

FUTURE*takes*

Transcultural Futurist Magazine

ISSN 1554-7744

Vol. 3, no. 3 (Fall 2004)

The Think Tank

Topic: Election participation. In other parts of the world, many people would like to have the right and the opportunity to choose their own head of state and other government leaders. People have fought and died for the right of self-determination. Yet, in the United States, many people choose not to exercise their right to vote. Is opting out of the political process a trend that will eventually reverse itself or is it a characteristic of a mature democracy? Furthermore, if such opting out persists, what are the long term implications for democracy itself?

Points for consideration: What factors contribute to the non-participation, and how will these factors themselves change with time? Possible factors:

1. complacency
2. fatalism
3. lack of time and/or interest (that is, voting and/or becoming informed on the candidates not being sufficiently high on one's priority list)
4. marginalization – being “lost in the crowd” (the perception that large national parties cannot adequately represent diverse local needs or are insensitive to them)
5. lack of relevance (the perception that the outcome will not significantly impact one's life)
6. other (You name this one!)

from the Summer 2004 Think Tank topic, “Cultural Values and Lifestyles”

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Increasing global inter-linkages, means the number of those with whom you can relate to increases. The overload of people, ideas, information, and opportunities will continue to become more

overwhelming and intense. Although we will amaze ourselves about how much we can really handle, we will still need to be far more selective and precise about who we actually relate to and about what.

With small numbers of people in the past and face to face communications as the dominant way, knowing who to trust was not so difficult. With advances in marketing, corporate intelligence, and various forms of information warfare, trust will be more difficult. Once trust is broken, integrity is questioned we will move on to others – because we can. In the past the possibilities were far fewer, so we really couldn't move on as easily. Knowing who you are and what you want will be more important in the future than in the past as a guide to selectivity.

Work, play, and leisure are being integrated today. By 2025 the synergies among these will be valued personally and as a criteria for whom to relate to and how. Also by this time, Americans will be about 2% of the world population as Asian cultural, political, military, and political power increases. Imagine that the majority of people with whom you communicate do not have English as their first language – it will require more precision in word and concept selection.

[Editor's note: Your thoughts on either topic, election participation or cultural values and lifestyles? Send your comments to forum@futuretakes.org.]