

**"Cincinnati and the World
at the Dawn of 2007"
Report of a Listening Post
held on 10th January**



Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

Part 1. THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

In this part of the Listening Post participants were invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experience in their various social roles. This part was concerned with what might be called 'the stuff of people's everyday lives' that related to the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants.

For the first hour attendees shared their concerns: National Health Care, global safety, escalation of Iraq war, use of language in mass media, poverty, social impact of war, lack of community, sense making, polarization, splitting, global hopelessness of children, greed, widening gap between have and have nots, too busy for thoughtful reflection, everything is for sell, global warming, war on drugs, shame/grief - how to manage loss, capital punishment, medicating kids, scorn for cross cultural expertise, use of empire to refer to U.S., anti-Semitism, fundamentalism, disparaging women, increased technology leading to decreased connections, globalization, isolation by social class, how we are raising boys leads to lack of male identity, prisons, frustration with political leadership, self alienation of females, intellectualism is negative, limitation of public education, eroticizing of pop culture, violence, children pressed to grow up too fast, obesity, accelerated change, aging population, materialism/loss of inner life, dumbing down, compromising science, genetic engineering/stem cell research, the origin of Mother's Day as a peace movement/ now mostly a commercial event, horror management, trivializing death, shock less society, cross fertilization effects of travel, lady luck/casino culture, continuing local and national Katrina effects, entertainment/escapism, bowling alone, personal and global peace, limited involvement with physical world, care of elderly /both for the older person and care givers, justice/responsibility, shooters/new psycho pathetic behavior, dehumanization, lack of morals, vigilantes (both positive and negative aspects) and immigration. The content and tone were depressing, which may have been related to fact that the recent election, with its possibility of change, was not mentioned.

Part 2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES

In Part 2 the aim was to collectively identify the major themes emerging from Part 1. For a half hour participants worked in 3 small groups to identify major themes. One group noted how poverty, war and natural disasters lead to externalization and though we want connectivity we more often are detached which results in a sense of hopelessness and loss. A second group spoke about loss of personal responsibility, values, morals, ethics and lack of respect for others plus mistrust of government, imbalance of

power, and the effects of technology all leading to desensitization and isolation. The third group discussed loss of identity, being out of control, feeling overwhelmed, solitary pursuits (I Pod), threats of death and the frustrated wish for maternal caring leading to isolation of people and the country.

Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION

In this part of the Listening Post the members were working with the information resulting from Parts 1 & 2, with a view to collectively identifying the underlying dynamics both conscious and unconscious that may be predominant at the time; and, developing hypotheses as to why they might be occurring at that moment. Here the members were working more with what might be called their 'psycho' or 'internal' world. Their collective ideas and ways of thinking that both determine how they perceive the external realities and shape their actions towards them. For one hour members worked on Analysis and Hypothesis formation.

Analysis and Hypothesis 1

because of a lack of trust in the government and an imbalance of power people feel overwhelmed

Analysis:

As one participant said "I feel exhausted, overwhelmed and disconnected". Our Government is in an endless war overseas and is still not doing an effective job in the wake of Katrina and in public education. We do not seem to learn from the past. Greek wars thousands of years ago lead to the disintegration of civil society. We are not told the truth. Our government adopts the line "what we do is right". But the popular movie "Cold Mountain" and the treatment of Iraq prisoners raise the question of our role in these conflicts and us as torturers. During WW1 there was a Xmas break from fighting organized by soldiers on both sides, officers heard of it and forced them back to endless fighting over a few hundred yards. President Bush was addressing the nation about sending more troops to Iraq as we meet. Maybe our government likes war. We internalize, feel guilty and do not strongly resist these negative factors in our communities and nation. The disintegration of society leads to individual retreat to defend against feelings of hopelessness. As part of the Boomer Generation we have not overcome the effects of drugs and sex from the 1960s and 1970s. Need to develop a greater sense of personal responsibility. We are not taking care of our own people (aging population, poverty, homelessness, 40 million uninsured, schools in disrepair, etc).

Hypothesis:

There is a marked loss of community. It has been brought about by global; national and local economic, political, religious and military developments that have made us feel apathetic. To adapt we need to overcome feelings of disconnectedness. It is possible for one to connect, by voting, participating in the political process, engage in the local community, which should lead to a more thoughtful, less depressed society.

Analysis and Hypothesis 2

because things seem to be out of control we are in a dependent state and psychologically wish for more maternal care

Analysis:

Women participants noted that the original Mother's Day was an anti war celebration. There is increased disrespect and violence towards women. Maybe if we had a draft the war would be brought home to middle class professionals like us. This war lacks morals, there is little empathy for the "other". The president acts as if he is entitled to do whatever because he is right. There is also a lack of nurturing in the family and the larger society. Parents are often dysfunctional, they do not say NO to their child. Therefore students and younger workers feel entitled. There is a generation gap that needs to be addressed so employees and employers, teachers and students, young and old can listen, understand and cooperate to a greater extent than currently. There is a loss of spirit. Society needs to see sex as a gift not a weapon. We are not taking care of each other. In a dependent state we split the world into good and bad. But with the end of the cold war there are not two sides but many sides. Splitting in a Kleinian sense is an understandable defense but too simple a stance in helping to address these complex dynamics.

Hypothesis:

Because the world seems chaotic society is in a dependent state. The entitled president doesn't take into account how his acts affect others. We therefore split by wanting maternal care and continuing to aggress against women on a worldwide level. One suggestion is that a critical mass needs to acknowledge that the good maternal care and the bad paternal aggression exist in all of us. Then the developmental task is to integrate both the yin and yang in a more sophisticated manner so we can share a more productive society and world.

Analysis and Hypothesis 3

desensitization leads to an increase in feelings of vulnerability

Analysis:

People feel exposed and threatened by nature, government, violence in our society and threats from abroad. The WTC is still a big hole in the ground; because of financial in fighting very little progress has been made making citizens feel helpless, victimized, discounted and devalued. There is disappointment with technology; instead of PC bringing us together it often creates a greater sense of distance and solitary behavior (I Pod). Managed care means you have to manage your own care you cannot count on the health care system. Desensitization involves violence, drugs, poverty, and class differences, as well as heavy gambling, drinking and depersonalized sex. The lack of respect for others draws people apart and makes one feel even more vulnerable.

Hypothesis:

Leadership at the national and local level has failed to address important issues, such as war, New Orleans, and poverty. Complex dynamics have lead to withdrawal instead of engagement. By turning to entertainment, gambling and other distractions as a way of coping with feelings of vulnerability and weakness we divorce ourselves from others

instead of relating to change these dynamics. For instance short-term stock market gains may have negative consequences for future generations. The increasing gap between the upper and lower classes will hurt our children. Our dependency on China, which holds our paper, limits how we behave in a global economy and we feel weak and less like a world leader. An idea is that looking within; sharing these concerns and relating to others can change vulnerability to collective actions and a greater sense of participation as a citizen of the world to overcome desensitization, isolation and the wish for a simpler time.

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