

UTC Trainers Resource Notebook

Method

The UTC employs an “Adult Transformative Learning Model” – an experiential process of orientation-disorientation-reorientation. Learning processes are participatory and always begin with real-world considerations that prompt “beautiful questions.”

Participants actively explore both theoretical perspectives and best practices for social and spiritual transformation of their cities. Our teaching methods are interactive, jazz-like, and dialogical. We emphasize listening, silence, narrative, humor, and well-placed questions.

Along the way, learners find themselves in “threshold” or “crossroads” experiences (sometimes referred to as “liminal space”) that challenge both mind and spirit. Disruption is both uncomfortable and necessary. Vulnerability, trust, and mutual support are essential. For these reasons, training typically takes place in participant cohorts.

Contextual Methodologies

City As Classroom: We engage the city itself as a teacher and living library of wisdom eager to be shared. We cultivate an open and inquisitive learning posture.

City As Parish: We engage the city as sacred space and holy ground - a healing sanctuary filled with all the spiritual streams of faith needed for human thriving and wholeness.

City As Playground: We engage the city as a prophetic sign of peace and a place where the Spirit plays according to a new song.

“But let’s be realistic,” some might say. “I look around and see my city as a place of ignorance, spiritual darkness, and violence.” Make no mistake; our methodology requires a radical “renewing of the mind” to view the city proactively through a lens that discerns concrete assets, rather than reactively with a view toward deficits. It is a way of seeing and acting in faith, hope, and love. It names *what most truly is*: NOW, HERE, THIS. “See, I am making all things new” (Revelation 21:5). Transformation is happening now; it’s happening here in this world; and it’s happening specifically in ways that can be observed. As a result of such attentiveness, the dynamic of transformation can be further unleashed.

This methodology is foundational to best practices of social transformation such as Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). Sources for this methodology include Mezirow (Transformative Learning), Freire (Critical Pedagogy), Turner (Liminality), and Cooperrider and Srivastva (Appreciative Inquiry).

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Message

For the UTC, three fundamental perspectives form the contours of a general space from which training content can be communicated and experienced.

Theological Perspectives

Abundance: An asset-based vision of life that begins with God's *yes*, rooted in the assumption there is enough – enough of all the ingredients for human flourishing in every context. Our task is to pay attention to how the Spirit is already at work in our cities and joyfully participate in unleashing forces for good.

From Below: An incarnational vision that begins with the reality of what IS. We are especially attentive to the lived experiences and unique perspectives of those on the margins of society – as they illuminate a way forward for all of us together.

Peacemaking: A vision of civil society rooted in the biblical vision of *shalom*. We practice unplugging from the violence of rivalry and exclusion, modeling ways of being in which enemies are embraced as friends and all parties are mutually transformed.

These kinds of “orienting” perspectives create openings for shared learning and fruitful dialogue. In contrast with specific theological *doctrines* that sometimes divide and constrict, we find that these perspectives expand possibilities for shared social and spiritual transformation in our diverse communities.

While these perspectives hold possibility for dialogue with people of all faiths, they are deeply congruent with classic Trinitarian affirmations of Christian faith:

Father's <i>Effulgence</i>	(Abundant, Creative Love)
Son's <i>Kenosis</i>	(Poured-out, Life-giving Love)
Spirit's <i>Perichoresis</i>	(Dancing, Uniting Love)

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Manner

The UTC recognizes the role of our distinctive “manner” – and accompanying “manners” in creating a learning culture. These versions of “please and thank-you” are cultivated in communities that display high emotional intelligence (EI) in conjunction with other forms of cognitive intelligence.

Street Psalms practices four manners of mission that imitate the manners of Jesus. “The Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does in like manner,” Jesus explained (John 5:19). “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you” (John 20:21). We want to practice a particular manner, or way, of being sent into the world.

We are learning our manners most powerfully from the vulnerable themselves - those who are the face and grace of Jesus – returning us to ourselves, clothed and in our right mind (Mark 5:15).

This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but suggestive. Friends and partners in the UTC and other networks grace us with a variety of manners that enrich our learning community.

Manners of Mission

Generosity: *Enough for all*

A largeness of vision derived from God's abundance - a willingness to risk big, fail often, forgive much, share freely, and act boldly in ways that transform our lives and the city.

Hospitality: *Room for all*

A largeness of heart that sets welcoming and open tables for all and gives preferred seating to those at the margins - a willingness to welcome, invite, gather, network and serve others in ways that nurture ever-widening community.

Simplicity: *Limits for all*

A largeness of soul that trusts, honors and discerns limits and healthy boundaries of our gifts, call, roles, and responsibilities. We are free to say yes AND no to opportunities. This discipline is born out of deep trust in the boundless love of God and the Spirit's unwavering commitment to bring all things to completion.

Vulnerability: *Risk in all*

A largeness of courage that risks the power of vulnerability. Martin Buber said, “All real life is meeting.” Such meeting is born of vulnerability that feels a lot like weakness. Yet vulnerability calls forth life, or as social researcher Brené Brown has found, “Vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change.”

Go, therefore...

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Messenger

The UTC is a community of trainers and learners who seek to *embody in our lives* the core message, method and manners of the training we offer. We are a “Community of Practice” as described by McDermott (see UTC Concept Paper). At the deepest level this is for us a particular expression of incarnation as the body of Christ.

This awareness prompts a keen desire both for development as individuals and growth into a committed community of friends. This is already happening across the network. Together, we are growing in the following competencies as messengers:

Core Competencies

Action (Hands)

All of our training is derived from real-life experiences of loving and serving with the vulnerable - in ways that foster mutual, enduring transformation. We seek best practices for robust, sustainable change.

Reflection (Head)

The UTC holds the “Word” and in one hand and the “World” in the other in an ongoing conversation – bringing the best skills of observation, analysis and creative action that our challenging contexts deserve. We seek the best tools of theological reflection and social analysis.

Discernment (Heart)

The UTC is a “Discerning Community” of contemplative activists. Our essential task is to see and celebrate the movement of God’s Spirit in hard places – so that we may live and thrive wholeheartedly in rhythm with that movement, helping others do the same. We humbly practice shared disciplines of discernment that lead to shalom - union with God, the self, others, and the created world.

We intentionally draw from a wide variety of models and influences in developing these competencies. As a diverse faith community centered in the life of Jesus, we are committed to celebrating the wide array of gifts of the church throughout history. For example, we recognize the influence of Young Life and the Jesuits – very different groups who each made worldwide impact. (See the UTC Concept Paper.) John Howard Yoder says, “God is working in the world, and it is the task of the Church to know how God is working... “Behold, here is Christ. This is where God is at work!” We recognize that God delights to work among unlikely partners. In many cases we are enriched by engagement with people of good will outside our own faith traditions – listening, learning, and serving together for the blessing of our cities.

Through our collaboration we are being shaped not only for how we think and what we do, but most importantly *who we are together* as messengers of good news in our world.

UTC Training Community: A Centered Set

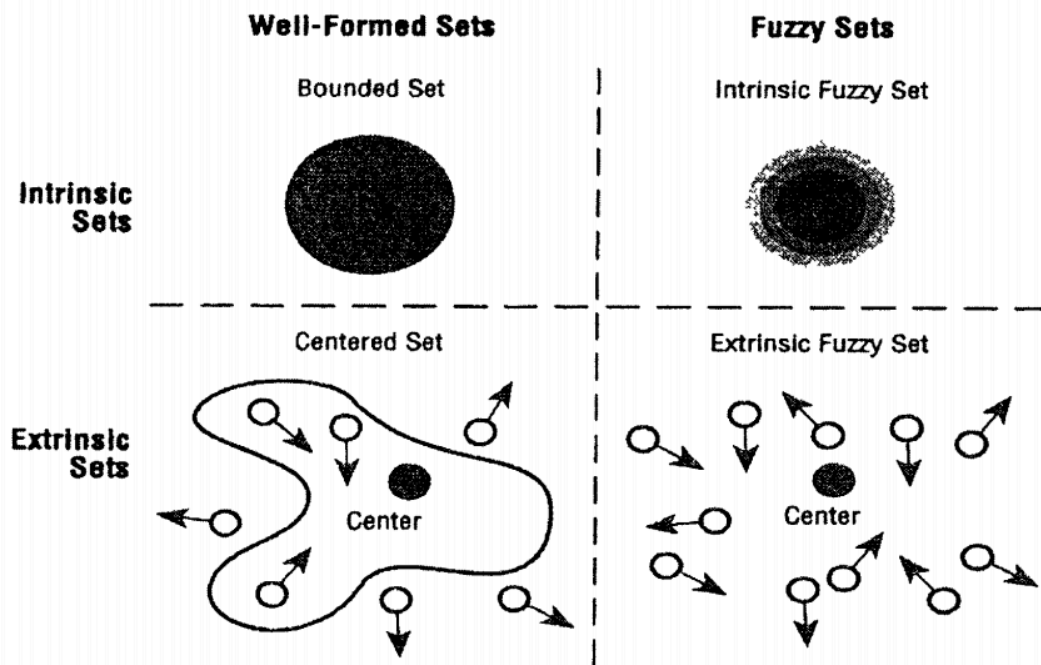
How are we oriented?

Bounded Set: Ordered by the edges. Preoccupied with protecting borders, tends to be rigid, produces us versus them mentality, interested in highlighting differences.

Key Question: Who is in and who is out?

Centered Set: Ordered by the center. Secure in the “core” we can engage those who differ greatly. Agreement is not necessary. Relationship is crucial. Interested in how we are oriented to a common core.

Key Question: How can we work together?



Graphic from: Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missional Issues* (Baker 1994), p. 112.

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Paradigm Shifts

UTC Transformational Learning involves these movements...

- **Message:** From Scarcity to Abundance
- **Method:** From Theory to Incarnational Practice
- **Manner:** From Rivalry to Peacemaking
- **Messenger:** From Fear to Freedom

For example, participants have expressed these shifts as:

From Top Down to Bottom Up
From Battleground to Playground
From Theology to Anthropology
From On Top of the Cage to Inside the Cage
From Transaction to Transformation
From Impossibility to Normalcy
From Classical to Jazz
From Ideal to Real
From Ideas to Experience
From Outside-In to Inside-Out
From One Way Street to Two Way Street
From Program to Relationship
From Dualism to Incarnation
From Rejected Stone to Cornerstone
From Answers to Questions
From Monologue to Dialogue
From Driven to Drawn
From Anxiety to Sabbath
From Obligation to Celebration
From Exclusion to Embrace
From Position to Authority
From "To and for" to "With and among"
From Power to Love

From Bibliolatry, Ecclesiolatry, Missiolatry
to Worship of Crucified and Risen One
From Noise to Silence
From Grasping to Gift
From Deficits to Assets
From Desolation to Consolation
From Compulsion to Contemplation
From Addiction to Sobriety
From Seriousness to Playfulness/Humor
From to Prose to Poetry
From Propositions to Story
From Speaking to Listening
From Scripture as Answer Book to Scripture
as Text in Travail (Conversation)
From Transmitters of Pain to Transformers
of Pain
From Poor as objects of pity to Poor as "The
face of Jesus who return us to ourselves"
From the Need to be Right to the Joy of
Being Wrong

Order of Discovery and Order of Logic

Order of logic:

Abstract explanations that tend toward formulaic answers

I see my sin



I repent



I am forgiven

Order of Discovery:

A concrete experience that leads to open-ended adventure

I repent



I see my sin



I am forgiven