner’s personal practice development. Its first applications were in environmental scanning, which make sense given that

scanning is perhaps the most personal aspect of futures work.

Voros and Hines with Environmental Scanning

Joseph Voros and Andy Hines helped move Integral Futures from philosophical theory into application by describing how it could be used in environmental scanning. Voros, then one of Slaughter’s graduate students at the Australian Foresight Institute, published an article on applying an integral approach to environmental scanning. He gave a foundational look at Integral Theory, covering the four quadrants, along with an in-depth look at Spiral Dynamics and how it fits in with Integral Theory. He also introduced the notion of cross-level analysis (how developments in each quadrant relate to one another) and how the practitioner’s worldview is itself a factor that influences what is identified as worth reporting as a scan hit.⁹

Hines, then an organizational futurist with The Dow Chemical Corporation, was intrigued by Slaughter’s work and graciously accepted an invitation to visit the Australia Foresight Institute and get a first-hand look at how that program was using Integral Theory. It inspired him to publish a couple of articles on Integral Futures and helped spread the ideas among the U.S. futures community. In a 2003 article, he described how he applied Integral Theory in the environmental scanning phase of a corporate foresight project. He developed a four-step (FAFA) Integral Scanning framework that utilized the integral perspective throughout:¹⁰

- Find: where and how to look for scanning hits.
- Analyze: use cross-level analysis (as well as causal-layered analysis) to expand the interpretation of the resulting scanning hits.
- Frame: create a framework for organizing insights from the scanning hits.
- Apply: use the insights to inform the sub-

sequent phases of the project.

His experience was that the integral approach enabled a broader range of scanning hits and that it expanded the depth of insights in analysis and interpretation. It was also a useful way to challenge his own and the team's assumptions about changes in the external environment, and it ultimately helped to communicate the resulting insights in a manner that acknowledged and spoke to the perspective of the corporate audience.¹¹

On a parallel path, Spiral Dynamics guru Don Beck, long associated with the futures field, had also been following Ken Wilber's work, and in 1999 he started collaborating with Wilber to update the Spiral Dynamics model. Beck launched Spiral Dynamic Integral¹² in 2002 with the intention of providing a more comprehensive model for integrating his Spiral Dynamics model into organizations. He and futurist John Petersen collaborated at several conferences on large-scale transformational change guided by an Integral perspective.¹³

It is important to emphasize the strong academic roots of Integral Futures in the Australian Foresight Institute (AFI), as it became something of a breeding ground for Integral Futurists. AFI's Master's Degree in Strategic Foresight is organized around Integral Futures. It encourages the use of Integral Theory as a perspective to be applied across all futures thinking and methods, and includes a strong emphasis applying the theory to the students' own development and practices. The students are challenged to adopt the Integral Futures perspective in their own practice as a way to become better futurists.

2. The Methods Phase: Attempts to Apply Integral Theory to Futures Practice in the Form of Methods (2005 through 2008)

Starting around 2005, the literature about Integral Futures expanded to include discussion of ideas around methodological application, par-

ticularly in organizational development. Several application areas were discussed. Key developments are briefly noted below:

- Organizational development
- Strategic change
- Individual development and ethics
- Framework for global social development
- Deeper and richer scenarios
- Uncovering worldviews
- Awakening individual capacities through development
- Development of paradigms for inquiry
- Integral futures in systems
- Assessing futures tools, e.g., CLA

Organizational development. Mark Edwards applied Integral Theory to organizations using the holon¹⁴ construct of Arthur Koestler and the AQAL integral framework¹⁵ of Ken Wilber to facilitate the development of new insights by introducing multiple paradigms and perspectives to aid organizational development.¹⁶ The holon concept holds that any entity is both a whole and a part. A molecule is a molecule as well as being part of a cell. A cell is a cell as well as part of a tissue, and so on. Progressively more complex holons transcend (are more complex) but also include their predecessors. Edwards asserted that the Integral holonic perspective offered organizations a framework to integrate and contribute ideas across the diverse and multiple levels, domains, and activities, in essence helping to address the perennial problem of "If Xerox (or any organization) only knew what Xerox knew."

He created a tool that overlays the organizational "holon" on top of the four quadrants and drew a graph of the Integral profile of the organization. Within the quadrants, the tool maps lines of development, which are a full range of "developmental potentials" of an organization in areas such as internal culture, customer and community relations, ethics and corporate morals, marketing, governance, and leadership.¹⁷ By using this theory and the four-quadrant model, practi-

tioners have a way to assess the health of an organization by evaluating the lines of development in each quadrant for improvement, intervention, and balance.

Edwards joined Ron Cacioppe to aid organizational transformation through the framework of Integral Theory and Spiral Dynamics. They reported on the value of Integral Theory in facilitating an organization in its quest for healthy growth and transformation by giving it a framework and model. They found—as Edwards had earlier—that Integral Theory is a good fit with organizational development because it is inclusive of all perspectives. It uses the natural and social sciences, Eastern and Western philosophies, and crosses all cultures to access the development of both the personal and the collective. It can be applied to the personal, team or group, or even the system level of development.¹⁸

Strategic change. Nancy E. Landrum and Carolyn L. Gardner applied Integral Futures to strategic change. They used it to create change as well as to support individual employee development—mind, body, and spirit. As Edwards did, they introduced the holon concept in relating to organizations. They also added the application of pre-modern, modern, and post-modern characteristics to organizations, suggesting that organizations can be viewed as a four-quadrant holon. Again, this facilitates the appreciation of all perspectives, a common theme in Integral Futures. They cite The Body Shop, Patagonia, and Ben & Jerry's as incorporating perspective across multiple quadrants and thus being good examples of applying Integral principles. They suggest this approach improves their success in the relating the organization to individuals and to the environment as well as building a sustainable competitive advantage.¹⁹

Individual development and ethics. Peter Hayward continued the stream of emphasis on practitioner development by highlighting the need to consider ethics in foresight, in particular

the moral obstructions that accompany individual members' psychological development. Thus, individuals in organizations are encouraged to move forward in their own ethical development in order to benefit the larger entity. What happens in one individual or quadrant affects the whole. Leadership by individuals can affect the collective in a healthy way: What affects one quadrant cascades into all.²⁰

A landmark in the development of Integral Futures took place when the well-respected journal *Futures* devoted a special issue to it in 2008. Slaughter coordinated the issue and suggested why Integral Futures is relevant to futures inquiry and application. He pointed out that the offerings covered in the issue included theory, practice, training, and development. Thus, Integral Futures can be beneficial in that it can refresh old and birth new methods, and also add dimensions of complexity to the individual practitioner's interior development. Several application areas were identified in the special issue:²¹

- Framework for global social development
- Deeper and richer scenarios
- Uncovering worldviews
- Awakening individual capacities through development
 - Development of paradigms for inquiry
 - Integral futures in systems
 - Assessing futures tools, e.g., CLA

Framework for global social development. Edwards used the Integral lenses to analyze worldviews and their corresponding pathological reductionism. He named and organized the various lenses and related pathologies, and suggested that in order to change and do an intervention on an organizational behavior, it first has to be recognized. He applied this thinking in the mediations area.²²

Deeper and richer scenarios. Chris Stewart applied Integral Theory to scenario planning. He suggested that the two most important criteria for scenarios are relevance and diversity of world-

views to provide appropriate depth and breadth. He proposed a generic scenario method using Integral and provided case study examples. His article provided the foundation for the four quadrant model along with principle of practice (POP) for incorporating them into a generic scenario method model.

Uncovering worldviews. Stewart also noted the value of Integral Theory in uncovering worldviews as part of his scenario approach. This is in keeping with the spirit of Integral's emphasis on breadth and depth with the value-add of including the strengths but avoiding the weakness of other worldview methods and being relevant to the context and purpose.²³ The article offered insight into the history and development of worldviews, and provided options on which worldview methods might be appropriate for a particular situation. The practitioner no longer has to "reinvent the wheel" so to speak—Integral Theory gives a "heads up" on the strengths and weaknesses of various existing methods.

Awakening individual capacities through development. Hayward claimed that the integral approach in futures methodology can waken integral capacities in both practitioners and clients. Depending on the psychological development of the individuals involved, the possible futures are under the influence of the developmental positions of the parties involved. In other words, the greater the capacities of the practitioner and team, the greater the potential solution set for better results. His two years of research on why students chose MBAs over MSs in strategic foresight found that many were attracted to the latter, but reluctant to commit to that less orthodox path. He suggested some areas of attention in methodology, to allure Integral possibilities in both practitioners and others, such as consciously challenging traditional world assumptions.²⁴

Development of paradigms for inquiry. Joseph Voros provided a synopsis of the philosophy underlying an Integral research method. He saw that

Integral Theory's foundational paradigmatic suppositions could generate methods, techniques, tools and practices. He showed the shift in the paradigms and their positions from a dualistic subject, distinctly distant from the object, to more of a confluence of the two. This thinking has now been put into the Integral framework so that other futures practitioners can build on it, perhaps constructing a model or an application that is waiting to emerge into reality.

The five inquiry paradigms show the development of these paradigms through time starting with positivism and developing through participatory approaches. Each development became more inclusive of perspectives in relationship to ontology (being), epistemology (knowledge), methodology, and axiology (value). This groundwork on which paradigms and assumptions best address specific futures methods suggests that some long-accepted models may no longer be relevant.²⁵

Integral Futures in Systems. Josh Floyd described using the four quadrant model internally in projects, but in the background rather than overtly with clients. His advice to practitioners was to apply Integral Futures in one's daily life and collaborate with others who say the development of the practitioner is most important.²⁶ Richard Slaughter said this about Floyd's contribution:

This is an immensely clarifying paper with many implications for futures thinking and practice. For example, by becoming familiar with the uses and limitations of systems-related tools and approaches, futures practitioners can enhance their capacity to integrate methodologies that explore systems from the perspectives of communicative and emancipator interests (as well as often-dominant technical interests) subsequent practices, decisions and actions will more effectively contribute toward preferred futures.²⁷

Assessing futures tools, e.g., CLA. In *Assessing Futures Tools, e.g., CLA.*, Chris Riedy showed how Integral Theory can be used to assess other methods for the “Integral-ness.” He analyzed Causal Layer Analysis (CLA) from this perspective. He suggested that while CLA is clearly a beneficial method in any Integral Futures instrument kit, its greatest effectiveness lies in the Lower Left Cultural Quadrant. Integral Theory insists that in order to be comprehensive, all quadrants must be represented for full perspective. Thus, CLA is said to be inadequate in terms of being called Integral because it focuses on depth in the cultural quadrant with no way of deepening in the other quadrants, particularly in cases where participants are not developmentally prepared to do so.²⁸

Slaughter calls to mind that the four quadrants do not exist in the real world. They take time and effort to take in and put into practice. Considering that it is neutral in its framework, it can bring clarity and fullness to almost any undertaking that involves individuals or groups for the simple and complex processes in life. Most practitioners tend to focus on the exterior aspects, but the Integral approach reminds one to include the interior as well, providing the benefits of:²⁹

- Balancing inner and outer perspectives.
- Providing multiple and yet systematic views of our species’ history and development.
- Accessing the dynamics of social construction, innovation and “deep design.”
- Accessing aspects of the “deep structures” of this and more advanced civilizations.
- Providing a new focus on the whole spectrum of development options for practitioners and others (not merely their cognitive abilities).
- Enabling new and renewed methodologies and approaches.

Slaughter also imparts an observation of how Integral Theory has enhanced the futurists’ techniques for scenarios, environmental scanning, the T-cycle, and causal layered analysis. For scenarios and scenario planning, he states:

In summary, the integral approach allows us to take scenario planning to a new and more capable stage of development. It means that we can go a long way beyond simple, pragmatic “mental models” and the “generic business idea” (themselves innovations in their time) to framing perceptions and the developmental capacities that underlie them. It also means that researchers and scenario planners can be more aware of the multitude of ways in which their own enculturation and interior development directly and profoundly affect everything they do.³⁰

3. Sense-Making: Debate and Some Controversy (2009-Present)

The Integral Futures “Special Issue” in *Futures* generated several responses that were captured in a follow-up special issue. The articles took on Integral theory and its proponents, some in a casual tone and others in a more serious academic style. Much as Ken Wilber has been the leader and lightning rod for Integral Philosophy, so has Richard Slaughter been for Integral Futures. Slaughter has become an impassioned supporter of Integral Futures, and as suggested above, he sees it playing a vital role in addressing serious civilization issues that he (and many others) see on the horizon. It may be that his mixing of the Integral perspective with a particular point of view on the future (heading toward disaster) has made acceptance of Integral Futures a bit more difficult for practitioners who do not share his point of view.

The debate about Integral Futures clearly gained focus with the 2008 Special Issue. As practitioners were exposed to this collection of ideas, they raised questions about them. For instance, is Integral Futures guilty of some of the errors it purports to address? A perception arose that Integral Futures has the potential to become a new orthodoxy to which other methods must con-

form. This was driven by what has been perceived by some as an evangelical fervor among its more enthusiastic proponents, who consider Integral methods part of the new wave of futures studies at a more advanced or “higher” level than existing futures methods.

The practice of assessing whether other methods are Integral or not has particularly fueled this objection. Perhaps the most controversial exchange was one around Causal Layered Analysis (CLA). Sohail Inayatullah, the originator of CLA, defended his method against what he felt were misrepresentations and the placing of existing methods within an Integral box. He felt that rather than encouraging a flourishing of perspectives, Integral Futures could stifle growth by creating the perception that only Integral methods are adequate. He suggested that “The beauty of futures studies is that all these doors are possible. There are many alternative entrances and exits—and many ways to create openings and closings.”³¹

Integral Futures will continue to develop as its place in the larger practitioner community of futures practitioners is debated. Its use as a perspective approach is at the core of the debate. A second stream focusing on practitioner development continues to gain emphasis as well. For instance, in several places it has been suggested that the most important application of Integral Futures is to practitioners themselves. AFI graduates Floyd, Burns, and Ramos assert that not only is the practitioner’s own development an equal factor with the tools used, but it “is the primary factor in realizing the benefits of Integral Futures methodologies.”³² Their view is that incorporating Anticipatory Action Research³³ can help translate Integral self-reflection into practical impacts in real world circumstances.

Some of those who have tried to apply Integral Futures in their work with organizations are challenged by individuals who do not adequately understand or appreciate the Integral perspective. Yet progress has been asserted on this

front. For instance, Holacracy³⁴ is put forth as an emerging integral practice that organizations may adopt. It includes being fully present, learning from experiences, taking responsibility for individual actions and their resulting impacts, and empowering self-organizing teams. “Holacracy aligns the explicit structure of an organization with its more organic natural form, replacing artificial hierarchy with a fractal “holarchy” of self organizing teams (“circles”). Marriott Corporation and GlaxoSmithKline are using this method and the Holacracy organization is offering certification and training.”³⁵

Still, even proponents acknowledge that there is still a long way to go in terms of successfully applying Integral Futures to organizational development.

Conclusion

The authors see evidence that Integral Futures has value as a perspective that can lead to broader and deeper futures thinking. They also see evidence, albeit anecdotal, that it can improve the practice of individual futurists. The extent of its impact on methodology, particular the development of new methods, is less clear at present. There is evidence of a positive impact on revitalizing existing tools. But the support is still quite thin for the development of new methods and applications. It is probably unreasonable to expect much more at such an early stage of evolution, so it would be inappropriate to draw firm conclusions at this point.

Integral Futures has now reached an exciting time in its evolution. It has gotten the attention of the futures community and is now being put to the test of peer review. Critiques are to be expected and are a healthy part of the development of any major piece of new thinking. The hope is that the criticism will be constructive and presented in a way that proponents can incorporate and learn from. The all-too-plausible alternative is a more emotional debate with hardened positions

that could divide the field. Let us hope that an Integral perspective informs the Integral debate.

Appendix A. Summary of Survey and Interview Results

The survey questions below were sent to practitioners and educators globally in the Futures social networks at Shaping Tomorrow, the APF listserv, LinkedIn, and Houston Futures. Given that Integral Futures had its roots in Australia, it was to be expected that the majority of respondents were Australian, and were generally in the category of supporters or leaders in developing applications.

Of the 21 respondents, less than half use Integral Theory in their futures practice to varying degrees. Thus far, it has primarily been used for environmental scanning and scenario development. The survey confirmed the emphasis on the perspective or theoretical framework area found in the literature, with the caveat that firm conclusions should not be drawn given the small sample size. The survey and quotes from follow-up interviews took place between September and December 2008.

Q1. Do you use Integral Theory in your futures practice?

Of the 21 respondents of the survey, six said that they use Integral Theory in more than 50% of their futures practice. One who said yes to more than 50%, however, was quick to say, "It is not readily quantifiable." Another five said that they use Integral Theory in less than 50% of their practice. One noted that it was not practical enough but with the qualifier that "Integral is a framework and not a method or practice." Five said they did not know enough about it to use it. One said that "I don't use it deliberately, but it does pop up as a frame of reference occasionally." An educator notes that he used it a little in teaching but not in professional practice.

Q2. Do you use Integral Theory in your environmental scanning?

The responses here were similar to Q1 above. One respondent added that "as one of many approaches, it certainly justifies my reading about things that interest me that I would not have considered part of scanning before."

Q3. Do you think Integral Theory can be useful for transformation of organizations?

Ten respondents agree that analyzing an organization through the lens of the four quadrants can provide useful insights. One of those 10 strongly agreed; another one agreed but admittedly did not know of "anyone, or any organization that has successfully done this." Two said that this is not how they use the theory, and another two said they did not know enough about it to use it. One noted that "AQAL is far larger than the 4Q!" Another said they would prefer to use Spiral Dynamics. Finally, another suggested that "I wouldn't call it a tool for transformation, but I think insights gained from approaching work through this perspective can enable/influence/shape a process of transformation."

Q4. Do you find it best to only practice it internally within your own organization?

Two practitioners say that they find it best to practice Integral Futures only internally, usually because of time. One noted it is more useful "as a potential frame of reference... beyond that, its utility diminishes greatly." Four have found a way to practice it both internally and with clients. One described it the best: "As you would expect with an AQAL informed practice, you notice that different clients will need different engagement styles based on both where 'they are at' and what the situation is." Three had variations on this theme of appropriateness of the situation. Another noted that "I think Integral Theory is most powerful when it is not seen as a tool but a perspective. Use of this perspective can be made explicit, or be used implicitly."

Q5. In what other ways do you use Integral Futures in your practice?

After environmental scanning, scenarios were the next most-popular application. Three

said they used it in this capacity and one claimed to have tried it but said that the attempt was unsuccessful. This open-ended question generated other rich replies:

“I use Integral Theory with my doctoral students to understand post-structuralism, epistemology, and alternative practices of organizational change. This is at the theory level, not the tool level. The strength of Integral Theory is that it offers one grid to draw upon each of these epistemological research traditions.”

“I tend to use it from a project design point of view—every project begins with me thinking about what I need to do in each of the four quadrants. After I’ve been involved in the project for a while, I map the state of the organisation using the four quadrants. And I try and make sure that there are some recommendations that address each quadrant (if applicable) in the final report. I tend not to move much below the quadrant level because that scares most people!”

“It is my lens on the world, personally, for organizational analysis as well as solution building and report writing. However, it would be rare for me to make Integral Theory explicit in a report.”

Notes

1. Sean Esbjorn-Hargens, “An Overview of Integral Theory: An All-Inclusive Framework for the 21st Century,” Integral Institute, *Resource Paper No. 1* (March 2009): p. 1.
2. For example, see Sean Esbjorn-Hargens, “An Overview of Integral Theory: An All-Inclusive Framework for the 21st Century,” Integral Institute, *Resource Paper No. 1* (March 2009); “Introduction to Integral Theory and Practice,” *Integral Naked*, www.integralnaked.org; Richard Slaughter, *Integral Futures—A New Model for Futures Enquiry and Practice*, www.foresightinternational.com.au/resources/Integral_Futures.pdf.
3. Sean Esbjorn-Hargens, “An Overview of Integral Theory: An All-Inclusive Framework for the 21st Century,” Integral Institute, *Resource Paper No. 1* (March 2009): p. 2.
4. Richard Slaughter, “Transcending Flatland: Implications of Ken Wilber’s Meta-Narrative for Futures Studies,” *Futures* 30 (1998): pp. 6, 519-533.
5. Peter Hayward, “Pathways to Integral Perspectives,” *Futures* 40 (2008): pp. 2, 109.
6. Richard Slaughter, “Transcending Flatland: Implications of Ken Wilber’s Meta-Narrative for Futures Studies,” *Futures* 30 (1998): pp. 6, 519-533.
7. Ken Wilber, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution* (Boston: Shambhala, 1995).
8. Richard Slaughter, “Transcending Flatland: Implications of Ken Wilber’s Meta-Narrative for Futures Studies,” *Futures* 30 (1998): pp. 6, 519-533.
9. Joseph Voros, “Reframing Environmental Scanning: An Integral Approach,” *foresight* 3 (2001): pp. 6, 534-549.
10. Andy Hines, “Applying Integral Futures to Environmental Scanning,” *Futures Research Quarterly* 19 (2003): pp. 4, 62.
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