ADDICTION RECOVERY IN POST-NORMAL TIMES: A FUTURES PERSPECTIVE

Collective Imagination, Collective Intelligence, Collective Agility

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Community Recovery Summit
June 3-5, 2022, Portland, OR
Celebrate family + friends
Love + life
Equality + respect
Pride + joy
WHAT FUTURES THINKING HAS TO OFFER RIGHT NOW

• Connect the past, present and the future

• Learn from the past, make sense of the present as we deal with it and connect both of these to an arc of meaning and the choices we have about what happens next.

• “Unlearn” our way of thinking about what is and isn’t possible. The veil between these things is especially porous right now.

• A way of managing complexity – our intellectual ecosystems.

• Critical, post-modern, anti-racist, anti-colonial, cultural, interpretive, participative, holistic

• Bow to Indigenous lens
Some opening conceptual ideas...

- Won't be predicting anything today – it doesn't work that way.
- Not here as an ambassador of how tech will EITHER save or destroy things. It doesn't work that way either. (Actually has potential for tremendous good AND tremendous damage). The future is plural.
- It can be very good for people to face what often feels like chaos (futures term for this is VUCA – volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) to use tools to navigate towards future we want together and away from futures we don't want.
- Our imaginations about the future(s) are among our most important assets but in too many places, I believe they are neglected and discounted.
- The future of addiction and recovery is MUCH BIGGER THAN ADDICTION AND RECOVERY. The world is facing unprecedented changes and challenges – the future of our shared work will evolve in these spaces.
- We can never be ready for everything, but we can collectively be more ready than we have been, than we are.
- We are gonna think about our thinking in this session – so get ready.
We bring all our identities with us when we do this work...

- I share what I share out of a life of growing up on the edge of middle class and with constant worries about being homeless with a severely depressed single mom
- As a well-educated white straight CIS woman who has lived most of my adult life in the academy with privilege and frustration
- As the mom of a non-binary young adult who has taught me how to be fully human and that the future is Queer
- For much of my career as a grantee of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation where I first learned about and began to practice these ideas some 20-ish years ago
- With great respect for all I am not, for the power I hold, and with the wish to push out what are tools of power I have become acquainted with that I believe are too important to leave in the hands of elites. Democratizing the future is all there is for me. These tools may be part of that. You will decide what you think and I share all of this with great respect for this truth. Whatever the future is, your input, your love, your identities and your life energy will make it better.
Let’s just think for a minute about YOU and “The Future”

- Your future
- Your partner(s), family and close friends
- Your extended family
- Your job
- Your discipline
- Your disciplinary ecosystem
- Your city, state, Tribe, country, planet
- All changing and evolving in both predictable and unpredictable ways

And just to give you a chance to sample the concept of “deep time” or “long time” - please take a moment to imagine the faces of the people YOU ARE RELATED TO that will be be your age 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7 generations from now….and let us all take a breath together to honor them and their well-being in whatever form that takes at that time. (Again – deep bow to Indigenous thought for this lens)
WELCOME TO THE FUTURE

• Start where we are – never has the idea of “post normal” felt more relevant.
• The definition of “post normal times” is:

"All that was normal has now evaporated: We have entered post-normal times, the in-between period where old orthodoxies are dying, new ones have not yet emerged, and nothing really makes sense. To have any viable future, we must grasp the significance of this period of transition which is characterized by the three c's: complexity, chaos and contradictions." Ziaddun Sardar, 2010

• Steffen (2021) – Welcome to discontinuity, population: Everyone…
A moment for all those we’ve lost these last few years, for all of us struggling right now, and for future generations.
What is the future?

- Big turbulent ecosystem
- 1 year, 5 years, 10 years, 50 years, 100 years
- Who is responsible for the future? Who decides what is best for the future?
- What are the greatest threats and opportunities to humanity now and in the years to come?
- Not something to be left to chance or deferred – but rather “a massively democratic endeavor” – Marina Gorbis
- Culturally, technologically, politically, economically, sociologically, ecologically beyond compare to any other time in human history – we must imagine in this context and not get caught in the trappings of our professional lenses
- Requires a commitment from all of us like no other
- Requires expanded and strengthened imaginaries to survive and thrive in the future - tools that help us get at ALL of this are needed
COVID 19 LESSONS SO FAR - SIMPLY

• The future is here (a future we worried about…and many predicted)
• The future is unevenly distributed.
• In order to navigate it, we probably need new ways to operate.
• Futures thinking provides that possible framework.

(Image from futurist Leah Zaidi, 2020)
LET'S GO!
A FUTURES LENS – MANY PATHWAYS/REASONS/IDEOLOGIES

• Futures as a cultural project (the future as a religious or spiritual focus)

• Futures as a political/military project (the future as a way to gain power via tactical advantage, defense or aggression, and conquest)

• Futures as an economic project (the future as a way to bend the future for financial gain – capitalism)

• Futures as a scientific project (the future as a space to anticipate/solve problems using the scientific method or to explore phenomena using a science lens)

• Futures as an artistic project (the future as a way to extend imagination into new worlds of all kinds and then to create them in various ways)

• Futures as a liberatory project (the future as a pluralistic, de-colonial, anti-racist, participatory and deeply democratic space focused on justice as its primary goal)
Principles of the Future

- The future is plural (many scenarios possible)
- The future is a combination of alternative futures: possible, plausible, probable and preferable
- The future is open (not fixed)
- The future is fuzzy (of course we can’t “know” exactly how the future will unfold, and our foresight is imperfect, limited).
- The future is surprising (not always smooth or continuous). Sometimes it arrives in unexpected ways.
- The future is not surprising (sometimes the future is boring).
- The future is fast (the future is always accelerating).
- The future is slow (accelerating change gets all the attention, but a balance of the future is also slow, plodding and predictable).

FUTURES THINKING/PRACTICE IS:

• About deepening and strengthening the ability to “anticipate” and imagine in new ways.

• Commit to reducing “short-term-ism” in our immediate and extended circles of influence. How can futures thinking help us make better decisions? (Deeper commitment to exploring “unintended consequences” and “underdeveloped possibilities”)

• Resisting powerful actors who “dictate” what the future is going to be (official futures) in favor of increasing agency and democracy in co-constructing desired futures while protecting/resisting undesired futures.

• Bigger than any one issue: climate, technology, geopolitical issues – a “way” of thinking that is a framework for how all of these (and many more) issues intersect, evolve and impact each other in predictable and unpredictable ways.

• Not neutral – it is powerful. Who gets to wield that power? Is it democratic?
THE FUTURE OF ISSUES

• Social change
• Work
• Organizational life
• Cities
• Technology
• Climate
• Food
• Communication
• Identity and human rights

• Racism and equity
• Family life
• Justice
• Safety
• Coupling (or beyond couples) and relationships
• Well-being (including both health and psychological)
• Religion and spirituality
• Trust
• Political life and democracy
• War (and peace)
• Not to mention “products” galore…
What futures work isn’t and a critique

• Predicting (it is more like mapmaking and navigating)
• Controlling (not possible anyway) – but pushing for/towards futures we want – YES!
• (Futures folks I hang around with) not about dominating the sector with one voice or one vision. Not driven by current economic/political frameworks/goals.
• Futures work sometimes criticized for being elitist, supremacy-anchored/blinded. Can be valid but there are “schools” of futures work. Foresight practitioner rather than futurist.
• I ascribe to critical futures thought: pluralist, disruptive, network-based, equity-human- and sustainability-centered. Constant power analysis. Iteratively challenging power relations in answer the question: ”Who gets to define the future?” Democratizing futures thought and practice.
“Another world is always possible.”

Social movements and oppressed peoples have always been incredible guiding lights for these other worlds.

Our roles, our jobs, our paradigms often conceptually bind us to a “projected future” and cause us to minimize, ignore, under-invest in possible futures.

Sociological term for people who do commit to experimenting with altogether new models is “prefigurative politics” of values, lifestyles and futures they aspire to - often before they are accepted or even understood.

The arts take us there again and again – and always have. The arts bring “anticipatory consciousness.” (Davies & Sarpong, 2013).
Dator’s Law – “Any useful idea about the future should at first seem preposterous.”

“In a culture where it is important to be certain, to know, to be expert, we get trapped by clinging to the projected future. We double down where we think we are headed and don’t create space to consider what other options are available. It’s extremely liberating to lean into uncertainty, go to the edges, and play with the preposterous. This is where interesting ideas live.”

Amanda Reeves
Is the future different this time – epic times?

- Climate change
- Disinformation landscapes and extremism growing
- Trust in institutions breaking down
- Political extremism
- Both physical, psychological and computational racism and other isms
- Economic injustice (housing, health, and educational injustices…)
- Our relationship to the state (extensions of or resistance to?)
- Technology proliferation (more on this…)
TECHNOLOGY AND THE FUTURE
IS NOT ONE THING... IT IS A RAPIDLY SHIFTING COMPLEX ARRAY AND ECOSYSTEM THAT COMPRIS
WHERE WE LIVE

• Smart cities
• Big data and analytics
• Social media
• App development
• Artificial intelligence
• Data justice
• Citizen technologists
• Data, privacy and security (surveillance)
• Virtual/augmented reality
• Children’s development and tech
• Health and mental health tech (personalized medicine)
• Neurotechnologies and biotechnologies
• Education technologies
• Social change technologies
• Access to technology as a human right
• Emerging human rights via tech
• Assistive technologies
• Tech across the lifespan
• Robotics
• Internet of things
But also a future of social movements

- Recovery
- Labor
- Civil and human rights
- Tech justice
- Mutual aid
- Abolition
- Climate justice
- Health justice
- Housing justice
- Reproductive justice and many more…
Futures Language and Practice

- Afrofuturism, Queer-Feminist-Crip, Latinx, Indig. futures
- Managed retreat
- Precariat class
- De-growth
- Misfit economies
- Calm technology
- Global brain
- Resilience hubs
- Cyborg anthropology
- Panopticon
- Post-capitalism
- Democracy 2.0.

Also – future of work, future of well-being, and more....

All of these things were happening BEFORE covid-19 and will of course be complicated and will proceed in expected and unexpected ways.

Futures work can be great at Helping us map possibilities and imagine different ways that might go.
What is around the next corner and are we ready? Our narratives matter....
Hierarchies vs Networks

THE FUTURE OF POWER

Types of Networks
FUTURES VOICES CHALLENGING DOMINANT NARRATIVES
COUNT ON DISRUPTION FROM HERE FORWARD – AMY WEBB

THE FUTURE OF THE RECOVERY MOVEMENT IS NOT JUST ABOUT THE RECOVERY MOVEMENT

NOTE: TRENDS VS. SIGNALS
A FUTURES TRIANGLE

PULL
of the future

Plausible futures

PUSH
of the present

WEIGHT
of the past
THE FUTURE OF GOVERNMENT ITSELF IS EVOLVING IN NEW WAYS

- Visit to see examples of countries all over the world (and across the United Nations) that are using foresight at:

THE FUTURE OF PROFESSIONS

• Medicine (both doctors, nurses and all health professions)
• Education (teachers - both in K-12 and higher education)
• Law
• Journalism
• Architecture
• Divinity
The Future of Quarantine

- What did covid-19 reveal about our ability to navigate a complex public health crisis?
- What lessons must we learn?
- What must be re-invented and/or restored?
THE ROBOTS ARE HERE...
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE/FUTURE OF HEALTH
HOW ABOUT DIGITAL HUMANS?

Soul Machines...
CLIMATE CHANGE AND HUMAN LIFE
AND OF COURSE...NOW EVERYTHING INTERSECTS WITH COVID 19

No we are not all in the same boat. We are in the same storm. There is a huge difference.

1. WASH YOUR HANDS
2. PHYSICAL DISTANCING
3. WEAR A FACE COVERING
4. GET TESTED IF NEEDED
Hat tip to Jamais Cascio for making me laugh with this slide…so with his permission, I borrowed it…
Deep breath...
1 | PREPARE
1.1 | Orient to the Future
1.2 | Find Future Me
1.3 | Look Back to Look Forward
1.4 | Identify Drivers of Change
1.5 | Catalogue Signals of Change
1.6 | Frame Futures Conversations

2 | FORESIGHT
2.1 | Draft a Forecast
2.2 | Reveal Unexpected Possibilities
2.3 | Draw Out Consequences
2.4 | Envision Alternative Futures
2.5 | Headline the Future
2.6 | Personalize the Future
2.7 | Create Artifacts from the Future

3 | INSIGHT
3.1 | Ride Two Curves
3.2 | Map Cross-Impacts
3.3 | Build Resilience
3.4 | Prioritize Possible Actions
3.5 | Explore Four Future Feelings

4 | ACTION
4.1 | Build an Action Roadmap
4.2 | Test and Learn
4.3 | Rally a Network
4.4 | Identify Assets and Gaps

Institute for the Future Framework, 2020
At its best foresight is...

- Transdisciplinary
- Transsectoral
- Transactional
- Transformative
- Transgressive
- Transcendent

Cynthia Sellin
LET’S TAKE A LOOK AT VR AND CONSIDER HOW A FUTURIST MIGHT THINK ABOUT HOW IT MIGHT IMPACT CHILDREN OF THE FUTURE – LET’S STRETCH OUR SENSE OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN NEXT…

“Speculative Futuring”
WHO WILL BE DISRUPTED BY VR?

- Retail
- Military/Defense
- Marketing and advertising
- Law enforcement
- Recruiting
- Agriculture
- Sports
- Education

- Energy
- Manufacturing
- Health care
- Journalism
- Film and entertainment
- Construction
- Real estate
- Automotive
- Space exploration
- Engineering
NURTURE POD

• What led up to this being a practice?
• Who decided this was a good idea?
• Who is at risk and what kind of risk from this future?
• Who benefits from this practice?
• What would the social work code of ethics say about the nurture pod?
• Is this a future you want to live in?

(Nurture Pod Artifact from the Future by Stuart Candy)
The Addictions Field

- Extraordinary growth and development since the 1950’s – science of addiction and recovery expanding dramatically. Prevention needs uplifting and advocacy to keep it centralized…we can’t look away for the deep urgency of prevention.

- Increasing professionalization of prevention, intervention and treatment arenas – strengths and challenges

- Always the bad#$%& underdog – the field has to fight for every breakthrough, every accomplishment.

- Now the recovery movement is evolving to include recovery professionals/peer support at many levels – “YOU ARE THE FUTURE”

- Simultaneous breakthroughs in health science and personalized medicine

- 30 years in addictions practice has taught me: There will always be new drugs and/or new ways to use old drugs and/or new complexities associated with the alcohol/drug trade that will complicate our understanding of addiction and recovery
The Breakthrough of Acknowledging Trauma

• Trauma-discourse and trauma—informed services – will we look back and see this is as one of the great turning points? (My opinion – yes!)

• Collapse psychology vs. post-traumatic growth as the new landscape of thought (the age of overwhelm?)

• What will the world need from us in terms of capacity building on shared, pervasive and continuous experiences of trauma that may be part of our shared world? (Climate…?)
Harm Reduction and Other Politics

• The future of addiction and recovery has always, is and will always be political

• What we are “allowed” to talk about and in what ways has always been political – look to reproductive rights to get a sense of what is coming

• What should we be leaning into, what should we be resisting, what should we be disrupting? (The recovery world has always navigated this well...)
Equity/Health Equity

• On every front, there remains pervasive health inequity in our country - this includes access to, use and effectiveness of all forms of prevention, treatment and recovery supports.

• The future needs us all to evolve faster together on purpose on this issue.

• How do we make all spaces related to the addictions-recovery movement visibly, functionally, economically and durably equity-centered?

• Who are the faces and voices of scholarship, activism, civic leadership, intervention, prevention on this issue?

• What will it take?

• Let’s recommit. This evolution/revolution is overdue.
ANTI-RACIST MORAL IMAGINARIES

• Liberating our imaginations becomes our most valuable tool and asset.

• Pushing up against assumptions, rules, norms and pre-existing structures.

• Intentionally complicating dominant narratives in novel ways.

• Inviting joy, pluralistic expression and methods.

• De-centering whiteness in every dimension of what is possible.
SO WHAT IS AROUND THE CORNER – THE FUTURE OF THE ADDICTIONS/RECOVERY WORLD?

What does the future need from us?
Looking ahead around us

• Personalized medicine – biotech and genetic therapies (who will have access and who will not?)
• Neurotech in many forms – deep brain stimulation and others (Google article “On neurorights” a must read as we begin to hook our brains up to computers – SERIOUSLY.)
• Replacing alcohol with "synthehol" (On the Media episode “Blame it on the Booze – July 9, 2021 episode worth a listen)
• The ways in which addiction/recovery practice will intersect with other impending social and climate-related conditions/stressors.
• Need for continuous investments to assure continuity and evolution of "the work"
Addictions beyond substances

• Tech, social media, VR…and Netflix (massive power asymmetry with intense focus on creating “clicks” and keeping you engaged). (Watch Disney movie “Wall-E” as a futures exercise). Not just addiction but the hijacking of our attentions. Reclaiming this is an actual movement (Johann Hāri, Jenny O’Dell and others.)

• Crypto trading and other economic gaming as an extension of gambling addictions.

• Extremist thinking/engagement (with disinformation propped up by nefarious forces)

• What do you see coming?
Looking ahead within ourselves

• Dr. Jose Ramos’ model “Mutant Futures”
• There is only the map we make together
• Collective well-being not individual survival
• How must we evolve ourselves to best co-create the future(s) we dream of?
• What does the future need from us? Our own personal evolution matters.
• What is our obligation to future generations?
• But “epic times” await – whether it be natural or man made disaster, the next global health emergency or something else (or several of these at the same time), we must prepare for a complex future together. This is not your grandmother’s world. We are in the age of discontinuity. How do we best prepare ourselves (and be available to help our communities)?
Will the recovery movement exist in the future? If so, what will it look like? What will recovery professionals of the future be doing?

- Think about recovery work 50 years ago.
- Think about recovery work now.
- Think about recovery work 50 years from now.

Truly when you think of recovery work in the year 2072 what do you see?
“WE ARE IN AN IMAGINATION BATTLE.”
– ADRIENNE MAREE BROWN
SOCIAL WORK JOBS OF THE FUTURE

Please come play the Social Work Jobs of the Future game at my website: www.socialworkfutures.com
• What would it look like if recovery work “was ready” for the future in a new way?

• What would we be thinking? What would we be doing?

• What might our profession look like in 10 years if we started truly investing in these questions now? What would it look like if we don’t?

• What are these “possibility spaces?”

• How is the future calling not only “our profession” writ large to change and prepare – but what about each of us individually – emotionally, spiritually and intellectually?

• Assert that foresight with a progressive lens is an ethical imperative for the recovery movement and our related educational apparatus.
It’s up to us.
The future is plural.
YOU AND YOUR ASPIRATIONS WILL BUILD THE FUTURE
Three things you can do...

• Check out my blog and come learn with me at [www.socialworkfutures.com](http://www.socialworkfutures.com) or follow me at @lauranissen on Twitter. Trying to help build a futures community in the Portland area. (I’ll post a PDF of these slides there later today.)

• Explore my futures “home base” – the Institute for the Future in Palo Alto, CA. Google “IFTF Foresight Talks” and explore an AMAZING array of futurists sharing their work (I’m even in there!!)

• If you’re interested in getting certified as a futurist – google “Coursera Futures Specialization” - with a 1-year Coursera membership you can add a futures certificate specialization through IFTF – wonderful way to go deeper and add a professional credential.

• Plus – I’m having two babies…next slides…
THE FUTURE IS PLURAL

Graduate Certificate in Foresight at Portland State University
Anticipatory Social Work
IN CLOSING

What kind of story will we write about what happens next?

Foresight: Possibility multiplier, threat analyzer, pathway illuminator, unintended consequence radar, community voice amplifier, energy enhancer, vision generator, and hope tank engineer/refueler.

Stay connected!

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