

Heliogram

Solutions to strengthen people and communities

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Creating Community Change

Nancy and Christina sat down in early 2000 to set goals for our work together at Heliotrope. We discussed our desire to continue exploring various models and theories of social change and community transformation. In October of 2000, we invited a small group of colleagues to join us for a half-day learning session about working on deeper level change for children, youth, families and communities. Each person led a discussion on a chosen topic, giving us some new ideas and inspiration for our work.

In this issue of the *Heliogram* we share an overview of our learnings about new models and theories for change. We describe some of the innovative change efforts in which we are involved professionally and personally. We are always interested in hearing from *you*. Let us know of other change ideas you are exploring or give us your feedback on the ideas in this issue. **H**

heliotrope 1. A flower that turns to face the sun. 2. An instrument for making long-term observations. 3. A purple that is bluer and stronger than cobalt violet.

Community Change Concept The Tipping Point

One way to think about social change is to think about it as an epidemic. Both share the characteristics of being contagious, of little changes resulting in big effects, and having transformation happen not gradually, but at one dramatic moment. The name given to that one dramatic change all at once is the *Tipping Point*. Malcolm Gladwell's book by that name (Little, Brown & Company, 2000; \$24.95) has some intriguing ideas for those interested in social change. At our learning session, Nancy and Christina presented some of the key principles from the book and everyone tested them with an example from their work.

The Tipping Point is designed to answer two key questions:

- Why is it that some ideas or behaviors or products start epidemics and others don't?
- What can we do to deliberately start and control positive epidemics of our own?

The characteristics of an epidemic are in many ways counterintuitive to what our rational minds may tell us. We are socialized to believe that cause and effect

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The Tipping Point

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should be roughly in proportion to one another, so it is hard for us to believe that little changes can have big effects. Yet sometimes, big changes happen very quickly once some type of critical mass is reached – such as when enough people got a fax or cell phone so that it made sense for everyone to have one.

Epidemics, says Gladwell, follow a number of rules that are applicable to social change efforts:

1. Law of the Few: In a given process, some people matter more than others; for epidemics, a tiny proportion of people do the majority of the work.

The success of any kind of social epidemic is dependent on the involvement of people with a particular and rare set of social gifts. Gladwell calls them “Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen.” For example, Paul Revere is cited as the quintessential Connector, whose midnight ride was successful not only because he had news to share, but because he was an intensely social person with relationships and credibility among people in different segments of his community. Engaging these types of people to spread an epidemic of social change is a powerful strategy.

2. Stickiness: The Stickiness Factor says that there are specific ways of making a contagious message memorable; and there are relatively simple changes in the presentation and structuring of information that can make a big difference in how much of an impact it makes. The creators of Sesame Street discovered that by making small but critical adjustments in how they presented ideas to preschoolers, they could overcome television’s weakness as a teaching tool and make what

Heliotrope: Who We Are

Heliotrope seeds positive change by providing planning, consulting, training, facilitation, writing, and coaching services to human and community development projects. We bring a strength-based approach to all of our work on behalf of local and state governments, non-profit organizations, neighborhoods, foundations and funders, local and national initiatives and collaborative groups.

Heliotrope staff include founder Nancy Ashley and Consulting Assistant Christina Malecka.

they had to say memorable. Sesame Street succeeded because it learned how to make television sticky.

3. Power of Context: Epidemics are strongly influenced by people’s situation – by the circumstances and conditions and particulars of the environments in which they operate. The rule of context is that it matters tremendously in how people choose to behave. For example, the lesson of the murder of Kitty Genovese is not that no one called police despite the fact that 38 people heard her scream; it’s that no one called because 38 people heard her scream – when people are in a group, responsibility is diffused and they assume someone else will make the call or because no one is acting, there really isn’t any problem.

The “broken windows” theory is an epidemic theory of crime. It says that crime is contagious – that it can start with a broken window and spread to an entire community. The broken windows theory and the

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The Tipping Point

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power of context are one and the same. They are both based on the premise that an epidemic can be reversed, can be tipped, by tinkering with the smallest details of the immediate environment. That is quite a radical idea.

Even characteristics like honesty and compassion are not fundamental traits; they are situational. Researchers observed the behavior of seminarians when passing an injured person; their response differed dramatically when the priests were told they were late to a meeting versus when they were told they had plenty of time to arrive at the meeting. When it comes to interpreting other people's behavior, human beings invariably make the mistake of overestimating the importance of fundamental character traits and underestimating the importance of situation and context.

Conclusion/Lessons We Can Use

- Starting epidemics requires concentrating resources on a few key areas. If you are interested in starting a word-of-mouth campaign, your resources should be concentrated on Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen.
- The world – much as we want it to – does not accord with our intuition. To make sense of social epidemics, we must first understand that human communication has its own set of very unusual and counterintuitive rules. People can radically transform their behavior or beliefs in the face of the right kind of impetus.
- In the end, tipping points are a reaffirmation of the potential for change and the power of intelligent action. With the slightest push – in just the right place – important beliefs and behaviors can be tipped. **H**

Community Change Concept Journey Mapping

Deborah Fisher, a Bellevue writer and consultant, brought the topic of “Journey Mapping” to our October learning session.

Based on the research of Barry M. Kibel, Ph.D., Journey Mapping (also called Outcome Engineering) is a system “that combines planning, management and evaluation for initiatives that aim to promote fundamental and sustained change in the lives of individuals, families, groups, organizations, or communities.” (Barry Kibel, *Outcome Engineering Toolbox*; Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, 2000) Dr. Kibel's model is too complex to share in detail here, but a free copy of his *Outcome Engineering Toolbox* is available at: <http://www.pire.org/outcome-engineering/OEToolbox.PDF>.

Journey Mapping uses journal-keeping by staff, clients and other change agents or stakeholders to highlight key changes in individuals or groups, as well as the role played by an initiative to bring about those changes. To capture results, journal entries are cross-referenced (by use of an Internet tool) with measurable benchmarks set for the initiative. This Internet tool captures stories *and* maps progress towards benchmarks through numerical scores, capturing both quantitative and qualitative data, and offering a rich and informative picture of the overall change process.

The journey of an individual, organization or community is documented and reported in a unique narrative format based on the literary concept of the hero's journey inspired by Joseph Campbell's classic work, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Kibel agrees with Joseph Campbell that all heroes and heroines, traveling alone or in groups, appear to follow a similar archetypical journey. The maps and associated narratives generated by a journey mapping process follow a sequence that tells the story of the initial call for change, steps taken to prepare for change, obstacles encountered on the journey towards transformation, steps taken to sustain change, and efforts to help other individuals or systems change.

Journey Mapping, says Kibel, has the potential to “enable initiatives to present their often complex work in rich, narrative forms; to track, gauge, and report progress and growth of all key participants; to engage in productive self-reflection; and to pinpoint areas ripe for improvement as well as the types of creative actions most likely to foster these improvements.” **H**

(A footnote: A form of Kibel's work is being used in the systems reform evaluation of the Seattle SafeFutures project, partly at the urging of Heliotrope.)

Community Change Concept

Cultural Creatives

Seattle consultant Mary Jane Marcus introduced us to the phenomenon known as “Cultural Creatives.” According to sociologist Paul Ray and psychologist Sherry Anderson, these are people whose core values include a deep concern for human rights, creating community and ecological sustainability. These people have been labeled “Cultural Creatives,” and they represent what may well be a significant cultural shift.

Some interests of Cultural Creatives include:

- Ecological sustainability
- Travel, meeting people from other cultures and concern that the “global economy” may not benefit everyone in the world.
- Women’s issues
- Alternative healthcare
- Spirituality
- Social conscience and social optimism
- Desire authenticity
- Prefer print and radio media over television
- Natural products and values-based purchasing.
- Arts and culture

Sound like anyone you know? And if the estimates are correct, and there are 50 million Cultural Creatives in the US alone, why have we not seen more of a cultural transformation? In the article “A Culture Gets Creative” in the Winter 2001 issue of *YES! A Journal of Positive Futures*, Ray and Anderson offer some explanations for why Cultural Creatives are not as visible as we would expect. One reason is cynicism about national politics. Cultural Creatives tend to be activists on the local community level, but don’t sense they can have any impact nationally where they feel influence is bought and sold. Another reason is the lack of Cultural Creative representation in the media and popular culture. People erroneously think that no one else shares their interests or that they are on the “fringe” of society, when in reality, they are a significant sector of the country.

In the article, Paul Ray asks the question, “What if Cultural Creatives knew that they had lots of

company? What if they were aware of themselves?” He goes on to say, “the way we’ll invent the future is with each other, in conversations about what’s possible and what kind of world we want... The hallmark of this profound culture shift is going to be reinventing practically every institution of society from the ground up. And that is not only possible, it is rather likely.”

If Ray and Anderson’s theories are true, those of us working on social change need to find ways to tap into this “hidden community” of people who are deeply committed to fellowship, social responsibility and sustainability. We need to look for change agents at local community centers, food co-ops, community playhouses and galleries, independent bookstores and natural health clinics as well as in national, state and local government and non-profits.

For more information on Cultural Creatives, see the web site at www.ilovethisplace.com/eco/misc/culturalcreatives.html. **H**

Christina Joins Heliotrope Full-Time

On November 1, 2000, Consulting Assistant Christina Malecka more than doubled her contribution to Heliotrope when she began working full-time. In addition to taking care of the administrative needs of a small business, Christina brings her organizational planning, community organizing, creative and analytical skills to our clients. In the past year, Christina has used her talent for distilling copious amounts of data and information into a user-friendly format for the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s *Making Connections* Initiative, New Beginnings for Battered Women and Their Children, School’s Out Consortium and others.

Nancy and Christina are excited to be increasing Heliotrope’s capacity and share a strong commitment to a strengths-based approach to community change.

Community Change Concept

Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods To Rebuild Community

Many of us have been working personally and professionally for years as part of programs, initiatives, or systems change efforts. Lisbeth Schorr, in her book *Common Purpose* (Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1997), argues that it is time to bring together disparate strategies around specific neighborhoods. She proposes that neighborhood initiatives combine physical and economic development with service and education reform – and that both bottom-up and top-down approaches are needed. This more comprehensive approach is seldom used, often because people rarely connect across these fields. Tracy Butler, who worked with the Seattle SafeFutures project and is now doing consulting work, reviewed and summarized some of the key points of *Common Purpose* for our learning session in October.

Elements of Successful Community Rebuilding Initiatives

Schorr suggests there are four essential elements of rebuilding neighborhoods, most of which require us to shift our thinking and roles. She says that successful initiatives:

1. Combine action in the economic, service, education, physical development and community building domains.
2. Rely on a community's own resources and strengths as the foundation for designing change initiatives.
3. Draw extensively on outside resources, including public and private funds, professional expertise and new partnerships that bring clout and influence.
4. Are designed and operated on the basis of one or more plausible theories of change.

Attributes of Highly Effective Programs

Schorr provides some specific guidance for effective programs, along with noting how seldom existing programs meet all of these criteria. She argues that we could greatly enhance the effectiveness of our

investments in strengthening families by following these guidelines.

Effective programs:

1. Are comprehensive, flexible, responsive and persevering,
2. See children in the context of their families,
3. Deal with families as parts of neighborhoods and communities,
4. Have a long-term, preventive orientation, a clear mission, and continue to evolve over time,
5. Are well managed by competent and committed individuals with clearly identifiable skills,
6. Train and support their staff to provide high-quality, responsive services, and
7. Operate in settings that encourage practitioners to build strong relationships based on mutual trust and respect.

Schorr apparently read *The Tipping Point* (see story on the front cover), as she advocates that those seeking true, lasting community change create an intervention that operates at a high enough level of intensity and with a broad enough scope to “tip a neighborhood toward becoming functional.” **H**

(A footnote: Many of the principles proposed by Ms. Schorr are integrated in the Making Connections initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, for which Heliotrope is providing some consulting services. See article on page 7.)

“We should invest in [at-risk] kids,” we’re told, “because it will be more expensive not to. Why does our natural compassion or religious inclination need to find a surrogate in dollar savings...? Why not give these kids the best we have because we are a wealthy nation and they’re children and deserve to have some fun while they’re still less than four feet high?...?”

— Jonathon Kozol
(from an article in the May 22, 2000 issue of *The Nation* about Kozol’s new book, “Ordinary Resurrections.”)

Community Change Concept

Keeping Cultural Competence at the Forefront of Social Change

When working for social change, we must constantly consider that people's experiences vary greatly depending on how they have been affected by our culture's many biases and power inequities. It is especially important to be aware that our experiences may be very different if we are part of a group that is afforded more institutional privilege because of our class background, our gender, the color of our skin, our sexual orientation, our physical ability, or any number of factors. In order to work in a truly transformative way, we must acquire cultural competence, and create safe spaces for *everyone's* voice and experience.

We liked the following definitions as a fairly comprehensive set of considerations for culturally competent social change work. Although the term "cultural competence" is often associated with race or ethnicity, it should carry a much broader connotation. Each factor, of course, must be considered in the context of individual experience. An African American lesbian, for example, is tied to, and sometimes torn between, communities of color, gender, and sexual orientation, and may have experienced different forms of racist, sexist, and homophobic attitudes in each.

- **Ethnic/Racial Background:** People from different racial backgrounds have diverse perspectives, customs, values and social upbringing. Because of the historically dominant nature of the majority culture, many people have little direct exposure to a range of racial cultures.
- **New Immigrant Socialization.** Relocating to a new country or region of the world requires adapting to new sights, sounds, and customs. This process is typically different for each generation of a family, with young people often adapting more quickly to the new culture.
- **Gender Culturalization:** The majority culture in most parts of the world is the patriarchy, where male "qualities" are more valued and men are provided access to greater opportunity.
- **Socioeconomic/Educational Status:** A person's socioeconomic status can be a major factor in their development as it relates to access to opportunity,

social status, the ability to meet primary survival needs (food, clothing, shelter), and the messages they receive about what they can hope to attain.

- **Sexual Orientation:** The majority culture sanctions heterosexual behavior as the norm. Homosexuals and bisexuals, therefore, have been forced to keep their sexual orientation private, often out of fear, and those struggling with other gender identity issues face similar isolation.
- **Physical Capacity:** The majority culture has until recently created systems and structures primarily suited for those with full physical capacity, and has devalued people without such capacity.
- **Age/Generational:** Each generation has its own distinct culture, and values, based on the time they were born, lived as children, and transitioned to adulthood. Further, the division between youth, adults, and the elderly has become more pronounced due to family relocations and breakdowns in intergenerational activities.
- **Spirituality/Religious Beliefs:** There are numerous differing religions, both formal and informal, that guide people's lives. Each has its own distinct traditions and belief systems.
- **Regional Perspectives:** The words, customs, etc., particular to a specific region of a country or the world. Each corner of the world, and even the regions within a country, has traditions, rites of passage, learning experiences, and customs that are unique. **H**

Adapted from A Guide to Enhancing the Cultural Competence of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs (1994). USDHHS, Admin. for Children and Families, Admin. on Children, Youth and Families, Families and Youth Services Bureau. Washington, DC.

New E-mail Addresses

Nancy and Christina have new e-mail addresses. You can now reach Christina at christina@beliotropeseattle.com and Nancy at nancyashley@beliotropeseattle.com. Nancy's older address, nancyashley@balcyon.com is still in effect, but we will be canceling it later this year. Please update your records and address books!

Heliotrope Part of Exciting Community Change Efforts

Heliotrope is privileged to contribute to several projects seeking deep community change. We have the opportunity to work with bold, creative and forward-thinking leaders who share our mission of finding solutions to strengthen people and communities.

Transforming Youth-Serving Systems

Reinvesting in Youth is an unprecedented effort in the Seattle/King County area to transform the current juvenile justice and youth-serving systems. The project builds on current research and public views valuing preventive and early approaches over costly, after-the-fact responses. It seeks smarter, more effective ways to use public resources, while continuing to protect public safety.

Today our systems funnel most public funds into expensive, punitive “deep-end” measures aimed at a handful of youth. Sixty percent of non-education, non-health care public funds spent for youth ages 12-18 in King County is spent in the juvenile justice system, which serves fewer than 6% of the community’s youth. Voters and elected officials want a clear and compelling roadmap to a higher return on investments in young people: stop problems before they start through a combination of “front end” targeted early intervention, prevention and programming that nurtures happy, stable kids. Heliotrope was the project manager for the feasibility study completed early this year which grew out of our systems reform work for the Seattle SafeFutures project.

Engaging Adults in Caring Relationships with Kids

We are continuing our five-year involvement with the Seattle *It’s About Time for Kids* initiative, designed to inspire and engage all adults and community institutions to help youth succeed. *It’s About Time for Kids* aims to ensure that youth possess the specific skills, attributes, and values (“developmental assets”) shown to increase prosocial behaviors and to decrease at-risk behaviors.

After strong success at organizational change among over 200 agencies and groups serving children and

youth, *It’s About Time* now aims to directly reach parents and other adults with the asset message. The research-based and highly structured approach called “social marketing” will guide this effort. The proposed campaign goal is to “ensure that all kids in the region have a caring adult besides their parents in their lives.” *It’s About Time* wants to tap into a dormant and overlooked resource available everywhere: ordinary adults forming caring relationships with kids that matter in a big way. Heliotrope assisted in the strategic planning for this new direction, is guiding the research efforts, and is supporting the fundraising for the campaign.

Strengthening Neighborhoods and Families

Another exciting opportunity we have is through the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s *Making Connections* long-term initiative beginning in 22 communities nationwide. *Making Connections* is about connecting families in tough neighborhoods to economic opportunities, natural sources of support, and accessible and responsive resources such as schools, housing, and recreational and social services. There is no “model” for *Making Connections*; it is an open, innovative approach allowing each community to create its own path.

For the Seattle/King County area, *Making Connections* aims to work alongside families, elected leaders, grassroots organizations, public and private sector leaders, schools, faith communities and others in a common effort to engage White Center families in identifying what they really need and want and how to get there. It will begin connecting them to opportunities, social bonds, and supports to increase their children’s chances of success. In addition, *Making Connections* will seek changes in the policies, services, supports, and institutions who play a larger role in helping families in King County raise strong kids. Heliotrope is assisting with the planning efforts, coordinating data collection, and documenting the ways in which *Making Connections* unfolds here.

We are fortunate to be part of these efforts, where we can both contribute our experience and expertise and benefit from that of others locally and around the country who are deeply devoted to building successes and strengths with our children, youth, families and communities. For further information on any of these projects, please contact us. **H**

Nancy's Millennium Project Enters Third Year

At the beginning of 1999, I pledged to walk 1,000 miles during the year and donate an amount per mile to a youth group. This was my approach to enter the new millennium with a consciousness of, and support for, those coming after us who will try to bring health and peace to this globe. The first year was rewarding in many ways, so I decided to continue in 2000 (and aim for the *real* millennium change date). I also added a strengthening and stretching routine and pledged more youth funding for the 2,000 exercise repetitions I aimed to complete.

Amazingly to me, I met both my walking and strengthening/stretching goals for 2000. My pledged amounts went to the Eritrean Association of Greater Seattle and the United Khmer Community.

Now that 2001 is here, I realize I really don't want to give up any of the benefits I gain each day – from a greater consciousness of all of the children and youth in our community who need our support to my own health and strength. I've signed myself up again.

Perhaps the most important part of my millennium project was to have more personal relationships with young people. After three years of tutoring and a long wait for a Big Sisters match, I have entered the wondrous world of a relationship with a 10-year-old Little Sister. We have a great time together doing all sorts of fun and interesting things. I am truly "wild and crazy" about her and consider our relationship a

gift of proportions I couldn't have imagined. I encourage anyone who has the inclination to be a mentor to dive in with one of the many quality mentoring programs available. **H**

Giving Something Back

In the year 2000, in addition to her Millennium Project and involvement in Big Brother/Big Sisters, Nancy donated the equivalent of two full weeks of time to *It's About Time for Kids*, the YMCA of Greater Seattle, and Fatherlove, an effort to involve fathers in the lives of their children. In addition, Christina and Nancy volunteered writing time to contribute monthly articles on asset building for *The Source* (the newsletter of the Church Council of Greater Seattle) and quarterly articles for the *Washington Out-of-School Times*.

We plan to continue giving back in 2001. Currently, Christina is looking for a two-hour-per-week volunteer opportunity with an organization that serves girls or young women. If you know of such an opportunity, please e-mail her at: christina@heliotropeseattle.com or call 206-526-5671.

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