FUTURE SEARCH NETWORK'S
FUTURE SEARCHING
EXPLORING COMMON GROUND FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

Future Search Conferences: Ecological Considerations

Ralph Copleman

In keeping with the idea that Earth's physical resources are limited and that people and organizations can take steps to make intelligent use of materials, here's a list of ecological suggestions for future search conferences.

This list is undoubtedly incomplete. Add to it based on your experience and "re-cycle" your additions to others doing this work. We invite you to think creatively about ways we can all "future search" sustainably. Thank you.

1. *Set a tone of environmental concern* at the outset and encourage all participants to cooperate in this spirit.

2. *Use recycled paper products wherever possible,* including invitations and registration materials. Recycled-paper flipcharts are now available. Post-consumer papers are the only truly recycled such products.

3. *Label a barrel or bin "Paper for Recycling"* and put it in a convenient corner of the conference room.

4. At the close of the conference, *collect all disposable papers,* flipchart pages, etc., and make sure they find their way into the recycled paper bin.

5. Permit *no smoking* in the conference room.

6. *Encourage car-pooling* or other group- and mass-transportation strategies for conference participants. The planning committee may wish to provide some coordination of arrangements in this regard.

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Coming! The New FSN Center for Humane Child Health

Richard Allan Aronson*

"I come from a country that understands the need for hard work to overcome past destructiveness and to escape a threatened future. But, we have also learned that miracles happen with vision and spirit. The world needs that vision and spirit still, and all the more. We are all threatened by entrenched inequality and divisions. We all must prove ourselves equal to a better possibility."

— Nelson Mandela, May 2005

In the timeless quest for such a "better possibility," Future Search Network is excited to announce a new initiative that we're calling the FSN Center for Humane Child Health.

It will be a dynamic and creative center for learning, practicing, and applying all dimensions of future search to improve the health (mind, body, spirit) of children and youth throughout the world. We plan to take this initiative to a number of potential funders and donors during the next year, and plan for a start-up date in 2008.

This article is the story of the Center's birth and an evolving description of what it will be.

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*Maternal and Child Health Medical Director, Maine Department of Health and Human Services.

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Background

Ever since my first encounter with Future Search in 1993 through the Milwaukee Common Ground Project, I have sought to apply future search to the highest ideals and vision of public health and medicine. As a pediatrician and public servant over many years, I have practiced a form of participative planning and leadership rooted in future search and uniquely suited to the task of making the world a better place—a more humane place—for children, youth, and families.

In the course of doing this work, I have discovered common threads that seem to unite people from all walks of life. I've seen people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives—social workers, physicians, nurses, child care specialists, teachers, government officials, employers, clergy, law enforcement, youth, and families—come together, plan, and carry out extraordinary action steps to heal themselves and their communities.

Through FSN colleagues across the globe, including several with whom I had incredible dialogue at the FSN Learning Exchange in 2005 and 2006, I have learned of hundreds of other similar experiences. Also, during the past year, I had the opportunity to document in detail the outcomes and learnings from more than a dozen child health-related future searches.

In Vermont, a future search in 2000 led to a recently enacted health coverage plan for all Vermonters. In Southwest New Mexico, a future search in 1997 resulted in several successful grant proposals that made parenting education and child care more widely available throughout the state. In Seattle, a future search in 2000 led to the mayor's successful budget allocation of $7 million per year in dedicated revenue for human services. In Nevada, a future search a decade ago created a Nevada Public Health Foundation, which continues to thrive. I could go on and on. *(Please contact me for the full report.)*

Future Search Network is excited to announce a new initiative that we're calling the FSN Center for Humane Child Health. It will be a dynamic and creative center for learning, practicing, and applying all dimensions of future search to improve the health (mind, body, spirit) of children and youth throughout the world.

From this work, I have become convinced that we all hunger for a world where dignity and respect prevail for everyone. Instead of systems that pathologize, stereotype, and lump children, youth, and families into a dizzying array of risks, diseases, and diagnoses, we aspire to humane practices that honor all people. Our species has a remarkable capacity for creativity, healing, and cooperating for the common good. Such hope is at the heart of both future search and public health.

Public Health

The purpose of public health, as defined by the Institute of Medicine, is to fulfill society's interest in fostering the conditions under which all people can be healthy. Public health seeks to assure that all people have the opportunity to fulfill their potential to be healthy in mind, body, and spirit. A central commitment of public health is to end inequalities and injustice and to protect human dignity and rights.

Maternal and Child Health (MCH)—the name historically used to refer to the child, youth, and family health sector of public health—seeks exactly the same goals. We work to foster conditions that will promote cultures that value children as a great natural resource. Such a culture requires sustainable systems, policies, and services to help families, communities, and society as a whole provide children with the essential care, love, dignity, and respect that they need in order to grow into healthy, resilient, inquisitive, and compassionate adults.

Intention

FSN now intends to create a new entity to bring together in a shared task of societal change thousands of people in the U.S. and beyond who share my commitment to this sector. The FSN Center for Humane Child Health is intended to bring the loftiest vision of public health into the lives of children and families everywhere. It is our aim to equip families, communities, and society with tools to create the conditions under which all children have the opportunity to thrive. We will do this in a focused, persistent, and empowering way that has been successful worldwide, with which I and many others have been able to bring about long-term changes with relatively modest investments.

Federal/State Partnership Meeting

Every year, the U.S. Federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau holds a MCH Partnership Meeting that brings together federal and state government leaders from this sector. The theme of the 2006 Meeting on October 16-18 in Washington, D.C., was "Leadership, Vision, and Legacy for the Future of Maternal and Child Health."

A year ago, the Planning Committee decided to weave future search into the 2006 Partnership Meeting as an exciting approach, i.e., tool, for creating such vision, leadership, and legacy. In March

2006, at another national MCH meeting, Sandra Janoff, Sheryl Peavey, and I gave a participatory half-day, skills-building workshop on FS. One of the workshop participants was a Federal MCH Bureau member of the Partnership Planning Committee who had taken part in a FS that Cynthia Bryant Pitts and I facilitated in Oklahoma in 2001. A few weeks later, I received word that future search was a "hot topic" at a planning committee meeting. And so the Network suddenly had an extraordinary opportunity to: (1) introduce state and federal MCH leaders to future search; (2) give them an active experience at the meeting of what a future search conference is like; and (3) provide ideas and resources for applying future search when they return home.

For the next six months, we worked closely with the federal agency on the design for the meeting. It was not easy. As we know, FS is unique and we wanted to make that uniqueness come alive within the context of a "culture" much more accustomed to traditional meeting formats. In addition, we faced the reality that many other people and organizations would also be on the agenda, and that participants would have the option of joining these rather than the FS sessions.

Instead of systems that pathologize, stereotype, and lump children, youth, and families into a dizzying array of risks, diseases, and diagnoses, we aspire to humane practices that honor all people.

At each twist, we tried to take a constructive and common ground approach to make things work out for the best. We were grateful for the champions on the Planning Committee who persisted "behind the scenes" in advocating for a strong FS presence at the meeting. We understood that the federal agency had to meet the needs of many other programs in determining the agenda for the three days. At the same time, we held faithful to our insistence in providing a future search presence throughout the meeting. We drew on our confidence in the potential of future search to further the goals for both the meeting and the whole sector of child, youth, and family health.

We ended up designing a program for this meeting that met two objectives: help the Federal MCH Bureau meet its goals for the meeting, and provide participants with enough knowledge, experience, and resources so that they would be able to explore how they might apply future search in their home states and communities.

With a great FSN team (Cynthia Bryant Pitts, Liz Alperin Solms, Marie McCormick, Eric Collier, and I), we ended up having seven distinct Future Search sessions over the three days of the meeting. On Monday, October 16, 2006, we had a plenary session for all 260 participants; a riveting mini-plenary, "Eight Voices: The Milwaukee Story,"in which eight people from Milwaukee Common Ground shared their experience with future search over a 13-year period going back to 1993, in addressing unconscionably high infant mortality in that city; and an informal dialogue in the evening. On Tuesday, we had three break-out sessions that provided participants with a hands-on experience on components of a future search (mind-map, initial planning); and on Wednesday, a closing plenary on Wednesday that served as a summary of what people had learned and a conversation on additional questions.

All the sessions, and particularly the Milwaukee Story, were incredibly rich and affirming of the power of future search to make profound systemic change happen. The video and text are now available at the following MCH Bureau website: *http://www.cadamedia.com/archives/mchb/partnership2006/*. In addition, we plan to make an edited DVD that includes, in my humble opinion, at least a dozen epiphany moments.

In the preparation for this meeting, many FSN members provided me with vital information and support. I thank each of you for that. I learned about future searches in San Gabriel and Orange County, California; Seattle; Minneapolis; Montana; Berrien County, Michigan; North Platte, Nebraska; Vermont and New Hampshire; Maine; Nevada; Southwest New Mexico; Milwaukee; Baton Rouge; and Oklahoma—all of which produced remarkable systemic changes that have improved the health, safety, and well-being of children, youth, and families. We synthesized this information into a report that we handed out to all the participants at the meeting in October.

The Goal of the Center: To humanize and dignify the worlds that children and families experience so that they (1) feel physically and emotionally healthy, safe, and protected; (2) receive unconditional love from at least one adult; (3) develop curiosity and a lifelong passion for learning; (4) become equipped with a resilient spirit; and (5) enter adulthood with a sense of dignity, meaning, and hope.

Objectives

1. Serve as a local, national, and global learning center for why, where, when, and how to apply future search to the creation and sustaining of humane systems and policies for children and families.

2. Inspire and support people, communities, organizations, states, and society as a whole to hold future search conferences and to apply future search principles and philosophy to the daily practice and

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leadership of MCH and public health, especially as they relate to fostering the conditions for systems and policy change that will promote thriving children and families.

3. Promote future search-based systems and policies that foster community-rooted family networks in which families create formal and informal connections with each other.

4. Raise parenthood and the raising of our children with love, dignity, and respect to the level at which society honors it as the most important of all "occupations." As Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis said, "If you bungle raising your children, nothing else matters very much."

5. Tap into the healing power of the creative arts in fostering conditions that equip children, families, and communities with the tools to become healthy.

6. Strengthen and dignify the involvement of fathers and, in general, men in loving our children.

7. Apply future search to address unconscionable health inequalities, such as infant mortality.

8. Explore, through future search, what it means for children to thrive. How does future search make possible the conditions for such thriving?

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Methods

1. Integrate FSN resources into the leadership, vision, and practice of Maternal and Child Health at the community, state, national, societal, and global levels. I have discovered and documented the unique synergies of purpose and method between future search and 10 characteristics of humane systems in maternal and child health; and comparable synergies between future search and the 10 Core Functions of Public Health, as defined by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

2. Convene local, regional, national, and international learning opportunities and workshops to advance the knowledge of how Future Search practice applies to MCH leadership and planning, and to deepen and expand the spirituality that lies at the heart of both. Communities, organizations, states, and others will form diverse teams to take part in such opportunities, and then apply them to their work on MCH issues such as prematurity, infant mortality, cultural and linguistic competence, youth suicide prevention, and the creation of clear and non-jargon language for public health endeavors.

3. Conduct action research to gain new knowledge for refining and redesigning the synergy between future search and MCH in achieving positive outcomes.

4. Disseminate findings through articles, presentations, and other publications.

Summary

The new FSN Center for Humane Child Health will complement and enrich all of the other efforts and programs of the Network, including a close affiliation with Prosperous Communities, Prosperous Nation. It will also offer a unique focus that creates opportunities to apply future search to our collective hope and commitment to assuring the health and safety of children and youth and future generations.

Future search represents a unique process where we can move beyond our job titles, professional degrees, turf, and fears and help each other reach a deeper respect for each other and deeper understanding of the underlying root systemic factors that contribute to the great public health challenges of our time. It has the potential to unite us by discovering that we have much more in common than we previously believed, and get us back in touch with our shared humanity and aspirations. This happens not by changing people's behavior but by changing the structures and conditions under which we work with each other.

Through future search, we can put into practice a style of leadership that emphasizes vision, risk, and collaboration. It includes but goes beyond the risk-reduction model of public health. It can expand our leadership capacity by fostering systems and environments in which children, youth, and families can grow and thrive, and live compassionate, productive, and dignified lives to change the world for the common good.

Underlying this model is the hypothesis that how we live together—the quality and meaning and connectedness of our relationships in family and community—has a powerful influence on our health, well-being, and safety. The most fundamental mission of public health—a mission that drives the way we do business—is to facilitate the collaboration, formal and informal support systems, and strengths to allow for people to grow and live in healthy and healing ways. The underlying assumption is that human beings, at their best, seek positive connections with each other, and that these connections enrich all of our lives. Future search is a tool to deepen the practice of public health.

We can then mutually learn to discover previously unimaginable common ground—a common ground that we share, regardless of class, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, and political positions. It is a tool that we hope will lead us to a paradigm shift so that health and human service systems for children and youth become relationship-centered, and families become partners in creating humane and respectful systems for all children.

To learn more about this initiative and to become involved, please contact Dick Aronson. FS

Congratulations...

The National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds and the American Academy of Pediatrics have selected Dick Aronson as the recipient of the 2007 Ray Helfer, M.D., Award.

This distinguished award is given to a pediatrician who has made a demonstrated contribution to primary and secondary child abuse prevention and who is involved with activities related to the work of the Children's Trust Funds (CTF). CTF is an organization composed of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds in states across the United States. It's mission is to eliminate child abuse and strengthen families.

Dr. Helfer is considered the "founding father" of Children's Trust Funds.

Congratulations, Dick! We respect deeply the work you do for the children of the world. Thank you for your colleagueship.

Sandra and Marv

High Praise for a Future Search Conference

Betsy Anderson* to Dick Aronson

What an experience! The MCHB (Federal MCH Bureau) Partnership Meeting** was so rich, with the future search sessions contributing an incredibly important and new dimension!

Kudos to you and the fantastic team of Milwaukee future searchers and future search colleague facilitators! You were all, in your varied roles, incredibly effective and inspiring. Every one of you came across as so committed and honest, with experiences and views beautifully articulated throughout.

The Milwaukee Panel was everything you had said it would be—what rich interchanges! I, and I know others, were spellbound and could have continued listening to their insights. I know your planning and pre-conference calls contributed to this, but as you already knew, the participants themselves were the stars.

The future search facilitators were just exemplary! Even though they had been mentioned through the planning, their roles did not really become clear to me until I saw them in action—what skill, what facility, what teamwork!

Dick [Aronson], your own role cannot be overstated—you were so committed and persistent throughout. At each twist you took such a constructive approach and worked to "make things work," showing both your understanding of how a federal agency with multiple agendas and audiences to satisfy needs to work and your absolute belief in the potential of future search as an important way to further MCH goals!

I am also aware, though probably only in part, of how much Elizabeth McGuire, as well as others in the MCH Bureau, contributed to all this. Their behind-the-scenes support was so important for the need to offer an additional approach like future search to MCH efforts. FS

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* Betsy Anderson is a longtime leader of Family Voices at both the state (Massachusetts) and national levels. She served on the planning committee for the October 2006 conference. Family Voices is a national grassroots network of families and advocates for health-care services that are family-centered, community-based, well coordinated, and culturally competent for all children and youth with special health needs. It promotes the inclusion of all families as decision makers at all levels of health care; and supports essential partnerships between families and professionals.

**Maternal and Child Health Federal/State Partnership Meeting, "Leadership, Legacy, and a Vision for the Future of Maternal and Child Health," Future search featured in Seven Sessions, Washington, DC, October 16-18, 2006.

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7. If possible, schedule the conference during periods of the year when *excess heating or air conditioning will not be required.* Avoid night sessions to conserve energy.

8. *Provide name tags that can be used for all days* of the conference. This also saves the trouble of having to supply extra materials at the start of each day.

9. *Print workbook sheets on both sides of the page.* Avoid fancy (and expensive) plastic binders.

10. Provide or ask people to bring their own ceramic or other permanent beverage mug or cup. *Avoid throw-away paper, plastic, and styrofoam cups.* Insist on reusable silverware and china dishes, etc. Avoid plastic utensils, paper plates, etc., unless they're compostable.

11. Most people do not do a lot of note-taking during a future search conference. If you choose to *supply writing tablets*, use the smaller (less expensive) 5x7 size instead of the letter-size ones that use double the paper content. Use only white ones.

12. The way we eat contributes importantly to the earth's deterioration. *Using locally produced organic food* is the best way to keep costs down (and provide the best nourishment for conference participants). Avoid excessive use of red meat and processed foods.

13. *Make sure the chairs in the conference are comfortable.* This can help cut down on the build-up of fatigue and, thus, the need for more sugar-based foods to prop up energy levels. FS

FROM THE LISTSERVE

Techniques for Future Search Follow-Up

During last year's Learning Exchange, several of us had a conversation about techniques for future search follow-up. Here is a list from my notes. You may wish to post others.

- Task force leader's guide: doesn't exist yet, but seems like a good idea
- Distribution of video or DVD of the conference
- Quick-response function on a website so people can get questions answered promptly
- Celebrations of successes
- Convene occasional meetings just for task force leaders (mutual support and coordination)
- Common reporting format for task forces on the web or elsewhere
- Recruitment of other people who did not attend the FSC to join the system
- And, of course, periodic whole-system follow-up meetings

Here's one more we'll be doing after the recent future search conference in my town because of the particular nature of the topic on which we have focused (ecological sustainability): periodic gatherings of us with people from neighboring towns who are addressing the same challenges.

Joanne Burke and I, both sponsors of recently completed future search conferences, she of the United Nations Development Program and I of Lawrence Township, New Jersey (USA), want to identify other future search sponsors and clients who have completed their conferences within the past year. We want to create our own e-mail correspondence as a way to support each other. If you are or know of other such individuals, will you please identify yourself/let us know? Joanne and I want to enrich our chances for continued success by building a degree of community around our common needs. Please send to *rcopleman@comcast.net* and/or *joanne.burke@undp.org*.

It was a very rewarding Learning Exchange. Thanks and deep bows go to the entire organizing committee, Network staff, and everyone who attended.

— Ralph Copleman

Future Search Empowers Future Leaders

Susan Mann and Eva Johnson*

Imagine the potential of over 150 18- to 22-year-olds filling a large gymnasium. As the students gathered for a future search conference (FSC) in August 2005, their energy was palpable: loud music blared, Frisbees and basketballs flew overhead, laughter and hugs were everywhere.

Selected to serve in a variety of student leadership roles at Pacific Lutheran University (PLU) in Tacoma, Washington, the young women and men were gathered at a camp in the forests of the Cascade mountains to prepare for the upcoming academic year. After a summer away, they were excited to see each other and enthusiastic about what they hoped to accomplish in their new roles. Participating in the FSC provided an ideal opportunity for these student leaders to connect their academic interests with their student leadership involvement.

Back-to-school training for college student leaders has traditionally focused on information-based knowledge ("we'll tell you what you need to know and do") and directed almost exclusively at resident hall assistants, the students who coordinate activities and support administrators in residence halls or "dorms."

About five years ago, PLU made a strategic decision to adopt an innovative model of student leadership development that is student-centered and grounded in learning. It brings together offices, campus professionals, and students from across campus.

About five years ago, PLU made a strategic decision to adopt an innovative model of student leadership development that is student-centered and grounded in learning. It brings together offices, campus professionals, and students from across campus. This holistic approach has opened up communication lines, deepened student learning, and strengthened collaborative work among offices.

What were the drivers that led PLU to hold the FSC for these student leaders in 2005? The process offered a highly effective way to:

1. Facilitate the implementation of the expanded student leadership network and support greater collaboration among various campus offices;

2. Create an opportunity for students to more clearly see the links among their roles as leaders, as learners, and as human beings both on campus and in the world;

3. Instill a greater sense of empowerment in students and a more meaningful way for them to connect to the PLU mission to "educate for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership, and care—for other people, for our communities, and for the earth";

4. Engage the whole person—body, mind, and spirit—in preparing for the academic year;

5. Establish action plans, goals, and priorities to guide the work of student leaders and aid campus professionals in supervising and supporting them.

This report will provide highlights and insights from this very large FSC, which began at 3:00 p.m. Tuesday and ended mid-morning on Thursday.

Millennial Generation

The FSC process proved to be an excellent fit for these millennial generation students. They are used to programmed schedules; they want to see the big picture; they want to understand the "why" and the context; they thrive on collaborative processes. With its flexible but clearly structured process, FSC provided all of that. Our hypothesis is that as the millennial generation enters the workforce, FSC will prove to be an outstanding way to connect diverse age groups and diversity of experience.

Self-Manager roles: In addition to the usual roles of data manager, reporter, etc., we added the role of "fun-meister." This person was responsible for encouraging creativity and productive play while working. While the "fun-meister" role could work well with participants of any age, it proved especially important with this large group of highly energetic 18- to 22-year-olds.

Reflection and action: Kolb's experiential learning model of action and reflection informs the work of university student life

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*Susan Mann, MS, is a certified future search conference facilitator and is the Director of Study Away at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, WA. Eva Johnson, MA, is the Director of Student Involvement and Leadership at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, WA.

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professionals and faculty alike. This FSC was a living example of Kolb's model. Students had multiple opportunities to reflect individually and with their peers, and to prepare for meaningful action during the school year. The outcome was superb student engagement, partnerships, and common language to harness the potential of the student leadership experience.

Mind-map: Students saw new connections emerge and their energy build as they contributed to this enormous, visual spider web of trends affecting the future. All 150 students stayed very actively engaged through the creation of the mind-map. Said one participant, "This really helped me begin to connect the dots between myself, my community, and the world." This sentiment was echoed by many other student leaders during and after the FSC.

Staff preparation: The greatest insight that we gained was the absolute necessity for all professional staff to be properly trained in the purpose and mechanics of an FSC. During planning, our focus was primarily on the students rather than on the professional staff that served as indirect facilitators. After a challenging first session, we regrouped the professional staff and were able to get them all on the same page. Ultimately, their buy-in was crucial to the success of the future search conference.

Some Outcomes

With the 2005-2006 school year well behind us the outcomes of that August FSC have proved to be both immediate and enduring. When Hurricane Katrina hit a few weeks later, student leaders came together to lend financial support to victims and, later during spring break, made a service trip to New Orleans. A direct result of the FSC, students created a Global Awareness Team that continues to increase the global knowledge of the entire PLU community through international lectures, AIDS fund-raising, and more. In spring 2006, PLU was a regional site for Relay for Life, and students raised over $55,000 in support of the American Cancer Association.

> Said one participant, "Wow! Now I know there are other student leaders interested in the same thing I am. I'm excited about what we can get done together this year."

As we began planning the student leadership training for the 2006–07 academic year, the 2005 FSC work proved excellent preparation as we created a strategic leadership curriculum that teaches students how to achieve a coherent understanding of their entire college experience. We have also been fortunate to leverage the FSC as an example of PLU's progressive student leadership program and have procured grants for over $100,000 to support continuing student development and co-curricular activities.

In keeping with its mission, PLU is preparing citizens of the world. Whether they serve through their roles as community volunteers, their work as business leaders, or their vocation as artists, PLU is dedicated to nurturing and developing graduates who have a sense of greater purpose and can see themselves in a global context.

This FSC was a way for student leaders to come together, contemplate their dreams and passions as leaders, and find partners to make it happen. Said one participant, "Wow! Now I know there are other student leaders interested in the same thing I am. I'm excited about what we can get done together this year." FS

What's a Learning Exchange Like?

Learning exchanges are facilitated conferences where people (consultants, facilitators/conference managers, organizational leaders, development people, those with interest or experience in FS) come together and share insights, learning, experience, questions, and explorations related to future search. These include philosophy, practical applications, lessons learned, etc., engaging with Marv and Sandra on points of interest, as well as exploring important themes relevant to our lives, work, and the world at large. There's also usually time and opportunity to network, learn from private conversations, and meet a lot of very interesting and fun people. The LEs are usually designed and facilitated by a volunteer design team. Every LE I've attended has been an incredibly energizing and rewarding experience, due mainly to the quality of individuals who make up this network, the spirit of what we're all trying to accomplish in the world, the relationships created/nurtured, and the gems of wisdom discovered.

Shem Cohen
(responding online to a new member's question)

Future Search from Varied Perspectives

Nancy Polend

My Work from the Cosmic Perspective

My work is healing work. The Future Search method is a healing process. It brings diverse people together to discover that they live in the same world and worry about the same things, understand their differences, take responsibility for themselves, find shared meaning and aspirations for the future, and make commitments that will help the whole create the future it envisions. By working directly with people who have different experiences, knowledge, needs, and information within a process that validates all perspectives and uses differences as information, not as problems, people experience a shift in their fundamental understanding of "what is" and their own place within it. Experiencing this kind of perceptual shift is common in all healing, and becomes the basis for new, healthier ways to handle the situation at hand, whatever it may be.

I want to use this healing process across the country and focus it on poverty. I believe it will heal individuals, communities, and the nation of long-standing mental, emotional, and spiritual wounds, which now need to be healed for the good of us all.

Future search is a way back to wholeness, which we are all seeking. It is a way back to unity by finding our common ground, back to empathy by exploring our common fears and suffering, back to hope by uncovering our shared aspirations for the future, and back to our shared humanity by implementing plans we ourselves created from having done so. It is a way to connect with each other on our ultimate common ground—as children of God—to create a world in which our differences are known simply as avenues for us to experience more of the whole than we would otherwise be able to. These are things we've lost or forgotten, and it is time to find them and remember. Doing so can only bring good things to all of us. For these reasons, my poverty work is healing work.

My Work from the Historical Perspective

Most of the solutions to poverty we've grappled with as a society focus on the external world, which is only the manifestation of our inner worlds. Nothing happens externally that was not first born as a thought, and we're the only ones here having them, so we must acknowledge that we're the ones creating the world we live in. The questions are: Is this what we want? Do we want all that comes as a result of poverty? I believe if we asked the whole nation this last question, we would find vast agreement—among the rich and the poor; the bureaucrat and the advocate; the employed and the unemployed; the young and the old; the conservative and the liberal; the black, white, yellow, and red; the professional and the layperson.

These are things we've lost or forgotten and it is time to find them and remember. Doing so can only bring good things to all of us. For these reasons, my poverty work is healing work.

This represents powerful common ground from which we could start if we could simply resist our tendency to begin from a position of conflict about our differences. When we focus first (and sometimes exclusively) on our differences, and think of them as problems or obstacles rather than information that will help us, we deny ourselves the opportunity to find common ground upon which lasting solutions are discovered. In our inner worlds, we have isolated ourselves from the problem and each other—it feels safer to us that way. As long as we isolate ourselves from the problem we isolate ourselves from the solution, and therefore have no right to complain about how the ripple effects of poverty affect us.

So, although our external interventions may be necessary, they are not sufficient. To attempt to fix on the outside that which is born in thought on the inside is a self-defeating endeavor; what we continue to think about poverty points us in the direction of keeping it in place. As long as we—individually or collectively—feel that poverty is someone else's problem, or feel anger toward those living in poverty or toward those that we feel are responsible for "fixing" it, we will continue to feel overwhelmed by the complexity of the problem. We will continue to focus our energy exclusively on the differences we have. And, ironically, it gives power to the very things we don't want to remain in place. What we focus on, we get. If we focus on an individual's or institution's ineptness or irresponsibility, we will be rewarded by ineptness and irresponsibility, and we ourselves will be affected by it.

If we focus on fighting something or someone, we will be rewarded by

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having that someone fight back. This defeats our whole purpose for starting the fight in the first place; we started it so that we could resolve something, but we end up spending more energy on the fighting than we do on finding the solutions we so desperately want. The result for us is that we now have two problems—the original one and the one created by the fight. At best, this is a colossal waste of energy. At worst, it does harm to us and others by way of the anger, stress, and dis-ease that perpetual conflict creates.

Somewhere in between, using fighting and adversarial approaches to create caring behaviors in others is just garden-variety hypocrisy. It would be one thing if we could get the results we seek by ourselves—we'd just do it. As long as we need others to get those results, it does us absolutely no good to ask for their help by throwing a punch. To think everything would be okay if only "those other people" would just get their act together is to forget that we are all "other people" to someone. When we're all demanding from each other answers that no one has individually, it isn't surprising that we feel angry and helpless—angry at them for not having the answers, and helpless because we don't, either.

My Work from the Practical Perspective

On the practical level, the gains we might make with our well-meaning external interventions will be repeatedly subsumed by the power of these and other thoughts that keep poverty in place. We may succeed in raising the minimum wage, but if we continue to think that minimum wage jobs and the people who hold them are not valuable, we will leave in place other societal structures that sustain poverty. We may succeed in helping those living in poverty understand their responsibility in making their own way; yet if we continue to think they alone can address the systemic and structural contributors to poverty, we are still only addressing part of the problem.

We may be successful in our individual strategies, but if we continue to think we can solve a systemic problem using singular, separate approaches (no matter how good they are), we will continue to do lots of noble work without seeing the intended progress. In other words, unless we change our fundamental thoughts about poverty on a national scale, we will be perpetually running on the treadmill of "progress"—expending huge amounts of energy and money to ultimately go nowhere. Changing our fundamental beliefs from which our strategies are born will create new strategies and also help create commitment to some of the individual strategies we've been working so hard to make work, and also will give them the support they need to finally take hold.

Unless we change our fundamental thoughts about poverty on a national scale, we will be perpetually running on the treadmill of "progress."

My Work from the Experiential Perspective

Changing thoughts and the more embedded ones we call beliefs require an experience or set of experiences strong enough to dislodge our current beliefs. Sometimes this takes a long time. Sometimes it happens in an instant. Many times, the change happens somewhere in between. Most of us have experienced this continuum in our own lives, when our own minds were being changed or when we've seen other people's minds changed.

Though a law may have us "fake it 'til we make it," being told to change our minds may make us change only our outward behavior; it usually creates sufficient power to change our beliefs only after we've "faked it" long enough to make it rote. We can certainly tell people or institutions that they are affected by poverty, that they have a role in the problem and in the solution, and that they and everyone would benefit from its solution. We can write about it, support our positions with data, politicize it, and speak with passionate conviction, but it is unlikely to change many minds.

Because it is impossible for any of us individually to experience what it's like to have the experience, knowledge, needs, background, or influence of the whole, the closest we can come to such an experience is to have the whole system in the same room—supported by a neutral, empowering process—actively working as a whole to map our shared history, interconnectedness, differences, shared fears and aspirations, and to tap into our individual and collective capacity to create a future better than the one we will have if we do nothing different. This is what happens in a future search session.

Though there are many examples of convening diverse groups around complex, high-conflict issues, we never seem to stick with it long enough to get past our differences—where common ground is waiting—and on to the task of collaborative action planning and implementation. Future Search's main goal is to keep the group whole long enough to get past its differences. We experience for ourselves that our own experience is significantly limited when compared to the whole. We hear, feel, see, and create things in a future search that we would have no way of experiencing in our isolated or adversarial environments.

This is where the true magic begins. When we've identified, validated, and acknowledged our differences, and in so doing have also exposed our common ground, we find that we are now motivated to work together to create a future that benefits all involved. We consciously and publicly acknowledge our differences, and we either use them to help us frame what we'd like to act upon or we put them aside, knowing that they don't have enough support or energy for these ideas to move forward on them. By neither denying nor invalidating these differences, they serve as boundaries to what we can hope to achieve together, but they do not divide us. At this point, just acknowledging and documenting our differences without having to defend them helps us more clearly focus our action planning on only those things we agree on. It is comforting to know we aren't wasting our time planning action for things that have little support and therefore little chance of success.

From here, it is quite energizing to move into the action planning segment of the future search experience. People from multiple stakeholder groups who have the most energy for a particular planning goal work together to flesh out its action components; often these cross-functional groups create ongoing task forces that are responsible for the plan's implementation in the community. Since people rarely resist plans they make themselves, implementation and follow-through are among the many benefits the future search experience brings that other approaches do not. How many times have we used approaches that produce perfectly rational plans that no one wants to or can implement?

Using future search as an experience- and action-based mechanism to change our thoughts and beliefs about poverty, and to create new plans for addressing it, may not ultimately get us all the way home, either. But I believe the chances are infinitely better when we engage the whole system in solving a whole-system problem than when we attempt it from our individual corners of the universe.

From the financial and moral perspective, our country cannot afford to remain on the treadmill any longer; and from the spiritual perspective, our individual and collective psyches can no longer reconcile the gap between what we all want—peace, love, and abundance—and what we create—war, hate, and poverty.

When we allow, validate, and inventory all voices, experiences, knowledge, needs, and information, we have vastly more information to work with than any discrete part of the system could possibly have. When we are all involved in developing the plans that we ourselves will act upon, we create stronger commitment than any "outside expert" could ever produce. At the very least, we will gather together in rooms across the country with the goal of creating more prosperous conditions for us all, and it will get us closer to that goal, whether in terms of material things or spirit.

From the financial and moral perspective, our country cannot afford to remain on the treadmill any longer; and from the spiritual perspective, our individual and collective psyches can no longer reconcile the gap between what we all want—peace, love, and abundance—and what we create—war, hate, and poverty.

My work is healing work. FS

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FROM THE LISTSERVE

To see a new [now not so new—*Ed.*] future search video (29 minutes long), go to:

www.pierreterre.com

Scroll to the lower right portion of the start page. Under "Browse," click on "New Stories" and then see "Community by Design."

Hit "View Video"and watch us do our thing for sustainability in Lawrence Township! (It was taped March 31, 2006.)

—Ralph Copleman

Techniques to Match to Our Values*

Marvin Weisbord

Here's the way it was in 1969 when I became a consultant: NO cell phones, NO pagers, NO fax machines; NO personal computers, NO PowerPoint, NO CDs, NO DVDs, NO internet. My "personal digital assistant" was a little black book in which I wrote down dates in pencil. Blackberries were something you put on pancakes. The Sony Walkman would not be invented for 10 years. Airplanes could go 500 miles an hour, and the schedule from Philadelphia to Boston was 50 minutes. Today airplanes still go 500 miles an hour and the same trip takes an hour and a half.

But that's a different speech.

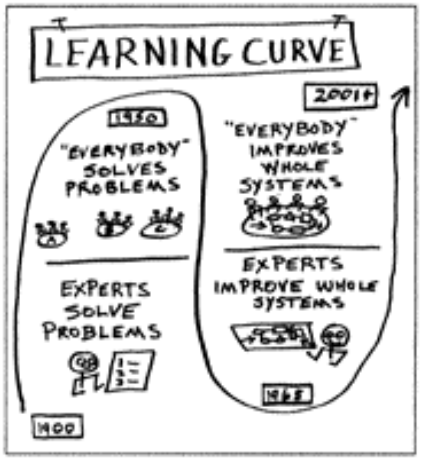
You have may have noticed that things are changing fast. That is not a new observation. More than 40 years ago, a mentor of mine, Eric Trist, and his key collaborator, Fred Emery, wrote a groundbreaking paper describing how outside events interacted to produce conditions that organizations could neither control nor ignore. "The Causal Texture of Organizational Environments" is the title. It's a pretty dense paper, but suffice to say they identified conditions from calm to turbulent that called for different organizational responses. What none of us fully appreciated in those years was that the *velocity* of environmental change was accelerating at warp speed.

In 1969, I went to see Paul Lawrence at Harvard Business School. Paul was co-author with Jay Lorsch of *Organization and Environment*, a key study of differentiation-integration in business that forms one session in Sandra and my "facilitating the whole system" workshop. I had been applying Paul's ideas to planning in a medical school. One thing led to another and eventually we teamed up to repeat his research in nine academic medical centers, creating some new ideas about managing them.

At Harvard 36 years ago, it was said that organizations reorganized every seven years. Those that were centralized, decentralized. Those that were decentralized, centralized. If they were in aerospace, they had a matrix, and people kept fiddling with it but never quite got it right. That seven-year cycle got to be five years in the early '70s, and then three years, and by the '80s reorganizations were an annual event. Mergers, acquisitions, down-sizings, globalizings, right-sizings. The org charts had hardly come out of the copy machine before they had to be changed again.

By the time I quit consulting in 1992, the cycle was more like seven weeks, or maybe seven days. Everybody knew that if they had a steep hierarchy, what they needed was a flat, lean, mean machine. Yet, few organizations stood still long enough to be "designed" that way. We had no choice but to celebrate change, but what became of the stable old cultures that needed a lot prodding to be unfrozen, moved, and stabilized again at some elusive higher level of functioning?

The Learning Curve



In 1987, I wrote a book, *Productive Workplaces*, tracing my workplace consulting ancestry back 100 years to Frederick Taylor, "the father of scientific management." I imagined a "learning curve," starting in the 19th Century with EXPERTS SOLVING PROBLEMS—what came to be called "Taylorism."

The 1950s brought new insights into group dynamics, leading to the second point on my curve: EVERYBODY SOLVING PROBLEMS. Only a decade later, systems thinking, a derivative of biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy's paradigm-shifting concept, general systems theory, made possible previously unthinkable concepts for improving workplaces, taking into account everything Taylor knew and a lot of things he never thought of, like "environmental demands," "negative entropy," and "equifinality." *General Systems*

*Adapted for Future Search Network's Derry Learning Exchange, June 2005. These remarks were delivered in a slightly different version to the Organization Design Forum, April 15, 2005, in San Francisco. They are based on themes from *Productive Workplaces Revisited: Dignity Meaning and Community in the 21st Century* (Jossey-Bass/Wiley, 2004). If you are curious about the oxymoronic concept of "sustainable change" and the half-life of OD projects, this is the book for you.—*M.W.*

Theory is not an easy read, but I'll give you a one-sentence book review:

Everything is hooked up to everything else.

This concept led to many grand design change strategies, specifying all the moves on the chessboard needed to checkmate the competition. EXPERTS IMPROVING WHOLE SYSTEMS added significant sophistication to the practice of participative management. In Russ Ackoff's grand system redesign, for example, he could tell you which teams a company needed, how many members each should have, and how often they should meet.

In a few minutes, I will take up the fourth milestone on the curve—GETTING EVERYBODY IMPROVING WHOLE SYSTEMS. First, I want to tell you some of my experiences with the first three milestones to illustrate the point of my talk. Whatever our methods, we are always at risk of replacing values with techniques.

"Taylorism"

Frederick Taylor described himself in 1893 as the world's first "consulting engineer." He institutionalized outside expertise to the point where, just as fish do not know they swim in water, we can miss the way fragmented work systems impact our lives—in stores, restaurants, offices, and even our homes, from whence we try to connect via mindless phone answering loops to what is euphemistically called "the service economy." Taylorism persists also in "electronic sweatshops," where your own computer, recognizing no priorities, can impartially supervise both your productivity and your potty breaks.

My interest in Taylorism is more than academic. Taylor was an upper-class Philadelphia Quaker. And I grew up as a lower middle-class Philadelphia row house kid, whose father nonetheless worked many years for a Quaker-owned firm. In addition to $30 a week, he brought home large doses of Quaker values—notably modesty, thrift, personal integrity, hard work, egalitarianism, and sympathy for the underdog.

But that is not the only Taylor hook in me. I also had once followed in his footsteps. In 1981, I became a consultant to the Bethlehem Steel Corporation where Taylor consulted full-time from 1898 until he was thrown out in 1901, but not before making Bethlehem's operations among the most efficient in the world. Taylor had an implementation contract that many of us would envy: if anyone resisted his systems, he could have them fired.

The future of Future Search Network does not rest on any particular methods. It lies with the values of the people in this room. The pioneers whose work I have mentioned—Bion, Emery, Lewin, Likert, Lippitt, McGregor, Taylor and Trist—all belong to the ages. They have no more to tell us. What that means, friends and colleagues, is that WE—those of us in *this* room—are the ones who are now up to bat!

In spite of this—or maybe because of it—he had great success improving output, quality, and working conditions in factories. He integrated cost accounting, training, personnel records, inventory control, goal setting, feedback, wage incentives, and other methods to achieve enviable results. Taylor's values were quite contemporary. His magnum opus, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), far from an engineering treatise, may have been the first ever human resources textbook.

"We can see our forests vanishing," Taylor wrote, "our water-powers going to waste, our soil being carried by floods into the sea; and the end of our coal and our iron is in sight. But our larger wastes of human effort, which go on every day through such of our acts as are blundering, ill-directed, or inefficient…are less visible, less tangible...." He was writing, of course, of the waste of what Rensis Likert many years later would call "human capital."

Taylor's "principles" are so simple as to be laughable:

- science, not rule of thumb:
- harmony, not discord;
- cooperation, not individualism;
- maximum output, not restricted output;
- development of all workers to their "greatest efficiency and prosperity."

Taylor asserted that his principles fit every form of human activity, and that "whenever these principles are correctly applied, results must follow which are truly astounding." (That claim is echoed today, of course, by those who use Open Space Technology, Appreciative Inquiry, or, for that matter, Future Search.)

I have learned a great deal from Taylor about the choices facing Future Searchers, who worry endlessly about whether there is a better way to do a mind-map. Taylor always insisted that his practice had nothing to do with techniques. Rather, it was "a complete mental revolution" in the relations among working people. Indeed, he practiced a form of action research—experimenting with workers to find the one best way to do every job and the best person to do it. Like Abraham Maslow decades later, he theorized that people used only a tiny part of their capabilities at

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work. If everybody worked at the jobs they did best and were paid incentive bonuses for individual output, all would earn superior wages. Brought up as a pacifist, Taylor believed to his core that rational systems would so motivate workers that he could cut out authoritarian supervision and eliminate labor/management conflict. Progressives like Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, who named "scientific management," considered Taylor a great social reformer. Brandeis believed Taylor had invented techniques equal to his values.

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Yet, it was the techniques that got him in trouble. In 1911, he was the subject of an acrimonious congressional inquiry into his "dehumanizing" methods based only on his breaking jobs into small, repetitive chunks. And Taylor lived long enough to see greedy executives and consultants reduce his high-minded system to the mindless repetition of time and motion study. (Just as some of us already have lived long enough to see future search reduced to timelines and mind-maps, never mind who's in the room or how much time they've got.) Taylor died in 1915 frustrated that many people had divorced his values and married his techniques. He was remembered a century later mainly for the stopwatch and slide rule.

When my company was hired by Bethlehem Steel, his former client, in 1981 to help improve labor-management relations, here's what we found: 14 levels of management; 400 industrial engineers timing jobs and setting rates; and 3,400 different wage incentive plans paying out an average of 130% of base pay! The yield of good steel was about 70%, compared to 95% for the Japanese, and the company was losing $80 million a month.

It took some years to untangle the mess. Bethlehem did it, though, in part by using "whole system in the room" activities that would have given Taylor nightmares. Labor-management relations got better and, after draconian downsizing, so did profitability. I wish I could end the story there. Bethlehem, like a lot of the "old" economy, fell victim to global economic forces that no one could control. It went bankrupt in 2003, and its assets were sold to a more resilient rival.

Participation and Group Problem-Solving

The alternatives to Taylorism that delayed Bethlehem's demise, I can trace back to the 1940s and '50s. They began, for me at least, with a 1938 research study by Kurt Lewin, a refugee from Nazi Germany with a graduate student named Ronald Lippitt. Working with boys' clubs at the State University of Iowa, they documented the indisputable contrast between groups performing under authoritarian and democratic leadership. They invented the term "group dynamics." They opened the door to remarkable organizational improvement strategies based on democratic leadership, group problem solving, and teamwork, not least of them future search.

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Douglas McGregor's Theory X/Theory Y became a module in a thousand management training seminars, ushering in a zillion-dollar "leadership style" industry.

This road, like Taylor's, also had its pitfalls. Dazzled by the heady T-groups of the 1950s and '60s, many of us believed that training everybody in decision-making, conflict management, interpersonal skills, collaboration, and self-awareness would lead to a workplace revolution. Where Taylor trained one person at a time (he saw groups as an uncontrollable threat), cultural change strategies in the 1960s and '70s consisted of training everybody in groups. We theorized that when everyone had the same inputs, they would transform their organizational cultures, making workplaces more people-friendly *and* productive.

This turned out to be an iffy proposition.

Many of us thought it a risky business to have people from different levels of hierarchy learn together. Too much self-exposure across levels could be bad for your career. Yet it's hard to gain influence on the whole in peer groups. Hence, "flavor of the month" programs came and went like songbirds with the seasons. We were always getting people ready to do something they never actually did—gain greater control of their own work lives. Alas, people improved themselves more than their organizations.

To remedy this, OD consultants invented team-building to enable transfer of training. (In the 1970s, I was a builder of some of the best losing teams in American industry.) The strategic flaw of mass team-building is exposed by systems theory. You can change a system only in

relationship to the larger system of which it is a part—other functions, customers, suppliers, regulators, and community. (Sound familiar?)

Don't misinterpret me. Team-building and training are existentially valuable activities. In both settings, people can learn to be open, confront conflict, collaborate, appreciate differences, diagnose problems, and set ambitious goals. What people *cannot* get in these activities is influence, let alone power, over policy, procedure, system, and structure.

Socio-Technical Redesign

There are, of course, other ways to improve systems besides working on everybody's behavior. You also can improve a system by validating its central task and redefining its boundaries. Instead of looking inward at each other, have diverse people study together how to organize themselves in a shared environment.

For me, the origins of this lesson date back to shortly after World War II. Several ex-British Army officers led by psychiatrist Wilfred Bion and psychologist Eric Trist started the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London. During the war, they had done innovative projects, notably the selection of field officers for the British Army using small, leaderless groups to test the candidates' ability to walk the tightrope between group and self-interest. Their postwar-mission: find ways to rebuild a devastated British economy using brainpower, in the absence of other resources.

During the war, they had done innovative projects, notably the selection of field officers for the British Army using small, leaderless groups to test the candidates' ability to walk the tightrope between group and self-interest.

One student, Ken Bamforth, an ex-union leader, went back to the South Yorkshire coal mine where he had worked years before and found miners laboring underground in teams without supervisors, bringing coal to the surface around the clock. In the old fragmented system, one shift undercut the coal face, another carried the coal to the surface, and a third shored up the roof. If a shift ran into trouble, those who came after were idle until the shift with requisite skills came back again. In the new system, every shift was a "multi-skilled self-managing work team." The teams had less waste, higher productivity, and a better safety record than under the old system.

Eric Trist went to the mine the next day with Bamforth. "I was a changed man when I came up," he once told me. "I had seen for the first time a real alternative to Taylorism!" The most instructive aspect of this story for me is that the innovation came from meetings between unionized miners and management on implementing a new technology of roof control. They did it themselves, without any consulting input. They had fulfilled in an unprecedented way Taylor's belief that increased cooperation led to superior results. Indeed, the miners rediscovered—at a higher level of technology—the way their grandfathers had mined in pick-and-shovel days when every apprentice aspired to learn all the skills and become a master mechanic.

"I was a changed man when I came up," he once told me. "I had seen for the first time a real alternative to Taylorism!"

If Taylor's *Scientific Management* was in fact a human resource treatise, the book that Trist and his colleagues published in 1963, *Organizational Choice*, was a coal mine engineering text. The book describes the empirical and theoretical roots of "socio-technical systems" design. In this scheme you started with a system's core purpose, or mission, the so-called "primary task." If people could internalize this task and its social, technical, and economic assumptions they could invent organizations more flexible, adaptable, dynamic, and self-renewing than the ones Taylor left us with.

The socio-technical method soon underwent a considerable elaboration in India, Norway, and Sweden before reaching North America in the 1960s. Along the way, Fred Emery, Trist's collaborator, dubbed multiple skills the "second design principle." Instead of one person, one task (the essence of Taylorism), multi-skilled teams greatly increased system flexibility. They did, that is, when they also controlled and coordinated their own work. Emery with his wife Merrelyn later created a simple do-it-yourself participative design practice, enabling people to redo their own work systems.

Still, what had started spontaneously in the British mines evolved in some iterations into an infinite charting of variances and a detailed social remapping of jobs. In the best case, labor-management teams did their own designs, using methods taught them by consultants. Even then I found an awesome paradox in getting multitudes of people in a company to embrace the hard-won conclusions of a 12-person design team bobbling in a small boat, so to speak, on an ocean of skepticism.

To ameliorate this, some of us in the 1980s began redesigning systems in a series of large conferences, a time-consuming process, that nonetheless involved many more people, and led to implementations that took only months rather than years. Dick Axelrod's Conference Model is a

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notable example. Even this in a world of non-stop change might prove too slow for most contemporary organizations. In any case, the redesigned systems rarely survived the tenure of the leaders who started them.

But that is not the last word. Just as Taylor's sophisticated integration got reduced to time and motion study, so did socio-technical systems become for many people a package to be installed like new software. About 15 years ago, I was invited to a manufacturing meeting in a famous paper company that is no more. The plant managers talked non-stop about the "multi-skilled work team model" that a consulting group had put in—and how much resistance it had stirred up. The company had sacrificed participative soc-tech values on the altar of canned techniques. Nobody has yet figured out how to commit people to work redesigns, even very good ones, over which they have no influence.

I should also point out Trist and Emery in 1960 pioneered a groundbreaking strategic planning meeting as they sought to scale up their multi-skilled team strategy to a more abstract level of planning in what became the Search Conference. (Ever wonder why everybody does all the tasks in future search? Look to the origins! That is the only way everyone can get into their bones the nature of the system they share—get to "talk about the same world," or gain an appreciation of the "whole elephant.")

Ever wonder why everybody does all the tasks in future search? Look to the origins! That is the only way everyone can get into their bones the nature of the system they share—get to "talk about the same world," or gain an appreciation of the "whole elephant.")

Getting Everyone Involved in Improving the Whole

This brings me to the fourth point on the learning curve. Seeking to undo Taylorism, using participative methods wed to socio-technical principles, I found myself in the 1980s tugged inexorably toward a scary conclusion. If we truly wanted to realize our values for workplaces in which productivity rested on a bedrock of dignity, meaning, and community, we ought to figure out how to get EVERYBODY IMPROVING WHOLE SYSTEMS. Studying my own and others' successes, I concluded that in each case we needed an attractive goal, a leader with an itch to scratch, and some energized people with expertise and commitment.

I proposed a few "minimum critical specifications" for effective development: get the whole system in the room; focus on the future rather than the problem list; and set things up so that people could do the work themselves. No new vocabulary. No special skills. No attitude adjustments. Just do it. If every deficiency had to be remedied before people could implement a new workplace, nobody would ever get a new workplace.

I also learned to define "whole system in the room" more precisely. I had it mean people with authority, information, resources, expertise, and need. When we convene such diverse groups, we effectively redefine a system's boundaries. That is a giant step beyond diagramming "environmental demands" on a flipchart. People who *are* each other's environment share what they know. Everybody comes to understand the whole in a way that no one person did before. Though this is a structural intervention, paradoxically, many people voluntarily change their behavior.

That, I believe, is the key to the success in the last decade or so of "large group interventions." These structures provide opportunities for people to act in new ways. They tilt the power balance. They enable fluid coalitions in real time. Most require no training. They turn "systems thinking" into an experiential rather than a conceptual activity. They enable everybody to use for a few hours, or a few days, or a few months, what they already have on behalf of a goal larger than themselves. I have been putting these ideas into practice experimentally for the last 20 years.

(One recent variation on the theme is the work that Sandra and I did in two future searches with IKEA, the global furniture retailer. In less than three days, we helped the company redesign its global inventory control and distribution systems—right down to the implementation plan, top management's blessing, and the task forces needed to see it through. I had never done anything like that in less than six months and numerous meetings when I worked as a consultant.)

I can tell you now what the future holds for Future Search Network: unpredictable change. The best thing we have going for us is a set of values and principles that underpin our methodology. The techniques we use are a minor part of the equation. They are subject to continual experimentation and revision. Getting everybody involved in improving the whole, however, is not, to my way of thinking, negotiable.

Nor are the points on my learning curve timeline mutually exclusive. Indeed, if you are going to get everybody improving whole systems, you're going to need some expert and group problem-solving too, and it helps to have a few whole systems thinkers around.

There is a great temptation to proliferate techniques. My advice on techniques goes like this: Keep them simple. Keep them congruent with your values. The more complicated the world, the *fewer activities* we need to cope—if we can figure out the right ones! No matter what strategies we choose, if we want job satisfaction, we are stuck with finding techniques equal to our values.

Techniques cascade down the generations like Niagara Falls. Values move like glaciers. Techniques fill whole bookshelves. Values take up hardly any room at all. I can say mine in eight words: *Productive workplaces that foster dignity, meaning, and community.*

Getting the whole system in the room is just one principle for managing them. And I know three other good ones.

I am too much of a historian, though, to believe that future search and other large-group interventions are the end of history. Every method has its limits, as we all are destined to learn. Our ancestors have given us priceless gifts, but none has prepared us for a world of cell phones, email, virtual teams, the kind of Blackberries that nobody but a dog would want to chew on, and, more to the point, a global economy that is consuming resources at a rate far beyond our ability to replace them.

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A Historical Footnote to "Techniques to Match Our Values"

In a 1920 article, Kurt Lewin described the "life value" of work. "The worker," he said, "wants his work to be rich, wide, and Protean, not crippling and narrow. Work should not limit personal potential but develop it. Work can involve love, beauty, and the soaring joy of creating. Progress, in that case, does not mean shortening the work day, but an increase in the human value of work."—Kurt Lewin, "Die Sozialisierung des Taylorsystems." *Praktischer Sozialismus,* 1920 (4), pp. 5-36.—*M.W.*

In her 2005 book, Margaret Wheatley (an FSN member) writes, "We have forgotten many important truths about human motivation. Study after study confirms that people are motivated by work that provides growth, recognition, meaning, and good relationships. We want our lives to mean something; we want to contribute to others; we want to learn; we want to be together. And we need to be involved in decisions that affect us. If we believed these studies and created organizations that embodied them, then work would be far more productive and enjoyable."—Margaret Wheatley, *Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time.* San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2005, p. 151. —*M.W.*

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Preface to Marv and Sandra's Newest Book!*

This is no ordinary meeting book. Our purpose is to help you improve your leadership skills one meeting at a time. We intend to do that by turning upside down much of the popular wisdom about meeting management. We aim to help you free yourself from the burden of having all the answers to the mysteries of human interaction.

We will introduce you to a philosophy, a theory, and a practice that is at once radical and simple. To apply our ideas, you will not need to worry about anybody's behavior but your own. We will illustrate our principles with examples and provide practice tips you can use starting the next time you lead a meeting. We will back up our advice with experiences from colleagues around the world.

Meetings are as common as dirt and about as popular. This presents you with a delicious paradox. You can practice almost any day of the week an art few people trust, letting low expectations work in your favor. Every meeting you run gives you a chance to surprise people with a gratifying experience. Why not take it?

Well, you have your reasons. You hate meetings, right? You consider them time wasting, boring, and unproductive, unavoidable rituals to be repeated endlessly in agencies, communities, corporations, and schools. That's just the way things are. Hold on a minute. You may be kidding yourself. While writing this book, we came across research showing no connection between meetings and people's job satisfaction. "It may be socially unacceptable to publicly claim that meetings are desirable," wrote the researchers. "Instead, a social norm to complain about meetings may exist" (Rogelberg & Leach, 2006).

Whatever your reality, everybody hates certain meetings for their own reasons. So do we, and we should know. We have been leading meetings separately and together since the 1960s. We have been in more meetings than we can count and taught meeting methods worldwide to thousands of people. We have been burned in meetings that promised much and delivered little; and, alas, we know the guilt of promising more than we have to give. Not any more, but that is getting ahead of our story.

Let us say at the outset that we are not writing about all meetings, certainly not those that rely on speakers, panel discussions, slide shows, and one-way information. Nor do we deal explicitly with conference calls and online forums, though you may find some of our ideas applicable. While people use distance media for good reasons, few find them a substitute for the gatherings that everybody loves to hate.

Our focus in this book is purposeful, face-to-face meetings. We present a new way of thinking about and leading gatherings where diverse people need each other to solve problems, make decisions, and implement plans that none can do alone. We are writing about meetings where people expect to participate, be heard, and make a difference—in short, meetings that matter. When they are badly led, the main output is cynicism and apathy.

So we write for you if you run meetings. Our book will be of professional interest if you are an executive, manager, consultant, facilitator, or meeting planner. You may also find it useful if you lead work teams, teach school or college, coordinate work in hospitals, chair civic boards, or manage nonprofits.

Our theme is this: you can make every meeting count. You do not have to knock yourself out memorizing checklists to run a good meeting. You can work less hard and get better results. Anytime we "just stand there," we are in no way practicing passivity or indifference. Calm we may be to the naked eye, but a lot is going on inside of us. We stay continuously alert to a few matters—very few, it turns out, that we believe make or break a meeting. Those are the ones we will describe.

In that regard, too, this is no ordinary meeting book. We will not tell you how to interview people or how to diagnose a group's needs, before, during, or after a meeting. We will not advise you on how to reduce boredom and apathy, overcome resistance, surface hidden agendas, deal with people who talk too much or too little, or get people's deepest feelings on the table.

To the contrary, we take the position that if you want to accomplish important tasks under trying conditions you need to work with people exactly the way they are, not as you wish them to be. You can do this if you learn to manage structure, not behavior. You focus on matching participants to goals, who gets to do what, and how to keep the group on task. Control a meeting's structure, we will show, and participants will take care of the rest.

Nor is this all. Starting in the 1980s we noted two global trends that made meetings harder to lead. First, we were living in a world changing so fast nobody could keep up. That's not news if you go to work every day. However, a sickness of our time includes seeking to reduce complexity by ducking it—the "shorter, faster, cheaper" meeting syndrome—and/or compensating for lack of depth with more entertaining techniques.

Second, our meetings grew increasingly multicultural. As

*This excerpt is from *Don't Just Do Something, Stand There! Ten Principles for Leading Meetings That Matter,* by Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff, Copyright 2007 by the authors, to be published in July 2007 by Berrett-Koehler. For comments or permission to quote, contact *sjanoff@futuresearch.net.* Future Search Network members can pre-order an autographed copy by contacting Jennifer Neumer, *fsn@futuresearch.* Cost is $19.95, no charge for shipping.

business went global, nonprofits expanded their reach in health care, education, and sustainability, our participants differed markedly by age, culture, education, jobs, gender, sexual orientation, language, race, ethnicity, and social class. Moving in and out of cultures not our own, we soon learned caution in applying what we took for granted at home. We came upon unspoken cultural norms about which we knew nothing and probably never would. No matter how many theories, strategies and models we acquired, we had a hard time making our ways of learning fit all the people we sought to lead.

We realized that our best methods were no longer producing the desired results. In the late 1980s, we set out to redo from scratch the way we organize, use, and manage meetings. First, we vowed to stop wasting people's time. We would no longer attend or lead meetings when we thought the goals were not attainable. Next, we began experimenting with ways to make every meeting matter, even in unfamiliar cultures.

We defined our quest as finding methods anybody could use, whether trained or not, whether systems thinkers or not, whether blessed with new technology or not. We set our sights on enabling any group, regardless of culture, to go right to work without having to learn new concepts. We began to structure meetings so that people could cooperate relying only on their own experience.

To make ourselves both more peripheral and more effective, we found we had to make big internal shifts. We had to manage the anxiety we felt as waited for people to connect across boundaries that no one can simplify. We had to let go of leadership demands on ourselves that we knew to be unrealistic. Rather than worry about outcomes, we taught ourselves to tolerate multiple realities and stay focused on goals.

Ten Principles That Matter

The purpose of this book is to introduce you to 10 principles for making every meeting matter. They reflect a good bit of refining that we have done on our methods. More to the point, they reflect persistent work on us. Despite recurrent bouts of self-doubt, we have let go many theories and techniques we once relied on. How, for example, would you diagnose "group needs" when every person needs something different? We could no longer work successfully with increasingly diverse groups in a world of nonstop change using methods favoring homogeneity in more stable times.

In this regard, too, we depart from mainstream meeting guides. To deal with diversity and uncertainty we offer a single theory that you can use whether looking at organizations, groups or yourself. It is a theory that we have tested in many cultures. We describe it in the introduction. If you hate theory, skip that part. Stay aware, though, that we ground our practical tips and techniques in research and theory going back decades.

In bringing each principle to life, we have chosen to limit ourselves to a few practices that you can use all the time. We run meetings the same way with teens and senior citizens, students and teachers, artists and engineers, tribal chiefs and captains of industry, making only small adjustments that help people preserve norms central to their identity. We have learned to help people cooperate regardless of their differences by discovering capabilities they did not know they had.

From this book, you will learn to:

- Help groups achieve shared goals in a timely way;
- Manage differences without flying apart;
- Solve problems and make tough decisions without delegating the task back to you; and,
- Structure meetings to greatly increase the probability that people will share responsibility.

While we believe that the action steps we propose are simple to execute, they take self-discipline to learn. You may have to exercise uncommon restraint to "just stand there" when a group falls into chaos and blames it on you, or when somebody says something divisive and everybody looks to you to fix it, or when people split over goals, question your authority, or stereotype each other to the point where work halts. You can, however, learn to deal skillfully with the unexpected if you are willing to persist in working on yourself.

Ours surely are not the only principles and methods for leading meetings that matter. We ask you to consider each one because so many others have adopted them. In writing this book, we compiled stories from colleagues around the world. Hundreds have applied the practices described here in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, India, and North and South America. They have integrated our principles into their work regardless of the size, length and goals of their meetings. You can do the same.

As a fringe benefit, you may lift from your shoulders the yoke of worries about people's attitudes, motives, hidden agendas, status and styles. Instead, you will learn to use structural practices that keep groups whole, open, and task-focused. As you discern when to act and when to just stand there, you will find yourself adding your own positive ripples to the stream of life. In other words, you will learn how to make every meeting matter.

The stone landmark that appears on the cover symbolizes our title. The Inuit of the high Arctic call it an Inuksuk. For centuries they have used it for guidance in navigating the barren tundra. Signifying safety, hope and friendship, the Inuksuk stands immobile. Yet people rely on it to find their way. FS

Update

MAY 2007
SOUTH AFRICA

The South Africa Future Search Network organising team. From right to left: John Goss, Aria Merkestein, Dumisani Ncala, and Tamara Sutila.

The Learning Exchange for the first time in Africa!

A few months ago, we invited the Future Search Network to conduct the 2007 Learning Exchange in South Africa.

We had quite a few enthusiastic responses, and it is time for an update on "where we are" with organising the LE. Of course, we want to use the update to renew our invitation for the 2007 LE in South Africa!

Just to recap, having the LE in South Africa will give the Network the opportunity to experience a developing country focus at first hand, to make new connections with other practitioners—particularly from Africa and other developing countries—and to extend its impact on the global stage. Through the LE we can raise the FS Network profile.

For those who missed the first invitation, the idea to conduct the LE in South Africa was raised in 2005 at the Learning Exchange conducted in Ireland. We jumped to the idea because here, in South Africa, we feel very strongly about the impact FS has on development.

Most of us from the local network have been involved in FS conferences with a developmental focus. Putting Future Search more firmly on the map in Africa could have a significant impact on cementing progress toward more sustainable and democratic societies.

When we suggested holding the LE in South Africa, we also suggested, amongst other points, a developing country focus, which would include the aspect of sustainability from an environmental perspective. Well, we certainly received a positive response to this.

In attending the LE, you will become part of the impact FS has in the developing world. You will have the opportunity to see South Africa at first hand and experience our diversity and our challenges.

LE & Workshop

Dates

The dates for the LE are 8, 9 and 10 November 2007.

Note: We will begin the week of the LE with the "Leading Meetings That Matter" workshop led by Sandra Janoff and Marvin Weisbord, in the same venue. The workshop is based on their new book, *Don't Just Do Something, Stand There! Ten Principles for Leading Meetings That Matter.* The dates are November 5 and November 6. So, if you are interested in doing this workshop, it might be a good idea to combine it with the LE.

Venue

www.aloeridgehotel.com

We have found a marvelous spot, Aloe Ridge Hotel, a venue within easy reach of Johannesburg and Pretoria, and far enough away to be in a tranquil space and provide a sense of Africa. The hotel is surrounded by rolling hills carpeted by aloe and other indigenous plants, which give way to rivers and waterfalls. Zebra and other animals roam around the hotel's premises.

Aloe Ridge also has an interesting history. It was used to hold the meetings that formed the transitional government in 1995, the so-called "Government of National Unity." The four suites where the leaders of the African National Congress (ANC), the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the National Party were accommodated at the time bear their names: Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, and FW de Klerk.

The hotel is also conveniently close to OR Tambo International Airport, the international airport just outside Johannesburg.

LE Design

We invite FS Network members to be part of the design team.

We wish to create opportunities to conduct more FS conferences in the developing world and Africa in particular and would like to mobilise significant support for doing this.

At the same time, we realise that not everybody in the FS Network is "in development." Hence, we invite input for additional topics as part of the design of the LE.

A detailed design of the LE will be worked out by a design team drawn from the Network and will be fully supported by the local team. We suggest getting the whole system involved in the LE including experienced facilitators, potential sponsors, community organiations, development agencies, foundations, government, etc.

LE Cost

The cost of the 2007 LE is ZAR 1,100 per person for the three days. This is approximately US$160 at the current exchange rate.

The package includes refreshments, lunches, and the use of the LE venue.

What next?

Registration for the LE will be arranged in May. We will keep you informed.

The Future Search Network has kindly offered us administrative assistance. We have wholeheartedly embraced this offer. There will also be a conference call to talk about the design of the LE this month.

Attractions

Of course, the LE "development" theme itself provides reason enough to participate.

But then, you might want to extend your stay with a few days (or longer)! South Africa has many attractions. We are planning exciting trips in the vicinity of Johannesburg on the day before the LE starts. These trips come at a separate cost, which we will confirm in the next update.

SOWETO — witness the miracle unfolding and experience South Africa in its complexity.

APARTHEID MUSEUM — see, feel and hear a record of our recent past, and recognise how far South Africa has come in the past 12 years!

CRADLE OF HUMANKIND — A World Heritage Site containing the origins of man (and woman!) some 2.5 to 3.5 million years ago.

And then it is up to you to personally explore our game reserves, hiking, white water rafting, elephant-back safaris, hot air ballooning, our first-class wines, our diverse culture, and our diamond and gold mines.

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WHERE DO I SLEEP?

Aloe Ridge Hotel has ample accommodation and is very reasonably priced. In addition to the conference facilities, there are 74 Luxury en suite double rooms. Other facilities include an indoor heated swimming pool and outdoor pool, tennis court and squash court, games room, observatory. You can go trout fishing or take a game drive, enjoy traditional Zulu dancing and a meal at Phumangena u Muzi, an authentic Zulu village.

We have negotiated a very good price with the hotel. The daily rate per person for dinner, bed & breakfast is:

Single: ZAR 600 —- per person/day (approximately US$85 at the current exchange rate)

Sharing: ZAR 425 — per person/day (approximately US$60 at the current exchange rate)

If you decide to join us for the LE, we suggest that you book accommodation directly with Aloe Ridge Hotel:

Tel: +27(0)11 957 2070

Fax: +27 (0) 11 957 2017

Email: aloereservations@mweb.co.za

During the 2007 LE, lunches are covered by the cost of the LE package (see box above on LE Cost).

Transport OR Tambo International Airport – Aloe Ridge Hotel can be arranged directly with the hotel.

The Learning Exchange
continued from page 21

For those who want to explore more of South Africa, including Cape Town and the Kruger National Park, check out *www.southafrica.info* for ideas.

Introducing ourselves

Dumisani Ncala

South African national with work experience that covers gold mining, chemical, manufacturing and banking industries in people management. Plans to manage a FS in 2007. Attended 2005 LE in Ireland. Currently contracted on a conflict resolution role (employee ombudsman) in a large bank.

Tamara Sutila

Croatian-born, grew up in Zambia, Tanzania and Norway and has been living in South Africa for seven years. Co-facilitated four Future Searches with Han Rakels in Tanzania, Zanzibar, Holland and Rwanda. Also works as a development writer and media specialist for the United Nations.

John Goss

South African citizen with experience in accounting, information technology and consulting in retail, manufacturing, IT, and financial services industries. Member of FS Network for nine years. Co-managed nine FS conferences in business, community, higher education and wildlife management settings. In own business focused on whole system development for four years.

Aria Merkestein

Netherlands citizen, South African resident. Experience in education, conflict management, development, and leadership facilitation. Worked and lived in The Netherlands, Zambia, Botswana, United Kingdom, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of Congo. Co-managed six FSCs: two on Local economic development and poverty reduction (SA), three on post-conflict transformation and development (DRC), and one on higher education planning (SA). FS

Future Search Graphic Report to Be Displayed in UN Conference Room

By Rita Schweitz

United Nations Population Fund (UNNFPA) Executive Director, UN Under-Secretary-General Ms. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid declared that the vivid, 20-foot graphic recordings of the just-completed Y-PEER Future Search would be framed and hung in the UNFPA Conference room.

After just a few minutes of perusing the graphics at the start of the meeting with the 27-member Global Advisory Board and some of its partners, Ms. Obaid was able to understand and appreciate the results, process, and excitement of the just-completed Future Search for Y-PEER, a network of 35 countries from Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Arab States, and East Africa regions, consisting of thousands of young people working in the areas of adolescent sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention, under the direction of UNFPA's Division of Arab States, Europe, Central Asia.

No oral or written report could have produced such a strong and immediate impact.

The Future Search, facilitated by Rita Schweitz and graphically recorded by Kriss Wittmann, at Mohonk Mountain House in New York, was electric right from the start, reflecting the predominance of young people under 25 years.

Though they were dedicated to addressing the serious issues of their organization, they also put their own mark on the proceedings. During breaks and lulls, different participants from a variety of countries led energizers in their own language, not only lifting the energy but also sharing culture and language. Participants were also intrigued by watching the graphic recording of their presentations, conversations, and ideas. The graphics provided them with a way to quickly communicate their long-term ownership of their process and results.

Some of the graphics are shown on the following page.

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Y PEER Global Advisory Board Meeting
DECEMBER 2006
The PAST
Personal
Y PEER
Young people neglected
Rise of HIV/AIDS
EECA
ADVOCACY
Proud5
Political
HIV
Wars
terrorism
revolutions
COLD WAR
The PRESENT
Y-PEER
SN


Y PEER Global Advisory Board Meeting
DECEMBER 2006
The FUTURE
It's the year 2015.....
2015
ADVOCACY
PROGRAMMING
YPEER SUSTAINABILITY THE NEXT LEVEL
PARTNERSHIP
MEDIA COMMUNICATION
WORK PLANS
UNFPA

Education, Democracy, and Language: The Link to Future Search

Richard Allan Aronson, MD, MPH*

As future search continues to evolve as a global planning tool, I have sought to understand the four principles within the inter-linked context of education, democracy, and language. The purpose of this article is to offer some reflections that have helped me to sustain the practice of future search in the spirit of a great learning.

Future search challenges us to question the cultural and language paradigms so deeply embedded in society that we largely take them for granted, even though such values often go against the ideals that drive our future search work. As a pediatrician and public health practitioner for nearly 30 years and a future search practitioner for 13 years, I want to focus on what I think it will take for future search to ultimately create a culture that fosters the conditions for the highest ideals of education and democracy to thrive.

As a graduate of Amherst College, I have long admired Alexander Meiklejohn, who served as Amherst's president from 1912 to 1924. In *Education and Democracy: The Meaning of Alexander Meiklejohn*, Adam R. Nelson describes, in eloquent detail, Meiklejohn's vision of a liberal arts education as a necessary process to equip young people with the tools that they can use to build, sustain, and strengthen democracy. This vision emphasizes the excitement and joy of learning, the ability to think with a critical and questioning mind, and the contemplation in community of timeless moral dilemmas. It's a vision that inspires students to develop a realistic idealism and to fuel their lives with passion and commitment to make the world more just and peaceful. According to Meikeljohn, the key to keeping democracy alive—indeed the necessary prerequisite for a real and thriving democracy—lies in such an education.

As it is with people who approach life with integrity and live according to their conscience, Meiklejohn encountered obstacles and controversies throughout his life, one of which was his forced resignation by the Board of Trustees as Amherst President. Such tensions are bound to happen, as they often do in future search conferences, when the practice of our ideals clashes with entrenched systems that fall shamefully short in their capacity to honor our common and inter-connected humanity. Meiklejohn's vision of education as essential to the success of democracy challenges people of privilege and material wealth to address the great moral issues confronting our society. It challenges future search to be ever more inclusive in getting the whole system in the room and honoring voices of people who have long been stripped of their dignity and excluded from the table.

Through these storms, Meiklejohn himself managed to sustain his own dignity, which indeed is a challenge for future searchers. As one of the great educators in American history, he and his story remind us that the courage to live up to high human ideals and to risk the controversy that such courage surely will generate is, indeed, an important part of what it means to be a healthy person. And this naturally leads us to discover and celebrate the common ground shared by diverse people throughout the world in the quest for a global culture that reflects the four principles of future search (whole system in the room, global picture before local, focus on common ground, and self-management).

I raise the example of Meiklejohn because I believe that his vision of education and learning, along every stage of the lifespan, is integral to that of future search. In the practice of future search, we seek to foster conditions that will enable people to work together and achieve previously unimaginable results for the betterment of society. Such results occur when all people have the opportunity to reach their highest potential; and when our society shows the will to invest in such human development, regardless of race, ethnicity, income, education, religion, and gender. The success of future search across cultures is indicative of its synchronicity with Meiklejohn's inspired vision of education.

What does this mean in practice? It means that societal structures and organizations support people in: (1) feeling physically and emotionally healthy and safe; (2) treating themselves and each other with dignity and respect; (3) creating and sustaining an intense curiosity and excitement about the world, a deep desire to learn, literacy, and a healthy balance of cognitive and

*Maternal and Child Health Medical Director, Maine Department of Health and Human Services.

emotional skills; (4) developing a sense of purpose, power, and hope about their lives, so that they can serve the world as compassionate, productive, and justice-promoting people; and (5) growing with a resilient spirit, which is at the very heart of healing and health in the midst of stress and adversity.

Through my future search learning and experience, I fully appreciate that the five parts of a future search conference (past, present, ideal future, common ground, action) call on participants and facilitators alike to strive to create humane and clear language that is in sync with the underlying future search principles. Our use of words defines how we all approach and actually think about life. Language itself determines how we receive, process, interpret, and provide output for our thoughts and, importantly, actions.

The widespread use of bureaucratic jargon, complex technical terms, unintelligible acronyms, and violence-related metaphors permeates the language and culture of society. It appears everywhere in our discourse, written and oral. For example, we "target" just about everything and everybody, most of whom don't take kindly to the idea of being targets; we design policies, programs, protocols, and services to, say, "combat" violence, which certainly qualifies as an oxymoron; we figure out ways to "fight" poverty; we design "interventions" on people and communities for campaigns, for example, to "attack" high rates of asthma and its "triggers"; we describe people as "high risk cases" to be "managed" rather than as human beings to be cared for; we fill grant proposals and electronic mail with "bulleted" talking points and confusing, often bizarre, acronyms; in medicine, we identify babies who "fail" a hearing screen as having birth "defects"; and we use the epidemiological related meaning of "surveillance" in the post-9/11 era when such a word is widely perceived in a much darker context and linked to a real war; and, of course, we thrive on building "infrastructure," whatever that nonspecific and vague word means to the public.

The five parts of a future search conference (past, present, ideal future, common ground, action) call on participants and facilitators alike to strive to create humane and clear language that is in sync with the underlying future search principles. Our use of words defines how we all approach and actually think about life. Language itself determines how we receive, process, interpret, and provide output for our thoughts and, importantly, actions.

The uncritical and ubiquitous use of such words and terms unintentionally, contributes to cultural norms that can undermine the purpose and ideals of future search and the quest for a culture in which education and democracy thrive. At future search conferences, people and communities cry out to be honored, respected, and included in the design and implementation of systems to enhance their well-being. Indeed, the genius of future search lies in its unique ability to honor and include such cries in whole-systems change.

But our dominant communication patterns have the opposite effect.

Our challenge in future search is to pay greater attention to such communication and, in the long view, to change our language so that it explicitly embraces and supports the quest for a culture that affirms the ideals of education and democracy. Through such a change, we can be in a stronger position to create and sustain humane public health policies and systems that honor the dignity of all people and that reduce unconscionable inequalities. Future search is blessed to have a wide array of people from around the world who carry out innovative, promising practices to do just that. Our calling is to make these practices systemic and enduring.

So our challenge in future search, wherever and whenever we practice it, is to create and sustain systems, both formal and informal, that are humane and that inspire hope and resilience in people, organizations, communities, and societies. Traditional approaches to strategic planning, facilitation, and organizational development have relied too heavily upon a pathology and risk model—a focus on what's wrong and how to fix it. All sorts of problems have been documented and studied to death for decades.

But, unfortunately, as we have learned from future search, too often this approach has led to a judgmental and "us versus them" approach to services and systems, putting people into labels and stereotypes that distract us from respecting and celebrating their humanity.

Instead of systems that repeatedly solve problems and pathologize, categorize, and lump people into a dizzying array of risks, diseases, problems, and disorders, we need systems and policies that humanize and dignify children, families, communities, and cultures; that celebrate and tap into their strengths, creativity, and capacity to heal in nonviolent ways; that foster the research-proven conditions that lead to productive environments and good health; and that promote research to identify how best to

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Education, Democracy, and Language
continued from page 21

address the systemic easy-to-ignore factors, such as racism and classism, that contribute to injustice, inequality, and violence. Future search is a tool to meet precisely such a need.

Research shows that the extent to which we feel lovingly and peacefully connected to each other and to our communities is a powerful determinant of our health and productivity. Such connections, which future search explicitly fosters, enrich our health and represent a deep well of protection from stresses and adversity. Indeed, we can say with confidence that loving human relationships are to health and well-being what location is to real estate.

Future search makes it easier for such bonds to form and grow throughout the life cycle. For children, youth, and families, future search fosters optimal conditions for education and child care to provide nurturing, safe environments; for medical, mental, and dental care to engage with families in a spirit of affirmation and partnership; and for programs like Head Start to enhance that trust between provider and client that is so central to good outcomes. Humane systems are in alignment with each other. Such systems invest heavily in stocks of social capital—that is, they encourage formal and informal social support networks, civic engagement, and a heightened sense of community, all of which yield long-term gains for communities and for society as a whole. (Social capital refers to the processes between people that establish networks, norms, and social trust, and that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit and improved health.)

Future search at its best results in systems that enable us to be more connected with each other, to listen more deeply to and respect each other's voices, and to invest wisely in stocks of social capital that are the foundation for a thriving democracy. Such results are far-reaching. They include stronger resistance to infectious and chronic diseases, increased probability of surviving a heart attack, and greater protection from the stresses of poverty and the risk for child abuse and other forms of interpersonal violence.

Ultimately, future search holds the promise of growing and sustaining the civic engagement and open, nonsecretive flow of information that is essential to a real democracy. In this time and this moment, the stakes couldn't be higher. Our ability to sustain government that is for the people, by the people, and of the people rides on this. Such is the global significance of the future search story. FS

FROM THE LISTSERVE

Hashing Out an ICT Education Policy in Zanzibar

Zanzibar—22 March 2006. In the midst of a lush coconut grove overlooking an endless white beach and the azure Indian Ocean, a future search conference is in session. Its aim? To develop an Information Communication and Technology (ICT) policy for education in Zanzibar.

Attended by more than 60 participants—including high school students, government officials, international donors, ICT specialists, and other stakeholders—the conference is sponsored by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and facilitated by Han Rakels and Tamara Sutila.

In Zanzibar, less than a fifth of the archipelago's 254 primary and secondary schools have computers. Those that do have ICT facilities have only one or two computers and usually use them for administration and record keeping. This was found by a recent baseline survey of the use of ICT in education in Zanzibar conducted by the Ministry of Education with support from SIDA. The same assessment revealed that only 3.5% of teachers were ICT literate. More than 70% of schools in Zanzibar do not have electricity.

"We have to look at the potential of using ICT in reaching as many people as possible—those in schools and out-of-school…," said the Minister of Education in his opening speech. "The use of distance learning is one among the areas of immense interest to my ministry."

The conference, titled "The Future of ICT in Education in Zanzibar," aims to raise awareness of the current ICT situation, create a shared vision of what ICT in education in Zanzibar would look like and how it would be implemented and monitored, and to determine the immediate next steps and commitments needed to develop an innovative policy. [The conference closed on 23 March 2006.]

"I think this workshop is taking place timely when the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training is preparing a new education development programme," said Mr. Nils Jensen, speaking on behalf of the Swedish Ambassador. "There is political will to take the opportunities presenting themselves to the sector, as well as to the society in general."

—Han Rakels and Tamara Sutila

FROM THE LISTSERVE

Nancy [Polend],* Is there any way neophytes can get some experience in the Prosperous Communities, Prosperous Nation initiative? Let me know your thoughts.

—Chris Kingsbery

Chris (and other "neophytes"),*

From one neophyte to another, I have a few thoughts; others may have some ideas as well. Beware what you ask for....

I think of "getting experience" broadly. That is, experience including, but in addition to future search facilitation experience. So the ideas I offer are from that broader perspective….

1. ***Future search facilitation experience*:** As always, pairing up with experienced facilitators is the best way to get experience. This sounds so easy, but all of us who want to do this know it's a bit more involved than that. After all, there has to be a client and a project before any of us can get any experience (go figure). I also do not have the experience necessary to be a facilitator in these national projects. For me, that isn't an issue because I would rather focus on getting PCPN off the ground and feeding lots of paid projects into the Network. If I were interested in facilitation, I guess I would go out and get a client for a future search, then recruit an experienced person into the project. Of course, it works the other way, too, where the experienced person brings the project and recruits lesser-experienced folks.

2. *Documenter experience*: For this National Ministries project, we're not at the point yet that it makes sense to assemble documenter teams, but that point will come (if not with this client, with another). If this client decides to move past "preparation" and into implementation (e.g., the local future searches), we will need to assemble documenter teams just as we are just beginning to assemble preliminary facilitator teams. So be on the lookout for those opportunities, as they come along.

BTW: Eventually, when the reality of national clients presents us with the opportunity, we intend to build cohesive teams of facilitators, documenters, and FSN staff to work off the same page, while still retaining what we do best locally. That is, we want to establish some level of consistency among local conferences, supporting communities as we always do, while at the same time feeding a larger, cohesive national movement. We hope to figure out a "ladder" that feeds experienced documenters into the co-facilitator role, which feeds them into the lead facilitator role. These are things the Network has wanted to do for a while, and though we can't guarantee that the PCPN program will deliver the opportunity to make it a reality, we can certainly hold it as an intention as we go along.

3. *Sponsor and community recruitment*: We need two things to make PCPN a reality: communities that want to address poverty and the sponsors to fund them and the infrastructure needed to tie it all together as a national program. So gaining experience in finding people and organizations that are interested and able to sponsor multiple communities to participate in PCPN is also a possibility. This is an area in which I am getting quite a bit of experience myself, and it makes my hair hurt. There are a few FSN folks actively doing this kind of thing, and one of these days their efforts will bring the Network, PCPN, and communities good things.

4. *Community champion*: Experiencing a FS as a planning team member and participant seems to me a good way to gain experience. For PCPN initiatives, if there are ways we can point local sponsors to folks in the Network who want to be involved in this way, we will certainly try from this end. If you see that a community in your area is one that ends up participating, and you want to be involved, yell! Otherwise, perhaps you can get a planning team together about some other issue you care about and see whether you can get a future search of some sort going in your community.

5. *PCPN "ambassador"*: Gaining experience in communicating the virtues of future search, the importance of whole-system planning and action to create prosperous conditions for ALL, and the way PCPN brings it all together to create something that hasn't been done before on a national scale to address poverty is another hard, but rewarding endeavor.

While I realize you probably were looking for facilitation experience, these last three things are actually critical in creating more of the facilitation opportunities you and others are looking for. It is all connected. The reality is that, though promising, PCPN is 90% unrealized potential right now....we are just getting started. As they say, the rest is still unwritten.

Thanks, Chris. Take care.

—Nancy Polend

*Program Director, Prosperous Communities, Prosperous Nation (PCPN), A Future Search Network Special Program. Visit *www.future-search.net/prosperouscommunities/* to find out more about PCPN, an exciting new national initiative to build prosperity for all and reduce poverty.

FSN Calendar

There is no formal deadline for submissions to *FutureSearching*. It will be published periodically after enough submissions have been received. Please e-mail all submissions to Larry Porter, *Srchnews@san.rr.com*.

2007 Public Workshops

Managing a Future Search:

June 3-6, 2007
Gregg Conference Center at the American College
Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania
Contact Jennifer Neumer 800-951-6333 or FSN@futuresearch.net

August 26-29, 2007
Stockholm, Sweden
Contact Drusilla Copeland at Drusilla@andolin.com

Leading Meetings That Matter: An Advanced Facilitation Workshop

August 30-September 1, 2007
Stockholm, Sweden
Contact Drusilla Copeland at Drusilla@andolin.com

October 14-16, 2007
Gregg Conference Center at the American College
Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania
Contact Jennifer Newmer, 800-951-6333 or FSN@futuresearch.net

November 4-6, 2007
Johannesburg, South Africa
Contact John Goss at jgoss@iafrica.com

2007 Learning Exchange

November 7-10, 2007
South Africa
Contact John Goss at jgoss@iafrica.com

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