



A Monthly e-Newsletter From:

 Institute for Alternative Futures

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Forward Perspectives

The Future of Foresight under Obama

By IAF V.P. for Business Development and Futurist [Eric Meade](#)

The Democratic Party described the presidential election of 2008 as a choice between the past and the future, and at least generationally, that is true. More significantly, however, the election of Obama suggests a marked change in the way our government and society will *think* about the future.

Commenting on the Russia-Georgia conflict during the October 7th "town hall" debate with John McCain, President-elect Obama said, "The other thing we have to do, though, is we've got to see around the corners. We've got to anticipate some of these problems ahead of time...We haven't been doing enough of that."

Futurists see around the corners by trying to anticipate major shifts or conflicts ahead of time. The Institute for Alternative Futures goes one step further, actually helping companies and organizations envision and *create* the future they prefer. This process will be essential given the depth of the crises we now face as a country and as a world. As a new administration comes into office under President Obama, there is tremendous opportunity to return active foresight to the top levels of government.

During the 1970's, many foresight programs existed at various levels of government. Examples

include Congress' Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) and Congressional Clearinghouse on the Future as well as several projects in "anticipatory democracy," such as Gov. Jimmy Carter's "Goals for Georgia" and Gov. Dan Evans' "Alternatives for Washington." In 1974, the House Select Committee on Committees stipulated that each standing committee "shall review and study on a continuing basis undertake futures research and forecasting on matters within its jurisdiction," a rarely observed requirement that remains on the books to this day.

An Obama administration is likely to revive this tradition of government foresight. Several members of Obama's team, including Daniel Kammen, an energy and public policy professor at the University of California (Berkeley), are long-range thinkers with experience with futures work or with long-term strategy projects. The transition team has also expressed interest in several projects focused on long-term futures, including the Project for National Security Reform.

In fact, the election of Obama and the re-emergence of a general interest in foresight are things a futurist might have foreseen, even in early 2007 when pundits were predicting a grueling death-match between Hillary Clinton and Rudy Giuliani. First, the passing of the leadership torch from the Boomers to Generation X has profound implications, freeing Boomers to play a visionary elder role while the more pragmatic crisis-responders of Gen X take the reins of power.

In his Martin Luther King, Jr. Day speech, Obama said:

And that is what is at stake in the great political debate we are having today. The changes that are needed are not just a matter of tinkering at the edges, and they will not come if politicians simply tell us what we want to hear. All of us will be called upon to make some sacrifice. None of us will be exempt from responsibility.

By articulating the depth of the challenges ahead, Obama has unleashed the energy of the younger "Millennials," for whom civic engagement is much more important than for any other generation since the G.I.'s of World War II.

Second, Obama has frequently spoken to issues many futurists have suggested will become dominant themes of the 21st century, such as holistic problem-solving, a collective rather than self-centered disposition, and renewed interest in the Common Good. The emergence of a collective and holistic view of the world, of which Obama's election may be more evidence than cause, would initiate a profound reorganization of our economy around new priorities and values.

Regardless of what specific values emerge during the next four years or beyond, it is clear that the U.S. is ready for a new approach to the future that envisions and creates the type of world we would like to give to our children. The crises we face in the economy, health care, and the environment reach down to the foundations of our worldview and the lifestyle it suggests. Obama's embrace of foresight as a means to tackle these crises suggests that - by envisioning the future we prefer - we will have a better chance to create it.

For more information on the use of foresight and futures methods to address challenges, please contact Eric Meade at emeade@altfutures.com.

Everybody Take a Deep Breath

By IAF V.P. for Business Development and Futurist [Eric Meade](#)

According to many of the pundits on the television we are now "in the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression." Fear and loathing has become the dominant emotions of checking their 401k plans and listening to the evening news.

But let's not panic. The outlook right now may be grim, but precedent abounds for the human ability to solve problems and create a better world. The Institute for Alternative Futures, along with others in the foresight community, can support this process by cultivating a longer-term perspective on today's headlines.

Most people imagine that next week will be like this week, as will the week after that. So they are surprised to notice a significant transformation that has taken place. Futurists see the present in the context of both past and future and can imagine scenarios and outcomes very different from today. In that light, let us consider what is taking place now.

In *Generations*, William Strauss and Neil Howe describe a cycle of four "types" of generations, which has repeated itself throughout American history. Leaving the theory's details aside, let us consider the four most recent generations to come of age - the G.I.'s, the Silent Generation, the Boomers, and Generation X.

- The G.I.'s came of age during a period of great secular crisis - the Great Depression and World War II. They accepted the challenge of their time, and - by controlling the White House from 1961 to 1993 - went on to create the institutions that still govern and organize our lives.
- Their children, the Silents, sacrificed in childhood to support the war effort, and then grew to admire the achievements of their parents. They became compromisers, able to see both sides of an issue and to mediate between G.I.'s and the Boomers behind them. Like John McCain, this was a generation of "mavericks" - not completely sold on the G.I. institutions, but too old to attend the "musical and pharmacological event[s]" of the 1960's.
- The Boomers initiated a period of spiritual awakening in the 1960's, and then brought the same idealistic fervor to their subsequent endeavors. For other Boomers, this awakening manifested itself in a revival of evangelical Christianity. Given the divisions within this generation, the combative tone of recent political campaigns should come as no surprise.
- Idealistic Boomers neglected Generation X "latchkey" kids, who grew up cynical and focused on material success. Again, no surprise that MBA programs have boomed as this generation has passed through the MBA age-bracket. This generation has struggled, and thus has the pragmatism to lead society through crisis.

So where are we now, generationally? We now see the emergence of a new generation as civic-minded as the G.I.'s. These are the "Millennials" - born between 1981 and 2003 - who are now expressing their desire to tackle the world's challenges in economics, health care, and the environment. They will quickly cast aside the idealistic "good-versus-evil" agenda of that sect of Boomers who see Islamic terrorism as the fundamental challenge of the 21st century. A Millennial might point out that after a certain amount of climate change, there will be nothing left for terrorists to attack.

Let's suppose that the first post-Millennial generation - born 2004-2026 - reflects the pattern of the Silent generation. They would benefit from the stability of global institutions built by Millennials, but they themselves would have little addition building to do.

I call this generation the "Globals" - they will live comfortable lives in a global society designed and built by Millennials. William Strauss and Neil Howe point out that Williamsburg, Virginia

was most like what we now see in the Colonial Williamsburg historical site during the 1720s and 1730's - when a generation corresponding to the Globals was coming of age.

The 21st century will really get interesting when the Globals' children, the "Spirituals" - born 2027-2049 - come of age. Like the Boomers, they will rebel against the spiritual immaturity of the global system built by their grandparents, and they will look inward for meaning. Advances in psychology and neurotechnology during the first half of the 21st century will have their maximum impact as this generation comes of age, seizes the reins, and directs these insights toward a deeper understanding of human spirituality.

This generational view is one of many approaches that futurists use to think about the future. These methods allow us to explore what might happen in the future in order to develop a deeper understanding of what is happening today.

For example, a sober group of new leaders (e.g. Nicolas Sarkozy, Barack Obama) are taking practical steps (calling for a global economic summit, pushing for a "green economy") that may someday lead to new institutions designed for 21st century life in a global economy. The generation now graduating from college is eager for a chance to solve the world's problems. Boomers like Al Gore, Newt Gingrich, and Bill Gates are taking on new roles as visionary elders to infuse the new structures with values. Life will be good for the Globals.

However, many people get stuck in the grim headlines of today's newspapers and cannot see what may really be taking place. So let's everybody take a deep breath. The world is not coming to an end. In fact, any environment offers plenty of opportunities to those who can think creatively and proactively about the future.

For more information on what the recent changes could mean to you, your business, your agency, or your organization, contact Eric Meade at IAF at emeade@altfutures.com.

Trends & Insights

Diabetes & Obesity Trends Worsen in Minority Communities

The twin epidemics of Diabetes & Obesity are leading to poor health and death in many minority communities. The twin epidemics can be significantly reduced by investing in preventive healthcare and community interventions. These interventions are urgently needed to forestall a forecasted 43 million diagnosed and undiagnosed cases of diabetes in 2025. IAF Senior Futurist Bill Rowley highlighted the twin epidemics in 2008 during a series of six regional Executive Colloquiums sponsored by Novo Nordisk.

Diabetes and obesity are growing national problems that are leading to unnecessary suffering and medical costs for millions of Americans. However, the burden of diabetes is not one shared equally across the country. Low income and minority communities are disproportionately affected by the twin epidemics. Without significant interventions to prevent obesity and diabetes, IAF forecasts that:

- The number of Hispanic Americans with diabetes will more than double from 3.8 million today to 8.4 million in 2025. The cost of diabetes for the Hispanic American community will rise from \$28 billion to \$61 billion (all estimates in 2002 dollars).
- The number of African Americans with diabetes will rise from 4.2 million today to 7.9

million in 2025. The cost of diabetes for the African American community will rise from \$24 billion to \$44 billion.

- The number of Native Americans with diabetes will rise from 1.5 million today to 3.2 million in 2025. The cost of diabetes for the Native American community will rise from \$5.4 billion to \$12.4 billion.
- The number of Asian Americans with diabetes will rise from 1.25 million today to 2.8 million in 2025. The cost of diabetes for the Asian American community will rise from \$8.3 billion to \$18.9 billion.

There is good news emerging despite these dire forecasts. New data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Diabetes Association (ADA) has shown a drop in the number of undiagnosed diabetes and better management of diabetes has shown fewer patients needing dialysis and amputations. IAF has also identified successful programs that improve outcomes and reduce costs.

This good news prompted IAF to lower its forecast for diagnosed and undiagnosed cases of diabetes in 2025 from 50 million to 43 million. Earlier diagnoses and better management will mean a forecasted 14,000 fewer cases of renal failure, 49,000 fewer amputations and 61,000 fewer deaths in 2025 than IAF forecasted just 3 years ago. However, more needs to be done to prevent and manage diabetes now before the twin epidemics reach a stage where the cost overwhelms our healthcare system.

You can read the original 2005 report, [Diabetes & Obesity 2025: Four Future Scenarios for the Twin Health Epidemics](#), funded by Novo Nordisk, on the [IAF website](#). You can also view the [slides](#) from Bill Rowley's latest Novo Nordisk Executive Colloquium delivered on September 4th, 2008 in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Novo Nordisk is also a sponsor of the DRA Project. For more information or to arrange a speech or project on the twin epidemics, please contact futurist@altfutures.com.

News and Events

School Based Wellness Programs Prevent Childhood Obesity

There has been a striking increase in childhood obesity over the last decade. According to data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, the prevalence of being overweight increased by 45% for children of ages 2-19 years from 1988-1994 to 1999-2002. Low income families and minorities are disproportionately affected by this rise in overweight and obesity.

The United States continues to struggle with an obesity epidemic due in large part to poor diet and physical inactivity, leading to increases in cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes, hypertension and some cancers. According to the American Obesity Association low-income, minority populations are disproportionately affected by obesity and obesity related chronic diseases. The Association notes that cultural, economic, and environmental factors play a role in diet choices and level of physical activity.

The Disparity Reducing Advances Project (DRA Project) at the Institute for Alternative Futures, a multi-year effort to reduce future health disparities, recently developed a report on [School Based Wellness Programs](#) (SBWP). School Based Wellness Programs are multi-level programs focused on improving and promoting child health and wellbeing, with an emphasis on physical activity and a healthy diet. The report provides an illustrative catalog of programs

with side by side comparisons of how School Based Wellness Programs are carried out, who is targeted, what the programs focus on, how long they take to implement and how to obtain the curricula.

Based on the findings of this report, the DRA Project makes the following recommendations specific to disparity reduction in childhood overweight and childhood obesity:

1. Ensure that healthy foods are available in schools and eliminate unhealthy food choices.
2. Provide opportunities to actively engage in physical activity at school.
3. Guarantee that food and activity choices available in schools are culturally sensitive and culturally appropriate.
4. Provide health and nutrition education through School Based Wellness Programs.
5. Make health and nutrition education available to parents.
6. Specifically incorporate a plan to reduce the prevalence of being overweight in all local wellness policies via SBWPs.
7. Ensure that wellness is a focus of every school day and that SBWPs are held year round.
8. Ensure that children of low socioeconomic status and children of color have equal access to SBWPs.
9. Ensure safe and activity friendly neighborhoods.
10. Implement, and evaluate SBWPs specifically tailored to disparate populations.
11. Include high risk youth in the planning and implementation of SBWPs.

The Health Disparities Collaboratives: Enhancing Quality and Reducing Disparities

The Disparity Reducing Advances (DRA) Project, in conjunction with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, is holding its second Disparities Foresight Briefing on Monday, November 24th, 2008 in Washington, D.C. The meeting will be held from 12:15 to 2:00 in room B-369 of the Rayburn House Office Building (lunch will be served at 12:00). The meeting is free and open to the public.

HRSA funded federally qualified health centers are leading safety net providers and see 18 million patients each year. These centers bring primary health care to underserved, underinsured and uninsured Americans, including migrant workers. They provide their services to all persons regardless of ability to pay, charging for services only on a community board approved sliding-fee scale that is based on patient's family income and size.

These health centers have created one of the most significant quality improvement campaigns in health care. The Health Disparities Collaboratives, now 10 years old, have been shown to improve outcomes and reduce costs in treatment of diabetes and other conditions. Using these approaches, community health centers provide a primary health home - an enhanced, team focused form of the medical home. This is primary care that lowers health care costs and reduces health disparities.

An expert panel will discuss the importance of the Health Disparities Collaboratives in improving healthcare in community health centers across the United States. The panel includes:

- David M. Stevens, Director of the Quality Center at the National Association of Community Health Centers.
- Paloma Hernandez, President & CEO of the Urban Health Plan.

- Roland Gardner, CEO of Comprehensive Health Services, Inc (invited)

Make your reservation for the Disparities Foresight Briefing by going to http://www.altfutures.com/foresight_dra_reg.asp or call (703) 684-5880 (extension 18).

Clem Bezold Speaks at the Consumer Health World Fall Conference

Dr. Clem Bezold, Founder and Chairman of the Board of the Institute for Alternative Futures, will be moderating a keynote panel discussion at the Consumer Health World Fall Conference on Tuesday, December 9th at 4:20pm. The Conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City in Arlington, Virginia. The Consumer Health World Fall Conference will focus on how globalization, Internet technology and consumerism are converging to accelerate the transformation of health care for all stakeholders sectors including employers, U.S. and international providers and consumers.

The keynote session, *Diversifying the Reach of Medical Care: Why Extending Care Beyond Traditional Medical Centers Makes Sense (Cents) for the Patient and for the Industry*, moderated by Clem Bezold, will feature a panel of experts with years of experience in the healthcare industry. Confirmed for the expert panel are:

- Dr. Jonathan Schaffer, Managing Director of the eCleveland Clinic.
- Dr. David Judge, Medical Director of the Ambulatory Practice of the Future.
- Dr. Richard Boxer, Chief Medical Officer at TelaDoc Medical Services.
- Dave Hom, Co-Founder and Chairman at the Center for Health Value Innovation.
- Dr. Reed Tuckson, Executive Vice President and Chief of Medical Affairs for UnitedHealth Group.

IAF is a supporting sponsor of the Consumer Health World Conferences and is able to offer our readership a 30% discount for registration to the Conference. You can find out the full details on the Conference and register for the event at www.consumerhealthworld.com/register. To receive the 30% discount, please use registration code BOLJBRCWDD.

Upcoming Events

Diversifying the Reach of Medical Care, [Consumer Health World Fall Conference](#), IAF Founder & Chairman of the Board Clem Bezold, December 8th, Arlington, VA.

Army Medical Department (AMEDD) Futures 2039 Forecast Workshop, IAF Senior Futurists Jonathan Peck and Bill Rowley, November 13, San Antonio, TX.

AFA Pharmaceutical War-Game Simulation, IAF President Jonathan Peck and Senior Associate Ben Sheppard, scheduled for later this year in Switzerland.

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