



Transcultural Perspectives on the Future

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Transcultural Perspectives on the Future

Introduction and Summary

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Center for Transcultural Foresight, Inc.

Series Objectives

- Explore how increasing cross-cultural interaction will shape your everyday life
 - *YOUR* workday and disposable time
 - *YOUR* sense of identity
 - What *YOU* value
 - *YOUR* structuring institutions
 - *YOUR* notions of fulfillment, gratification, and happiness
- Share wisdom that can be helpful for meeting the challenges of the future
 - Wisdom from various nations, peoples, and cultures of the present and past

*Asks questions not
being asked elsewhere!*

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It started here!

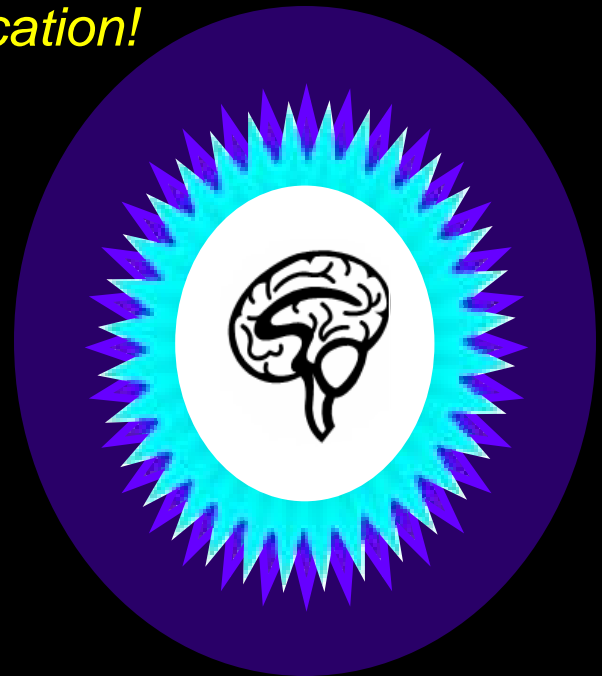


FUTUREtakes transcultural thematic issue series

What more will YOU *gain?*

- Appreciation of diverse cultural perspectives
 - *Complementary thinking skills*
 - *Personal and career enrichment!*
- Ability to recognize and think beyond cultural “event horizons”
 - *True diversity – the next frontier in education!*

Cultures of the present and past offer useful counterpoints that can uncover hidden assumptions and overlooked futures!



Mandate

- Increased cross-flow among diverse cultures; “exports” and “imports”
 - *Impacts on how YOU will live, work, think, aspire, and interact!*
- Culture clashes, deculturation, and loss of ways of life
- The complex challenges presented by “the future”
 - *Challenges requiring answers that are beyond the capability of a single nation, people, or culture to provide*

The imperative to share cross-cultural perspectives has never been greater!

Workday Contrasts

- Europe
 - More vacation days (several countries) than are generally common in other parts of the world
 - Traditional limits on store hours (rationale: more family time)
 - Long tradition of security and the social contract
- US
 - Strong tradition of vibrancy, liberty, and opportunity
 - Considerable emphasis on work and career
 - Working lunch, eat-at-your-desk, eat-while-you-drive, and “uncompensated overtime” more common
- Asia
 - Tradition of dinner with work colleagues, followed by a return to work (in some nations)
- Latin America and parts of Southwest Asia (Middle East)
 - Siesta tradition (less prevalent now)

Workday Contrast Implications

- Which working lifestyle will prevail in *YOUR* part of the world several years from now?
- With what impacts to
 - Health and well being (and by implication, healthcare costs)?
 - Family life, including parenting?
 - Life expectancies?
 - Leisure activities?
 - Volunteerism?
 - *On which professional organizations such as our own depend?*



Is the “chronologically challenged” society being exported elsewhere?

Asia – “West” Contrasts

- Time horizon – incremental, and/or quarterly earnings statement vs. long-term
 - Concepts of time
 - Implications to foresight thinking and education
- Individuality and self-reliance vs. family and group-oriented cultures?
- Sacrifice and long-range planning vs. instant gratification?
 - Impacts on business and politics
 - *Note: a spirit of sacrifice and gratification deferment characterized the early days of the US also*

*Your culture influences your thinking patterns,
which shape how YOU experience the world!*

More Asia – “West” Contrasts

- Thinking patterns – holistic vs. reductionist, extending to diverse areas: healthcare, philosophy, religion, warfare, politics
 - Example: health and wellness – underlying cause mitigation vs. “silver bullet” approach
 - Example: binary, “either-or” thinking that is prevalent in some parts of the world
- Basis of identity – group vs. individual

The comparator “vs.” itself represents either-or thinking!

Basis of Identity – Implications

- Which “neotribes” will prevail in your part of the world?
 - Extended family, ethnicity?
 - Community, country?
 - Profession?
 - Common question when people meet: *“What do you do?”*
 - Collegiate equivalent, *“What are you majoring in?”*
 - Socioeconomic class?
 - Religion?
 - Political affiliation or cause?
 - Social network?
- Will there be more of a tendency to identify with smaller groups (“fission”) or with larger groups (“fusion”)?

Counterpoint-based identity: you know who you are in terms of people who are dissimilar to you!

Perspectives of Native Peoples

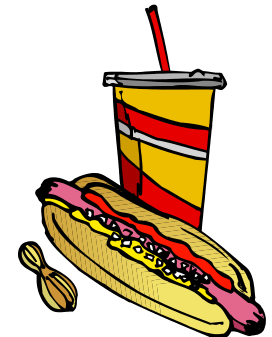
- Concepts of time – *and of the future!*
 - Cyclic, “eternal now,” vs. linear
 - Some Native languages do not conjugate verbs by time
 - *Imagine translating your everyday conversations to one of these languages!*
 - Languages influence thinking patterns; which languages face extinction?
 - “Natural clocks,” vs. alarm clock – commute culture
- Relationship with nature
 - Coexistence with, vs. dominion over
 - More holistic
- Pace of life – traditionally slower



There is a resurgence of interest in various traditions of times past.

Cultural “Exports” and “Imports”

- From Asia to US
 - Religion, philosophy – supporting individual enrichment
 - Health and wellness philosophies and concepts – leading to complementary therapies
 - Martial arts and some other sports
- From US to other regions
 - Business culture, in general
 - Diversion and entertainment (e.g., TV game shows)
 - US sports
 - Fast food infrastructure (to support fast-paced life?)
 - Including baseball stadium food to Japan!



Other factors also influence how people will live, work, and think; however, cultural factors can have a substantial impact.

Deculturation ...

- Loss of ways of life
 - Native and Aboriginal peoples (worldwide)
 - Occupations – manufacturing, family farming, customer service, etc.
 - Obsolescence, outsourcing, automation
 - Not entirely culture-driven, but can impact value systems
 - Demise of a career for life – *not exactly new*
 - Early industrial US, contemporary Japan – more common to spend entire career at a single company

... and Assimilation

- Impact of cross-cultural interactions, plus other factors
 - “Salad bowl”?
 - Demise of controlling majorities?
 - Plurality of minorities (cultures, religions, values, etc.) interacting compatibly?
 - Choice of “operating systems” under which to live?
 - Cultural clashes?
 - “Melting pot” leading to a new monolithic culture – e.g., working and business culture?
 - “No place to hide” for those who cannot adapt?



Overarching Questions

- Which present-day lifestyle options will continue to be possible, and what new ones will emerge?
 - Which lifestyle options will become extinct?
- And, what is the future of cultural diversity itself?
 - Choice of “operating systems” under which to live?
 - OR, monolithic world with “no place to hide” for those who cannot adapt?

For example, how will people accustomed to a slower paced life adapt to a faster paced one?

Other Key Questions

- Who will be the “MVPs” – the most valued professions and personality types, in your part of the world?
- What new countercultures may arise in your part of the world, or elsewhere, and what will they value?
- In what ways do different peoples view “the future”?

There are many more questions that cannot be addressed in a single session.

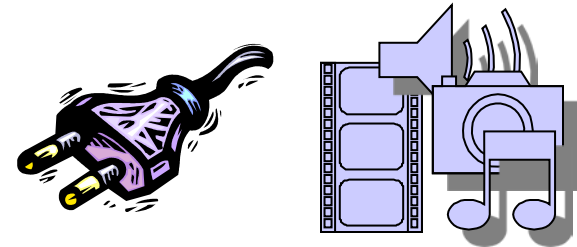
Example 1: Business Culture Contrasts

- Downtime aversion, workaholic ways vs. balanced lifestyles
- Disposable workers and worker mobility, vs. mutual loyalty and social contract
- Risk-taking vs. risk aversion
 - Or the “S-curve” business model, risk-taking followed by risk aversion
- Quick-turn results and lowest bidder vs. relationship-based business
- Incrementalism vs. long-term thinking
 - Quarterly earnings statement mindset
 - Relationship with typical tenures of CEOs and political officeholders
- Ways in which leaders emerge
 - In parts of Asia, *“The nail that stands above the rest is the first to be hammered down”* – in contrast with some Western cultures

“Salad bowl,” “melting pot,” or something else?

Example 2: “Plug and Play” Aid Packages

- Well intended
- Favorable results
 - Empowering people, lifting them from poverty, alleviating misery, offering hope
- BUT, who defines prosperity?
 - Level of prosperity?
 - Satisfaction of basic needs?
 - Comfortable lifestyles?
 - Consumerist economy based on cycle of creating and satiating discontent?
 - Type of economy – growth vs. steady-state?
 - Relationship between economy and nature?



Panelists

Stephen Aguilar-Millan, United Kingdom

Alphan Manas, Turkey

Tony Au, Hong Kong, China

Mohan Tikku, India

Dave Stein, USA

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panelist presentations

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WRAPUP

Additional Information

- <http://www.futuretakes.org/ThematicIssue.htm>
- <http://www.futuretakes.org/CulturalDescriptors.htm>
- <http://www.futuretakes.org/ThematicIssueTopics.htm>

Next Steps

- This year ... five FUTURE*takes* editors

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- This year ... five FUTURE*takes* editors
- Next year ... *YOU!*
 - To participate, write to info@futuretakes.org.

Thoughts for 2011

“To best prepare for the future, we must arm ourselves with the wisdom from diverse nations, peoples, and cultures of the present and past.”

– FUTURE*takes*

“One should challenge present assumptions and ask the questions that no one had thought to ask.”

– *Tim Mack, President, World Future Society*

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