

**AFROCENTRIC ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT?
SHIFTING THE PARADIGM FROM EUROCENTRICITY TO AFROCENTRICITY**

by

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**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Adult Education, Community Development
and Counselling Psychology
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto**

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ABSTRACT

AFROCENTRIC ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT?

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Master of Arts 2000

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This thesis explores how white, Western Organization Development (OD) practitioners may assist non-Western countries and regions such as Africa in their efforts to improve their organizations. Espoused OD values were compared with traditional African cultural values. Areas of congruity and incongruity were noted. Methods to help ensure that Western OD practitioners may provide OD services to Africa in a manner that is culturally-sensitive, appropriate, and 'in the best interest of the peoples of Africa' (Madhubuti, 1978) were suggested. An 'Afrocentric' OD approach was recommended. This approach comprises: (1) personal 'de-colonization;' (2) cross-cultural communications; (3) African cultural values and Afrocentric perspective; (4) de-colonizing OD approaches: critical questioning of OD values; inclusion of anti-racism and diversity theories and strategies; and (5) indigenous knowledge and approaches. Some of the implications of the thesis's conclusions for both the OD practitioner and the adult educator/researcher were described.

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Organizational theories all have one thing in common: They reflect the conceptual frameworks of Western social science, which are derivatives of Western ideology and thought. By exclusively reflecting the values and notions of Western society, these theories are circumscribable...biased and omit different conceptualizations of human beings and society found in other cultures...some have argued for development of an alternative social science model reflective of the cultural background and cultural reality of African people...[i.e.,] the Afrocentric model.

(Schiele, 1990, p. 145)

There is so much for us to learn in Africa, or rather relearn; how any Westerner can think that the Western way is the best...is beyond me.

(Sten, 1993, p. 23)

It is amazing how the old demons return to haunt me, how seductive the 'Western way' is.

(Sten, 1993, p. 24)

I. BACKGROUND

CHAPTER ONE -- INTRODUCTION

1.1 Author's Purpose, Theoretical and Discursive Framework

These opening quotes suggest both my purpose in writing this paper and the theoretical and discursive framework I intend to use in this discussion of Organization Development (OD) and its capacity (or possible lack thereof) to assist less-industrialized, non-Western, and previously colonized (and many would argue, re-colonized) countries (Owomoyela, 1996; Unesco, 1990, p. 18). This framework may be referred to as 'de-colonizing' and 'anti-colonial' (see Dei (1998b) for a more complete discussion than will be provided later in this section).

Regarding the opening quotes, the Schiele's (1990) article indicated has, among

others, proven to be an important, foundational basis for my own work. Sten (1993) also provides some useful insights and timely reminders for white, Western OD practitioners doing work in non-Western regions such as Africa.

In general, I see the material presented in this thesis as building on the work of, in particular, Molefi Kete Asante, George Sefa Dei, Jerome Schiele, Kwame Gyekye and Evangelina Holvino. Schiele's piece, which comes closest to the topic being considered here, analyzes organizational theory in general from an Afrocentric perspective and notes the congruities and incongruities between it and a Eurocentric one (Schiele, 1990). In addition, it provides a clear image of an Afrocentric framework. Asante's notion of Afrocentricity (Asante, 1987; Asante, 1980a; Asante, 1990; see also Dei, 1998a; Madhubuti, 1978) provides the basis for my work here since the paradigmatic 'shift' I will be proposing in this paper is a shift from an approach to OD that is rooted in (although also in many ways a reaction to) Western, Eurocentric¹ paradigms, to one that is based more directly on Afrocentric values and principles. In this context, I will be arguing that an Afrocentric approach is, notwithstanding the seeming exclusivity² of the term itself, in fact a more inclusive approach (Holvino, 1993) than the Eurocentric one. While the term 'Afrocentricity' (Asante, 1980a; 1987; 1990) will be discussed in its own section, suffice it to say here that Afrocentricity places Africans (or other cultural, and frequently marginalized groups) at the centre of their experiences so they can analyze all matters

¹ I will be equating Eurocentric values with Western values (except where noted) for the purposes of this paper. However, when I am speaking about countries or regions of the world, Western means "the West," not just Europe. By the term, 'Western,' I include North Americans (excluding Mexico) and Europeans, while also recognizing the cultural diversity among them. Part of the notion of 'Western'/European relates to this group's historical experience as 'colonizers' and as 'promoters' of 'white culture' as being intrinsically better than (i.e., superior to) the cultures of people of colour. Mazama's definition of Eurocentrism focuses on "...the pervasiveness of European evolutionary thinking and the widely accepted view that Europe, due to some inherent quality, has taken the lead on the universal path toward progress— that is perfection and happiness for all" (Mazama, 1998, p. 3).

² Afrocentricity involves what is essentially a 'shifting' centrism. As such, some may be more comfortable with the term, 'acentrism' (Verharen, 1995, p. 66). Verharen defines 'acentrism' as "the view that no single group can claim a center stage except in the context of incomplete descriptions. Each group must constitute its own center, but these 'polycenters' coalesce to form the whole" (p. 66).

from that perspective and obtain self-knowledge that has not been filtered (and oftentimes distorted) by others (Verharen, 1995, p. 67), typically a dominating group such as white male, Europeans or Westerners. As such, the Afrocentric approach pays attention to issues of race and gender and thus provides a shift from the more exclusionary Eurocentric model. The Eurocentric model places the white, European male at the centre of all history of importance to a country or culture and interprets everyone's history and experiences from that one perspective. As a result, it excludes, diminishes and marginalizes others' voices and downplays the roles and achievements of those who are different from the white, European (or Western) male. Since Europeans/Westerners are usually in a position of power vis-a-vis non-Westerners, this in turn leads to a situation in which what is in fact just one perspective on matters becomes accepted by mainstream society and academe as 'the truth.' This in turn leads to an 'entrenchment' of what may be at best 'half-truths' (and sometimes outright lies) as indisputable 'fact.' These 'facts' are then passed on to other generations via 'education' as 'the truth.'

In this paper, I also use Ngugi wa Thiong'o's concept of 'decolonizing the mind' (Ngugi, 1986) as a foundational piece. Additionally, I reference material by authors in the areas of 'racial awareness,' and anti-racism and diversity work (Bowser & Hunt, 1996; Findlay, 1992; Jackson & Holvino, 1986; Katz & Miller, 1986; Katz, 1978; Mawhinney, 1998; McIntosh, 1990a; McIntosh, 1990b); cross-cultural awareness (Chasnoff & Muniz, 1989; Hall, 1959; Hall, 1976; Hall, 1983; Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 1991); paradigms (Barker, 1989; Burke, 1992; Gould, 1989; Kuhn, 1996; Senge, 1990; Warner, 1991); cross-cultural communications (Gudykunst, 1998; Gudykunst & Kim, 1984; Hall, 1959; Hall, 1976; Hall, 1983; Kim, 1986; Kim, 1988; Koole & ten Thije, 1994; Wiseman & Koester, 1993); and indigenous knowledge (Dei, 1998a; Dei, 1998b; Green & Zokwe, 1996; Kiggundu, 1991; Mclsaac, 1995; Ocho, 1984; Okpara, 1981).

The 'political project' of this thesis is to add to the discussion on how white, Western (and particularly Canadian) Organization Development (OD) practitioners, and their OD approaches and techniques may assist non-Western countries and regions in their efforts to 'develop', specifically with respect to improving their organizations and more effectively developing and managing their human resources. While OD is distinct from human resources management (as evidenced, in part, by the difference in definitions³ provided for the two concepts), OD interventions are frequently used as a response to organizational effectiveness and human resources management challenges, by, for example, in the case of socio-technical systems design, "creating a context which responds directly to the basic needs of people at work" (Laiken, 1998, p. 85). In addition, some of the distinctions between OD interventions and traditional management or human resource management functions have become increasingly blurred (Holvino, 1993, p. 161; McLean, Sims, Mangham, & Tuffield, 1982, p. 126) since OD's inception as a practice in the United States in the 1950s (Alon, 1998, p. 61).

Africa⁴ is referenced in this paper as an example or 'case study,' however, much of what is proposed here may also have validity in other regions of the world.

The topic of 'development' is itself vast and provides a field of contestation in the extensive literature on this topic. While it will be referred to again in the section of this

³A definition of OD is provided in Chapter Three — "ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT: GROUNDWORK FOR DISCUSSION." Human Resources Management (HRM), although generally understood, is surprisingly, not always defined by those who write about it. In addition, there is some diversity in views about what HRM entails. A more traditional definition of HRM refers to a "process of placing the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time, with the right motivation, to achieve organizational objectives" (Schuler, Galiente, & Jackson, 1987, cited in Hopkins, 1997, p. 95). Another definition, one which perhaps better demonstrates a link to OD is: "creating systems and situations in which human beings in an organisation can make their best contributions to achieve their individual goals and to develop the enterprise" (Eze, 1995).

⁴The term, 'Africa' represents, in a single word, what is really a huge, diverse continent. Rather than viewing and understanding Africa as a 'geographical' space, the reader is advised to regard Africa as a social, political, historical, economic and cultural construct. As such, it is necessary to theorize about and analyze Africa in a multiple of ways, i.e., across and beyond theoretical 'boundaries.' It is also important to remember, that notwithstanding cultural diversity within Africa (Owomoyela, 1996, p. ix), similarities in culture across the continent also exist (Sow et al., 1979, pp. 10-11).

paper on organizational effectiveness and human resource development and management in Africa, it will not be a focus here. However, notwithstanding this, I am including a brief definition of, and commentary on development, mainly for the purposes of framing the later discussion of organizational effectiveness and human resource development and management challenges in Africa.

My preferred definition of 'development' accords with the following, provided by Singh and Titi: self-sustaining improvements in the quality of life and productivity of communities and societies; ensuring that production processes are not over-exploited; and ensuring that people have basic human rights and freedoms (Singh & Titi, 1995, pp. 7-8). Also, in keeping with one of the key principles of Afrocentricity, which will be described more fully in chapter six, a guiding principle of my own perspective (which I share with others such as Dei (1992/3) on a definition of 'development,' is that 'development' should be defined by Africans, themselves, rather than by others, such as multinational companies, the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (Adams, 1992; Dei, 1992/3; Dembele, 1998). Rather than focusing on what people 'lack,' or what they 'should' become, i.e., westernized and 'modern' — which is how many development arguments are framed, African-centred development would focus on people's own aspirations and needs. In this regard, Dei (1992/3) states that we "must begin to unlearn, to rethink, to reconceptualize and deconstruct the hegemonic ideas of development and the development process" (p. 18). He calls for a new form of development in which local people can find creative ways to express their "subjugated knowledges about their own societies and the workings around them" (p. 18). Such knowledge is grounded in the "lived experiences of local peoples" (i.e., indigenous knowledge), (p. 18). Dembele (1998) notes that "Africa's recovery and development lie in inventing a new approach to economic and social development away from the western model based on a materialistic and individualistic view of the world and human relationships, and on a mindless pursuit of

economic, political and strategic advantage" (p. 13). This new approach "must give a high priority to creativity and inventiveness and place human dignity at the center of its preoccupations and subordinate all other objectives to this goal...[it] must be founded on the spiritual renewal of the African people..." (p. 14). Dia (1991) also points out the need for development projects and programs in Africa to more fully take into account African social, political, economic and cultural values and traditions if they are to be successful.

This preceding 'definition' of development is an example of the overall 'de-colonizing' approach I will be attempting to follow in this paper. Briefly, de-colonization is a process that calls into question "the whole colonial situation and its aftermath" (Fanon, 1963, cited in Dei, 1998b). It also calls for "an on-going dialectic between hegemonic centrist systems and peripheral subversion of them; between European ...[imperial]...discourses and their [anti]-colonial dis/mantling" (Thiophene, 1995, cited in Dei, 1998b, p. 6). 'Decolonization' also requires a disruption of the Euro-American definition of the "indigenous [African] human condition" and replacing it with "an understanding of the indigenous social reality informed by local experiences and practices" (Dei, p. 6). Of significance as well is the idea that "all knowledges are contested in terms of boundaries and spaces" (Dei, pp. 6-7) and that it is important not to simply create "a false binary or moral evaluation between [the] good (indigenous)/and bad (conventional/Western) knowledges" (Dei, p. 7) during the 'de-colonizing' discourse.

With respect to an 'anti-colonial discursive framework,' the latter is a "counter/oppositional discourse to the denial and [is a] repudiation of the repressive presence of colonial oppression, and an affirmation of the reality of recolonization processes through the dictates of global capital" (Dei, p. 7). Dei also indicates that, as a theoretical perspective, "anti-colonialism interrogates the power configurations embedded in ideas, cultures and histories of knowledge production and use," and that an "anti-colonial

approach would recognize the importance of locally produced knowledges emanating from cultural histories and daily human experiences and social interactions” (p. 7). In addition, such an approach also questions institutionalized power and privilege and “the accompanying rationale for dominance in social relations” (p. 8). Importantly, however, “power and discourse are not possessed entirely by the colonizer. Discursive agency and power to resist also reside in/among colonized groups” (p. 8). Resistance, in a myriad of ways, and agency, are in fact, important parts of the entire de-colonization process. Dei, citing Haynes and Prakash, interprets ‘resistance’ as “referring to the social actions and practices of subordinate groups (and their allies) that contest hegemonic social formations and knowledges, as well as unravel and dislodge strategies of domination” (Haynes & Prakash, 1991, cited in Dei, 1998b, p. 21). Dei also sees local, indigenous knowledges as ‘counter-hegemonic’ knowledges, (p. 15) and as such, they are vehicles of resistance.

In a similar manner, through this process of de-colonization, people can maintain/regain a sense of ‘agency.’ In other words, formally marginalized or silenced voices can reclaim and reinvigorate “their marginalized voices and knowledges” and speak “for themselves and [act] on their own behalf” (Dei, 1998a, p. 147).

In the discussion that follows, it is also important to note that discourses such as this one are themselves filled with, and subject to contestation, a contestation that reflects, in part, the complexities, ambiguities and stresses within society itself.

1.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are as follows:

- (1) to review espoused OD values as they have evolved over time. For the purposes of this discussion, I am making the assumption that the values that

OD practitioners say they endorse are essentially the same ones they wish to bring to their OD work;

- (2) to compare these OD values with traditional African cultural values (Gyekye, 1996; Gyekye, 1997; Jeppe, 1994; Nysten, Mitchell, & Stout, 1967) and examine areas of congruency and incongruency;
- (3) to explore, with respect to areas of incongruency, what can be done to help ensure that Western (and especially white) OD practitioners who provide OD services to regions such as Africa (my assumption here is that this will likely continue to occur for some time), do so in a manner that is culturally-sensitive, appropriate, and 'in the best interest of the peoples of those regions'⁵ -- in this case, people in African countries;
- (4) to explore, with respect to OD approaches and technologies, which had their roots in Western, Eurocentric thinking,⁶ whether these approaches might, nevertheless, be beneficial to less industrialized, non-Western regions as they develop and manage their human resources and improve their organizations; and
- (5) to propose, in keeping with my purpose of contributing to the improvement of OD practice, as practiced by Western (and especially white) OD practitioners, in non-Western contexts, an OD approach that I believe avoids some of the problems which I think are inherent in the Eurocentric model.

⁵ I was first introduced to this phrase and approach by Professor George Dei in his 1999 class on *Modernization, Development and Education in African Contexts*, OISE/University of Toronto. It is discussed at length by Asante (Asante, 1980a, p. 52), in which he references Madhubuti's "brilliant question, 'Is it in the best interest of African peoples?'" (Madhubuti, 1978) .

⁶ Most of OD's 'founders' were white American males working in the behavioural sciences field (French & Bell, 1995).

1.3 Key Questions for Consideration

In my review of the literature, I contemplate the question of whether white, Western OD practitioners (including but not restricted to Canadians) can ever really provide culturally-sensitive, culturally-appropriate, and non-Eurocentric⁷ OD consulting services, including the transfer of OD consulting skills, to clients who are people of colour, living in non-Western, less industrialized regions. I inquire as to whether this is indeed possible, notwithstanding the fact that some espoused OD values may be congruent with traditional African cultural values. I raise this question since a majority of these practitioners are both white and live in Western countries. As such, they are privileged members of white dominated societies. In such societies a doctrine of White Supremacy⁸ endures and is manifested in both individual and systemic acts of white privilege, and racism against people of colour (Bowser & Hunt, 1996; Darden, 1999). I also question whether most Western OD practitioners are 'so different' from other whites in a white-dominated society. Are they 'so different' in both their 'espoused OD values' and their 'values in use'?⁹ Are they thus able to 'escape' any tendencies to act in a racist manner themselves or, (in a more passive way), will they simply 'go with the flow,' and not challenge (and thus permit) others' racist acts or white privilege, particularly in their work with people of colour? In raising such questions, I am hoping to highlight what I see as some key issues for white,

⁷By 'non-Eurocentric,' I mean an approach to OD that does not place 'European-centred' or 'West-centred' values at its core. Rather, an approach that puts the values of the client's culture at its core will be proposed.

⁸"White Supremacy, which is deeply ingrained in the white European culture, is a set of ideas, held by the white population, which establishes the way things ought to be in relationships involving people of color...[This doctrine] holds that in any relationships involving people of color, whether economic, social or political, the white race must have the superior position and the competitive advantage (Rose, 1969). Any other arrangement such as racial equality threatens the comfort zone and is, therefore, unacceptable to the white majority. White Supremacy in multi-racial, white-dominated societies is used to shape social laws, institutions and practices which the dominant group considers appropriate for the society. Thus, ideology, in this case White Supremacy, enables whites to legitimize domination and control through public policy since public policy has, as its main objective [making society] the way...[it] ought to be" [emphasis mine] (Reeves, 1983; Smith, 1989, cited in Darden, 1999).

⁹I am taking liberties here with Argyris' notions of "espoused theories" (i.e., what we say) and "theories in use" (i.e., the implied theory in what we do) (Argyris, 1992, pp. 216-217; Senge, 1990, p. 186). For my purposes, I am referring to the values we say we believe in (and may sincerely think we do) versus the values that may be interpreted as being present, based on one's behaviour.

Western OD practitioners who provide services of any kind to any diverse, i.e., non-rationally homogeneous client organization, whether in Africa, in the West or elsewhere. In this regard, I am suggesting that the values that underpin the 'mainstream' Eurocentric OD approach are, although progressive by Western standards, nevertheless still 'Western.' As such, they are, in the West, I would hypothesize, generally accepted as 'taken for granted' in both the discourse on organizational theory¹⁰ and OD theory and practice. Similarly, they are, I would suggest, seldom interrogated for their appropriateness in 'non-Western' regions of the world. This paper tries to at least take a step in filling this relative void in the discourse.

My wish to ponder these questions is, in part, rooted in my own experiences, beliefs and assumptions relating to how whites in predominantly white countries, (both in terms of population and power in society) such as Canada, relate to issues of racism and discrimination. While there is, undoubtedly, a diversity of perspectives among Canadian whites regarding whether or not they believe white privilege and racism exist in Canadian society, (and certainly whether they are, or see themselves as being racist), a seemingly frequently held notion among Canadians is that there is "no discrimination here" (Billingsley & Muszynski, 1985). This view persists notwithstanding well-documented evidence¹¹ to the contrary (Billingsley & Muszynski, 1985; Henry, 1978; Henry, 1995; Henry & Ginzberg, 1985; Reitz & Breton, 1994). For my purposes here, I am starting with the premise that discrimination and racism not only exist in Canada, but that they are part of the 'fabric' of Canadian society. This situation, in turn, affects all Canadians, including OD practitioners, albeit in different ways. As an underlying 'operating principle' for a society, they will also affect how members of that society act toward others, and particularly toward people of

¹⁰Exceptions to this are: Hassard & Parker (1993); Mills & Simmons (1995); Reed & Hughes (1992) and most notably, Holvino (1993).

¹¹While this too is an area of contestation, extensive Canadian bibliographic references are available to those who wish to examine this topic.

colour, both within Canada and abroad.

1.4 Personal and Subject[ive] Location of Author

My selection of this thesis topic is the result of a confluence of many interests, concerns, previous experiences and 'life-changing' learnings regarding racism and discrimination. I have been concerned, throughout my life, with oppression and wish to have a greater understanding of why oppression occurs, the forms it takes, and how, through specific strategies, it might be overcome. In addition, having spent some fifteen years as a consultant working in the areas of employment discrimination and affirmative action/employment equity, as well as several years in the fields of organization development and workplace diversity, I feel that I have obtained a reasonable understanding of the resilience of racism and employment discrimination, and the continued existence of white resistance to equity change in Canadian society. I have observed and tried to counter many acts of personal and systemic resistance to equity change. Based on this experience, I determined that there was more at work here than just 'lack of information' or, a 'natural' resistance to a proposed change.

The key paradigmatic shift I made in my thinking was from seeing acts of White Supremacy, white privilege, racism and discrimination as 'exceptions' in an otherwise fair and equitable society (which many Canadians would like to believe is the case), to seeing White Supremacy as an organizing principle and feature of Canadian society, with white privilege and racism being two of its typical manifestations.

As a white person, a person who enjoys certain privileges in Canadian, and other white societies, solely on the basis of skin colour, I believe I have a responsibility and an obligation to work toward the removal of such privileges, which are based on invalid, and

morally reprehensible premises. Having said this, I recognize the contradiction of my position as a researcher within a North American university, which puts me in a place of privilege and may, as such, automatically 'privilege' my knowledge.

Notwithstanding this contradiction, I believe I can play a positive role in this regard and am committed to working to eradicate the doctrine of White Supremacy (together with racism and discrimination) that my group established and, which the majority of this group (in my view) continues to maintain (if not actively, at least through silent 'consent').

In terms of my 'social location,' I am a white, middle-class, Canadian-born woman in my mid-40s who was raised in a suburb of Toronto and who has lived in downtown Toronto most of my adult life. Most of my formal education could be described as male Eurocentric. Many of my key learnings about race, racism, and discrimination have been the result of my fortune in being able to work with racially diverse groups of colleagues who have generously shared their (sometimes painful) experiences with me. Much of my past twenty years or so has been spent on becoming aware of the need to shift paradigms and on learning about in which direction I should move. In this regard, I consider myself to be still 'in training' in terms of my ability to 'de-colonize' my research fully, and in the manner described by Dei (1998b). As Sten (1993) pointed out (in one of the opening quotes), "[i]t is amazing how...seductive the 'Western way' is."

1.5 Rationale for Study and Contribution to Fields of Organization Development,¹² and African Studies

Schiele points out the need for work that conjoins an Afrocentric model to

¹²Definitions of OD and other relevant terms will be provided in Chapter Three —"ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT: GROUNDWORK FOR DISCUSSION."

organizational theory, noting that most of the work done in this regard has applied only to individual and group behaviour (p. 145). Also, as previously noted, there is a relative void in the discourse (compared with that on the 'technology' of OD), on the topic of the appropriateness of utilizing OD approaches that are based on Western values in non-Western contexts such as Africa.

In addition, regarding Africa, Kiggundu (1988), as cited in Blunt and Jones, points out that while African organizations may be able to apply imported Western management¹³ concepts and ideas to their technical aspects with a few changes, these "ideas and practices are generally found to be inadequate and/or inappropriate for...organisations' relationships with their environments" (Blunt & Jones, 1992, p. 1). Blunt and Jones (p. 11), citing Murrell, state that "Western management models cannot be merely adopted or copied in [Africa]; they have to be adapted in the 'most culturally appropriate manner'" (Murrell, 1986). This 'adaptation,' in my view, needs to constitute a paradigmatic shift, rather than merely a 'tinkering' with the Western OD approach. This issue will be explored later in the paper.

Additionally, as Kiggundu (p. 239) notes, a recent study indicated the importance of management practices to African organizations if Africa is to "pull out of its present doldrums" (Blunt and Jones, p. 1).

Ahiauзу, cited in Blunt and Jones (p. 10), has commented as well that it has become increasingly accepted that "patterns of management and employee behaviour in the workplace are largely culture-bound" (Ahiauзу, 1986, p. 3). Thus, culture, both in terms of the employees' cultures, and the organizational culture as a whole, needs to be a key

¹³As previously indicated, while OD interventions are distinctive in many ways from traditional human resource management practices, OD is often utilized as an organizational response to problems of organizational effectiveness which frequently, in turn, have an impact on human resources management issues, and vice versa.

consideration in any model designed to improve organizations.

Blunt and Jones (p. 10) concur with Ahiauzu on the need for more research, and state that much of the literature on socio-cultural influences on organizations is of "poor quality." In addition, Jones and Blunt indicate that "[l]ittle is known about organizational functioning and managerial behavior in Africa. [And, they add, the]... need for organizational development and change is urgent" (Jones & Blunt, 1993, p. 1735).

Based on the previous comments, additional research in this area would appear to be, potentially, an important contribution to both organization development theory and practice. This study is intended to contribute to the fields of organization development and African studies by providing a forum for discussion of these issues and by introducing an Afrocentric approach to organization development work in, particularly but not exclusively, regions such as Africa. Such an approach will, I believe, contribute to improving both the quality of the content of organization development approach(es) and techniques used by Western (frequently white) OD practitioners and the interactions between these practitioners and African clients.

1.6 Initial Assumptions Underlying This Study

The initial assumptions of this study were as follows:

- (1) That relatively non-industrialized regions such as Africa might benefit from some Western organization theories and practices in some, culturally-appropriate form.
- (2) That a culturally-appropriate organization development approach might be possible.
- (3) That the people who will be affected by the organization development approach are

in the best position to make any 'adaptations' of Western approaches.

- (4) That, notwithstanding the latter point (3), some 'Western' theorists and practitioners can make a useful contribution to the discussion of this topic.
- (5) That Western approaches that are used in relatively non-industrialized regions such as Africa, without having been specifically 'adapted' to the cultural context, are likely inappropriate and are, as such, probably also unethical.
- (6) That a comprehensive OD approach would likely include not only theoretical aspects but also specific techniques, tools and teaching-learning methods by which the information and skills are transferred by the OD practitioner, as well as address issues of the practitioner's identity and social location (e.g. sex, race, education, etc.).
- (7) That the values, culture and worldview (i.e., way of seeing the world) of the OD practitioner are key factors in determining the likely success or failure of OD interventions in non-Western contexts.
- (8) That any inquiry of this nature, regarding Africa, should be guided by the fundamental question, 'Is this in the best interest of Africans?' (Madhubuti, 1978; cited in Asante, 1980; Dei, 1998a). Africans are, of course, in the best position to make this determination.

II. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER TWO — APPROACH TO PROJECT, DISCUSSION, AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Approach to Project and Discussion

In this paper, I begin with the (well-established) premise that OD is, what I call 'value-laden' (French, 1973; Gellerman et al., 1990; Golembiewski, 1993; White, 1986). In fact, the Organization Development Network (ODN), which is a U.S.-based association of OD practitioners from more than 90 countries, states in its mission statement that it is a "values-based community which supports its members in their work in human organization and systems development..." and that one of its strategies for achieving its mission is to "[l]ead the field in practicing and advocating our values"(OD Network, 1999a) (emphasis mine). These values, which will also be presented later in this paper, are featured prominently and described in some detail on its website. Indeed, it appears that values 'drive' the field, (more so than is the case with other fields), and that they therefore make OD, OD. I suggest that the prominent role that values play in OD work is a 'double-edged sword' and that they may limit, at least in some cases, an OD practitioner's ability to be open to cultural differences in the way things 'should' or 'shouldn't' be done in organizations. Also, the fact that these values are 'Western,' (however 'progressive' they may appear to Western eyes) may be problematic in terms of their usefulness or appropriateness to non-Western contexts. 'Mainstream,' Western OD may thus be problematic in terms of its ability to assist Africans in their efforts to 'develop.'

With regard to this discussion of OD values, the 'Western' approach to OD will be

interrogated in terms of the key values underlying it, as espoused in the literature and as disseminated by the OD Network in the U.S., the latter which does not, admittedly, represent all OD researchers and practitioners. These values will be compared and contrasted with 'traditional' African cultural values, as articulated in the literature (Asante, 1980a; Gyekye, 1996; Gyekye, 1997; Schiele, 1990). I will describe areas of congruency and incongruency. I then suggest that these cultural differences may become the basis of cultural conflicts. I also contend that issues such as White Supremacy and racism need to be acknowledged as still being a factor in OD work done by white, Western OD practitioners. I point out the 'power of cultural paradigms' to distort what one can 'see' and try to provide a cautionary note in this regard.

During the focused discussion on these values, the possible implications of utilizing Western OD approaches in Africa will also be examined. The cultural context of Africa within which African organizations operate, and within which the described organizational effectiveness and human resources management challenges occur, will be considered.

I then outline some of these challenges¹⁴ and discuss the nature of the discourse in the literature on this topic. I propose that, in place of an approach to OD that had its basis in Western (and heavily U.S.) values, which, it has been suggested, has historically excluded or marginalized women and racial minorities (Holvino, 1993), an Afrocentric¹⁵ approach to OD be considered for widespread use (i.e., in Africa and beyond). In making this case, I am mindful of the fact that OD has, in many ways, already started to shift from

¹⁴As previously indicated, OD is frequently seen as a possible response to organizational effectiveness problems which themselves impact on, and are in turn affected by human resources development and management issues. While the use of OD interventions in regions such as Africa is increasing, research literature on this topic is even more scarce than is literature on organizational effectiveness and human resources development and management in Africa.

¹⁵As noted previously, this term, 'Afrocentricity' will be defined and described in some detail later in chapter six. In the meantime, the reader can understand it as entailing putting Africans and their experiences at the 'centre' (rather than viewing Africa from a Eurocentric perspective that marginalizes Africans and diminishes their experience and knowledge). It is also a philosophy that emphasizes 'holism,' and includes both physical and spiritual aspects of being (Asante, 1987; Verharen, 1995).

its Eurocentric 'roots.' However, I am in agreement with Holvino that more needs to be done. A shift to an 'Afrocentric' approach may help facilitate this process.

Finally, I outline the components of what I believe to be a starting point for a fairly comprehensive approach to OD— one which will shift it in the direction of Afrocentricity. In this regard, I argue that Afrocentricity is not replacing one type of 'centrism' for another, but rather, is providing a more inclusive approach that places the client system's values at the centre in a determined and an explicit fashion and operationalizes the espoused value of "social justice"(OD Network, 1999b). As such, this approach builds on the currently-espoused values of the OD community, as articulated by the OD Network association.

The proposed approach will deal with both what a Western OD practitioner might do to better equip her/himself to provide culturally-sensitive, appropriate and useful OD consulting services to non-Western, less industrialized regions such as Africa, and how the overall approach to OD, including teaching-learning methods, might also be improved.

In presenting this 'Afrocentric' approach to OD, I am suggesting that it is more culturally appropriate for Africans (and perhaps others) than traditional Western OD approaches and that, as such, it is both ethical and potentially helpful to Africans in their goal of improving African organizations and successfully meeting African human resource management and development challenges.

With respect to my approach's theoretical basis and operational capability, I freely admit that they are still in their 'embryonic' stages. In presenting this approach, I recognize its many weaknesses. I then note in concluding that much more work on this approach would need to be done for it to become either theoretically comprehensive or operationally sound.

2.2 Methodology

This research was accomplished in five phases. The approach may generally be considered under the umbrella of 'grounded theory,' with the understanding that the term is meant to be used in a "nonspecific way to refer to any approach to developing theoretical ideas (concepts, models, formal theories) that somehow begins with data" (Schwandt, 1997, pp. 60-61). The data were qualitative, based on a selective review of relevant literature. These data from this literature were synthesized and analyzed in order to produce a new approach to organization development that is designed to be culturally sensitive and appropriate for use in non-Western contexts. The steps in this process are:

- (1) **Data Gathering —selection of literature for review:** after the main research questions were framed, an initial, wide-ranging, non-evaluative literature search was completed to establish what materials existed regarding the relevant topic areas, i.e., (a) organization development theory and values; (b) culture, and in particular, 'values;' (c) African cultural values; (d) Afrocentricity; (e) de-colonization; (f) cross-cultural awareness; (g) cross-cultural communications; (h) anti-racism and diversity studies (i) organizational effectiveness and human resource management and development in Africa; and (j) indigenous knowledge. Standard literature search methods, including the Internet, were utilized for this search.
- (2) **Brief critical review and initial, evaluative assessment of literature re: inclusion of same as 'data.'** The literature was reviewed critically and compared against a key 'guiding' question and criterion for inclusion in a 'deeper' assessment: "Does the author's argument support a position that would likely be in the best interest of Africans? (or is at least neutral in its effect?)" This question formed the main, but not only criterion for determining if an author's argument was worth further consideration

and if so, which type of consideration. For example, arguments in the literature that were clearly (in my view) hegemonic and served only to perpetuate negative stereotypes about Africa without adding any value to the discussion were set aside—unless they were to be used to illustrate how Africa is described (often negatively) in the literature. This was done purposely because, in my opinion, the literature already abounds (and unduly so) with such 'negative reports' on Africa. As a white, Western researcher, I took the position that I would not add to this discourse or unduly highlight those who have taken this hegemonic, Eurocentric track. Articles that might present negative, but more 'balanced' impressions of Africa and which also contained serious and important content, i.e., worthy of further consideration, were included for further study. Books and articles which held the most promise in terms of their ability to 'let Africa speak for itself' and which (typically) portrayed Africa in a fair and non-hegemonic, non-Eurocentric way were utilized extensively. Having said this, it is important to point out that, in some cases, the lack of literature existing on a topic, such as Organization Development in Africa, meant that 'Western' authors such as Blunt and Jones (1992) needed to be consulted more extensively than I might have wished were the case.

- (3) **Compilation, synthesis and analysis of qualitative data.** The qualitative data, based on the initial review, were organized and compiled by topic. Topics were dealt with separately as well as being 'crosslinked,' as suggested by the material itself. For example, the notion of overall 'development' (both 'traditional' and Afrocentric) was linked to 'organization development,' which was in turn linked to 'organizational effectiveness, and human resource development and management challenges in Africa.' With respect to the analysis of the data, the question previously mentioned, i.e., "Does the author's argument support a position that would likely be in the best interest of Africans?" (or is at least neutral?), was an important assessment tool. In

addition, one of the key 'end-products' of the research was a possible Afrocentric approach to Organization Development. Data were also analyzed, using an Afrocentric/African-centered approach, to help me determine whether such an approach was feasible, and if so, what it might look like.

- (4) Findings and Conclusions, based on the data analysis: the bulk of the paper deals with the findings and conclusions, based on my critical review of the literature selected and my analysis utilizing the Afrocentric criteria indicated.
- (5) Presentation of an approach to Organization Development that is designed to be culturally-sensitive and culturally-appropriate to non-Western contexts. Based on the research, a proposed, 'Afrocentric' approach to Organization Development is presented for consideration.

III. CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

CHAPTER THREE — ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT: GROUNDWORK FOR DISCUSSION

3.1 Introduction

Since Organization Development is being presented in this paper as a possible vehicle for assisting African organizations, and by extension, Africa as a whole, in their efforts to develop, a definition of Organization Development and a brief summary of how OD has evolved over time will be presented. As well, some definitions relevant to this discussion of OD will be provided.

3.2 Definition of OD and Its Evolution Over Time

A number of definitions of Organization Development have been published in the literature over the years. Eric Neilsen (1984, pp. 1-3) cites some of the definitions provided by other OD theorists and practitioners such as Richard Beckhard (1969); Warren G. Bennis (1969), both of whom Wendell French and Cecil Bell refer to as 'major players' in the field (French & Bell, 1995, pp. 72-73); Gordon L. Lippett (1982); Richard Schmuck and Mathew Miles (1971); Warner Burke and Harvey A. Hornstein (1972); Wendell L. French and Cecil H. Bell, Jr. (1973); and, French, Bell and Robert A. Zawacki (1978). Neilsen also provides a definition of his own (1984). More recent works by OD theorists will also be referenced in the section on historical and current OD values.

Some of the key themes of these definitions are that OD involves: (1) "planned," systemic, large-scale or "organization-wide" change, undertaken over a long period of

time, “managed from the top,”¹⁶ and aimed at improving organizations (especially their “effectiveness and health”) (Beckhard, 1969); (2) the use of behavioural science knowledge in a process of organizational self-analysis (Beckhard, 1969; French et al., 1978; French & Bell, 1973; Schmuck & Miles, 1971); (3) the use of action research (French & Bell, 1973); (4) the increased competence of an organization's members to understand and manage organization processes and culture (French et al., 1978); (5) increased problem-solving capacities (French & Bell, 1973); (6) collaborative management of organization culture, especially with respect to formal work teams (French & Bell, 1973); (7) use of a catalyst or change agent (French & Bell, 1973); and (8) an emphasis on candidness on one's view of her/his organization and greater responsibility by organization members for their own actions (Neilsen, 1984).

For the purposes of the discussion on OD values, I would like to highlight Warren Bennis's (1969) definition, since it seems to convey, particularly well, the fact that OD focuses on changing values and beliefs (as well as behaviors)—an important consideration for the discussion of OD practitioners providing services within Africa. Bennis (p. 2) sees OD as “a response to change, a complex educational strategy intended to change the beliefs, attitudes, values, and structure of organizations so that they can better adapt to new technologies, markets, and challenges, and to move toward greater organizational maturity” (Bennis, 1969 cited in Neilsen, 1984).

French and Bell are influential authors in the OD field.¹⁷ In the fifth edition of

¹⁶ Burke notes that one significant shift in organizational dynamics and management [including the management of change], since 1969, has been from a “unilateral, top-down management” style to “multilateral, participative management” approaches. This includes “more decentralized authority and flatter hierarchies” and “collaborative, joint approaches to labor-management relations” (Burke, 1994, pp. 17, 24). Both of these latter approaches have long been advocated by OD. I would add that although change initiatives may not be “managed from the top” on a day-to-day basis, they do require the sustained commitment and ongoing support of key executives.

¹⁷ Holvino (1993, p. 84) indicates that Organization Development (French, Bell, & Zawacki, 1983) is one of the “four most commonly used texts in current OD programs” in the U.S.

Organization Development (French & Bell, 1995), the authors provide some "more recent definitions of organization development" (p. 27), citing the work of Michael Beer (1980); Peter Vaill (1989); Jerry Porras and Peter Robertson (1992); Thomas Cummings and Christopher Worley (1993); and W. Warner Burke (1994). These newer definitions are, for the most part, a reworking of the older ones; however, there is a greater recognition of whole "systems" as the site for OD interventions (Burke, p. 12). In addition, there is a more explicit mention of one aim of OD being to enhance "congruence between organizational structure, processes, strategy, people, and culture," as well as an organization being able to develop a "self-renewing capacity" (Beer, 1980, cited in French and Bell, 1995). French and Bell remark that these definitions "contain a great deal of overlap" which they see as "encouraging" and note that "[all these] authors agree that OD is a field of applied behavioral science related to planned change," that the "target of change is the total organization or system" and that the "goals of OD are increased organization effectiveness and individual development" (p. 27). Interestingly, French and Bell endorse Bennis's (1969) definition, which focuses on changing "beliefs, attitudes, values and organization structure" as being "as relevant today as when it was first written" (p. 28).

Organization culture is also cited for its "crucial role" and "organization culture and processes" are highlighted as "high priority targets in most OD programs" (pp. 27-28). French and Bell "affirm [their] belief that culture is the bedrock of behavior in organizations" and that while "culture, strategy, structure, and processes...each [influence] the others...culture is of primary importance" (p. 30). Burke also notes that OD is a "process of cultural change...[that] the value system of an organization is a significant component of its culture [and that for an] organization to change significantly...its values must change." (Burke, 1994, p.194). This issue will be addressed in more detail in the section on OD values.

Of similar importance to OD projects is “developing the organization’s self-renewing capacity” (Beer, 1980), which is, in French and Bell’s view, “a central goal of all OD programs.” Part of this self-renewing capacity may be in the form of learning organizations— a phenomenon which all of the writers cited by French and Bell have endorsed.

French and Bell’s ‘up-to-date’ definition of OD can be summarized as follows:

Organization development is a long-term effort, led and supported by top management [i.e., championed and adequately resourced by key executives], to improve an organization’s visioning, empowerment, learning, problem-solving processes, through an ongoing collaborative management of organization culture—with special emphasis on the culture of intact work teams and other team configurations—utilizing the consultant-facilitator role and the theory and technology of applied behavioral science, including action research¹⁸ (French & Bell, 1995, p. 28) [quote in italics in original].

French and Bell¹⁹ also present what they see as the “primary distinguishing characteristics” of OD. In their view, OD focuses on: (1) culture and processes; (2) the human and social side of organizations primarily, which also means intervening in the technological and structural aspects²⁰ and (3) total system change, seeing organizations

¹⁸ Action research refers to a “participative model of collaborative and iterative diagnosis and action taking in which the leader, organization members, and OD practitioner work together to define and resolve problems and opportunities.” (French & Bell, 1995, p. 32)

¹⁹ I am quoting extensively from French and Bell as they (among several others) are considered “must reads” within the OD field, and I would hypothesize that their views have an important influence on OD practitioners.

²⁰ I interpret this statement as including both human/social and technical/structural aspects, albeit with the emphasis on the former. There is a diversity of opinion on the topic. A review of the ODN’s values indicates that both aspects are seen as important. However, Burke also cites a perhaps familiar OD values dilemma wherein OD consultants may “push for humanistic and *participative management practices*” [italics in original], but may end up having to be “primarily concerned with more traditional and typical problems of how to increase efficiency and productivity” (Burke, 1994, p.195), the latter which are still often overarching management goals. While OD ideally seeks to achieve both humanistic and sound management goals, Burke’s comment suggests there is often tension between trying to meet both sets of goals. Laiken, in reporting on the findings of a group of OD professionals who were discussing some key issues facing the OD field, quotes a research participant in saying that, with respect to profitability and OD, what “OD consultants offer is [in part] a set of processes which can help an organization use its resources more efficiently and effectively, in order to turn around its profitability” (Laiken, 1996, pp. 122-123). If this is the case, as I believe it is, OD is well-equipped to help organizations meet both their “humanistic” and “bottom-line” productivity goals.

as complex social systems. It also (4) supports collaboration among all organization members in managing culture and organization processes; (5) emphasizes the importance of teams for task accomplishment and OD activities; (6) sees cross-organizational participation in problem-solving and decision-making as "hallmarks of OD"; (7) views OD practitioners as facilitators, collaborators and co-learners with the clients; (8) sees as its "overarching goal" to help clients be capable of solving their own problems by "teaching the skills and knowledge of continuous learning through self-analytical methods"; (9) views organization improvement as an "ongoing process"; (10) relies on action research, including extensive participation of "client system members"; and (11) takes a developmental perspective that focuses on creating 'win-win' solutions (French & Bell, 1995, p. 33).

3.3 Definition of 'Attitudes,' 'Beliefs,' 'Values,' 'Assumptions,' ' Norms,' 'Culture,' and 'Tradition'

3.3.1 Introduction

Beliefs, values and assumptions (as well as culture) are integral to organization development (French & Bell, 1995), and to this discussion of it. Related to these subjects are attitudes and norms of behaviour. In reviewing the literature on Africa, it also became apparent to me that the term, 'tradition,' which is sometimes used interchangeably with culture, is used extensively (although Gyekye (1997) disagrees with this practice).²¹ Before proceeding to the subjects of OD values and African culture and values, I would first like to provide a working definition and brief discussion of these terms.

²¹This phenomenon is itself worthy of critical study, which is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper.

3.3.2 Attitudes, Beliefs, Values and Assumptions

The Concise Oxford Dictionary Of Current English (referred to here as the 'OED') defines an **attitude** as “a settled opinion or way of thinking” (Allen, 1990) [underlining added for emphasis]. This definition is similar to the one the dictionary provides for '**belief**' (see below) in that the way of thinking is firm or fixed. The term '**belief**' is often used in reference to religious views but can apply to any topic on which one has a firm opinion.

French and Bell provide their perspective on this and add the notion of the 'individual' to it. They see a **belief** as “a proposition about how the world works that the individual accepts as true” or as a “fact” (French & Bell, 1995, p. 68). The OED describes a belief as: “a person's religion [or a] religious contention...a firm opinion...an acceptance (of a thing, fact, statement, etc.)” (p. 100).

French and Bell note that **values** are “also beliefs” and define them as beliefs about what is “good” or desirable and what is “bad” or undesirable. The OED echoes this perspective, describing values as: “one's principles or standards; one's judgement of what is valuable or important in life” (p. 1357). In contrast to these individualistic definitions, O.D. deals with (cultural) beliefs in the context of an organization as a 'society' (Laiken, 1999).

For French and Bell, **assumptions** are beliefs that are seen to be “so valuable and obviously correct that they are taken for granted and rarely examined or questioned” (p. 68). Argyris and Senge also deal with belief systems and assumptions and their power to shape one's way of thinking (Argyris, 1982). Senge notes, “our 'mental models' determine not only how we make sense of the world, but how we take action” (Senge, 1990, p. 175).

French and Bell echo Senge's view, commenting that “[v]alues, assumptions, and beliefs provide structure and stability for people as they attempt to understand the world around them” (p. 68).

These latter points are important to the discussion on Western OD practitioners and how they might more successfully provide OD services to non-Western contexts, particularly since one of the key roles of OD is to help organizational members surface and examine their beliefs (Laiken, 1999).

3.3.3 Norms

The OED defines a **norm** as “a standard or pattern or type” or a “customary behaviour” (p. 808). I would add to this that norms are a society's ‘shoulds’ (and ‘should nots’). They describe what is and is not appropriate behaviour for a cultural group and prescribe how members of that group should behave. Related to this may be sanctions for failure to comply with the prescribed behaviors. Since behaviour is a reflection in some way of a group's norms, it is more ‘visible’ compared with values, beliefs and assumptions. The latter three characteristics can only be inferred if the people/ person involved do(es) not state them or otherwise make(s) them known to an observer.

3.3.4 Culture

Organization Development theorist, Edgar Schein, defines culture as “...a pattern of basic assumptions...invented, discovered, or developed by a given group... as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration... that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore...is taught to new members as the...correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (French & Bell,

1995, p. 30). Using their definitions of the three respective terms, French and Bell similarly summarize culture as comprising “basic assumptions, values, and norms of behavior that are viewed as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel” (p. 30).

Ali Mazrui defines culture in terms of seven functions. He sees culture, first, as providing “lenses of perception, a way of looking at reality, a world view” [i. e., a cultural framework within which and from which the world is viewed]. Second, it provides “standards of evaluation” (e.g., what is good versus what is evil). Third, culture “conditions motivation” by influencing what people do and do not do. Fourth, culture also entails communication, including both verbal and non-verbal language, as well as styles of dress. Fifth, culture determines what the “pecking order” in a society will be. In addition, with respect to economics, there is a link between culture and the “means and modes of production.” Mazrui’s seventh function of culture (which is, in my view, a key one) is to define a group’s identity (Mazrui, 1980, pp. 46–48).

Molefi Kete Asante, referencing the discourse on Afrocentricity and citing Maulana Karenga’s (1978) philosophical views on culture, notes that culture comprises “seven criteria: history, mythology, creative motif, ethos, social organization, political organization, and economic organization” (Asante, 1980a, pp. 23-24). Julius Jeppe describes culture as the “socio-political values, usages, worldviews and institutions of groups (peoples)...[which] are moulded and modified over time by the historic, social, political, economic, religious, symbolic and subjective experiences of each group” (Jeppe, 1994, p. 8).

It is perhaps interesting to note here that while the OD definitions speak largely to individual, group and organization-wide assumptions, values and norms of behavior, Karenga’s definition links ‘day-to-day’ ways of seeing and doing things to a whole “system of thought” (Asante, 1980a, p. 24). Similarly, Jeppe’s definition makes a link between the

day-to-day behaviours and 'big picture' worldviews. He, along with Kwame Gyekye, also adds the important idea that cultures do change over time (Gyekye, 1997). This latter 'holistic' approach of linking culture and values to a broader philosophical context of African thought was an approach frequently seen in the literature reviewed regarding African values (Asante, 1980a; Gyekye, 1997; Sow, Balogun, Aguessy, & Diagne, 1979), whereas several of the Western authors consulted for this paper dealt with discreet, identifiable values as individual elements, without reference to a whole system of thought, philosophy or notion of a worldview. While a full discussion of these differences is beyond the scope of this paper, it is interesting to ponder the extent to which the values orientation (i.e., individualistic vs. communalistic) of the various cultures, as represented by their writers, are also reflected within their respective discourses.

3.3.5 Tradition

Gyekye has written extensively on the topic of tradition (and the related notion of modernity). His definition of tradition includes, "any cultural product that was created or pursued by past generations and that, having been accepted and preserved, in whole or in part, by successive generations, has been maintained to...a particular time" (Gyekye, 1997, p. 221). Gyekye differentiates this more 'active' definition of tradition from those of other authors whose definitions of tradition entail a passive transmission and acceptance of beliefs and practices (Shils, 1981; Fleischacker, 1994). Gyekye does, however, agree with others such as Shils on the idea that a practice or belief must last for at least three generations to be considered a tradition (p. 219). Another important aspect of tradition is that it is seen as authoritative and worthy of being deferred to, "...without argument" (Acton, 1952-53, cited in Gyekye, 1997), although Gyekye (1997) also stresses the need to critically examine 'traditional' values and ways of doing things.

Asante, for his part, sees tradition as “history, customs and rituals...[and notes that it] changes; it is not static, but rather [is] a perspective that is controlled by the viewer.” Gyekye also sees tradition, like culture, as being changeable (p. 222). Finally, Asante states that tradition is “a necessary link between an individual and his [sic] means of expression” (Asante, 1980a, p. 96).

3.4 How Attitudes, Beliefs, Values, Assumptions, Norms, Culture, and Tradition 'Fit' Together

What came first, 'culture' or 'values' seems, in my view, to be the proverbial 'chicken or egg' problem. While beliefs, values and other aspects of human social interaction and behaviour are clearly interrelated and sometimes overlap, I see them as part of a continuous 'system.' Briefly, I see attitudes, beliefs and values as the 'building blocks' of culture, with culture representing the 'big picture.' Since no culture exists in the absence of a previous culture, that which went before (especially 'fixed' notions or traditions) necessarily influences what comes to exist or be valued in any given culture.

Attitudes, beliefs and values are themselves 'invisible'-- unless the person who holds them states what they are. They are often inferred based on a person's observable behaviour or 'practices.' This behaviour and the values and beliefs underlying it are subject to cultural interpretation by the observer, and that interpretation may or may not be correct. Senge notes that “[o]ur theories determine what we measure” (p. 175), and that our “mental models are always incomplete” (p. 185) [emphasis in original]. The inferences that result from these mental models may in turn result in “leaps of abstraction” in which one “jumps from observation to generalization” (p. 186). This can also lead to the stereotyping of groups.

Behaviours and practices are frequently governed by societal rules or norms--the 'shoulds' and 'should nots' of a society. Once a set of attitudes, beliefs, values, norms, behaviours and practices become accepted by what I would describe as a 'critical mass' of people, either within the mainstream culture or a sub-culture, those elements become 'fixed,' however briefly. If these cultural components remain fixed in the culture over a period of time (I accept Gyekye's 'three generation rule'), they become part of that culture's 'traditions'.

Noting the definitions of "assumptions" and "tradition," previously provided, one can see the similarity between the two. In my view, both carry with them the sense that they are "so valuable and obviously correct that they are taken for granted and rarely examined or questioned" (French & Bell, 1995, p. 68). This also becomes the basis for one's 'worldview' or, 'way of seeing' the world or the paradigm, model or framework within which, and from which one views and assesses the world, including other cultures.

3.5 'Worldviews,' and the 'Power of Paradigms'

3.5.1 Definition and Significance of 'Worldviews'

A number of authors from diverse fields of study have coined various terms (in various languages) to describe this phenomenon of "worldviews" (Gyekye, 1997; Kuhn, 1996; Merquior, 1991). Senge refers to this concept as "mental models" (1990) and "Weltanschauung" is referenced in Gyekye (1997). The 'power of paradigms' is also discussed by a number of authors from diverse fields (Barker, 1989; Gould, 1989; Kuhn, 1996; Warner, 1991). Who first became aware of, named and described this phenomenon is of less importance to me than its incredible power.

Thomas Kuhn's definition of 'paradigm,' as articulated in the "Postscript" (1969) written seven years after his book was first published, bears a striking resemblance to the previously defined notion of culture. His 'sociological' sense of the term, and the one most applicable to this discussion, sees a paradigm as the "entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community" (p. 175). I would add 'rules' to this definition. In other words, on a group or societal level, a cultural paradigm is a collective 'way of seeing the world'—from a particular vantage point — namely, one's own culture. Fixed or entrenched paradigms provide assumptions which in turn affect (and possibly distort) what someone within the culture can and cannot 'see.'

Kuhn notes that when paradigms change, the world, although it does not actually change, is seen as having been transformed into a different world (pp. 121-122). Those who are supposed to have the greatest ability to see new paradigms or to 'see the world anew' are "either very young or very new to the field whose paradigm they change" (p. 90). Hence the importance, in problem-solving, of bringing 'fresh eyes' or a new perspective to a problem. This, in my view, can be accomplished by either bringing in new people or developing the capacity within oneself to see 'anew' on an ongoing basis. This ability to 'see anew' is the result of shifting one's paradigm.

Kuhn, in writing of the history of science and what he calls 'scientific revolutions,' indicates that scientists react in different ways to data that are at odds with their own paradigms. Some may continue to study and simply 'live with' the "anomalies" through what Kuhn refers to as "'the essential tension' implicit in scientific research" (p. 79). Others experience an intolerable "crisis" in their paradigms and leave the field (p. 78).

As Kuhn points out, "once [a scientific theory] has achieved the status of a paradigm, [it] is declared invalid only if an alternative candidate is available to take its

place.” Further, the “decision to reject one paradigm is always simultaneously the decision to accept another, and the judgment leading to that decision involved the comparison of both paradigms with nature and with each other” (p. 77) [emphasis in original]. Based on Kuhn’s comments, it would appear that a person cannot strongly believe in two conflicting paradigms simultaneously, notwithstanding their possible ability to critically examine both with a relatively ‘open mind’. In the context of a shift from a Eurocentric paradigm to an Afrocentric one, this would mean that the person can embrace one or the other, but not both.²² In other words, once a person has ‘seen’ something, s/he can never ‘not see it’ again or go back to the way s/he used to see it. This is thus a ‘revolutionary’ change in one’s ideas. A classic example of this shift would be from believing that the world is flat to believing that the world is round. Another example would be someone who formerly believed in a ‘creationist’ theory of the origin of humans who then came to believe in the theory of evolution. A third example would be one who thought, as I did, that discrimination was the result of ‘a few bad apples’ but who has come to believe that the establishment and maintenance of discriminatory systems is a key organizing principle for white-dominated societies such as Canada.

Another interesting observation Kuhn made was that if a scientist is confronted with data that does not ‘fit’ with her/his paradigm, s/he will essentially try to modify the existing paradigm “in order to eliminate any apparent conflict,” rather than accept the new paradigm (p. 78). Some of the experiments Kuhn describes indicate that the people involved were literally only able to see the types of data that previous experiences had

²² After the discussion of the Afrocentric approach to OD has been concluded, it will hopefully be apparent that the Afrocentric paradigm is more inclusive than the Eurocentric one. With respect to the discussion here, once one has come to strongly believe in an ‘inclusive’ approach, it would seem not possible to ‘go back to’ a more exclusionary (Holvino, 1993; Mills & Simmons, 1995) one. As previously indicated, the Eurocentric model places the white European (especially male) at the centre of all history of importance to a country or culture and interprets everyone’s history and experiences from that one perspective. With respect to OD values and techniques and to the OD practitioner as the transmitter of Western knowledge, the question that requires (in my mind) to be further explored is the extent to which OD values, etc. have shifted from their original Eurocentric roots. This question presents an area of obvious contestation in the OD field.

equipped them to see. The power of their own paradigms 'screened out' conflicting data in the form of anomalies. They were literally not able to see contradictory data (p. 113). And, as Barker points out in his effective video on the topic, one's paradigms can actually distort data that do not fit with the paradigm (Barker, 1989).

Senge (1990), in referring to what he calls "mental models," also notes that "new insights fail to get put into practice because they conflict with deeply held internal images of how the world works, images that limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting" (p. 174). He also points out that "[t]wo people with different mental models can observe the same event and describe it differently, because they've looked at different details," (p. 175) — which also may be based in part on one's cultural background and framework (i.e., cultural paradigm).

The significance of Kuhn's (and others') insights regarding paradigms is immense. The possible inability of a Westerner working in Africa on development projects — in this case a white, Western OD practitioner — to 'see' and therefore value another person's culture can lead to grave consequences for the client and her/his organization and workforce. The negative impact that many well-intentioned Westerners from diverse fields (along with their Western ways of doing things) have had on Africa and African development is well documented in the literature (see, for example, Dei, 1998a; Dembele, 1998). In any 'transfer' of knowledge or technology, the political and socio-cultural values of the host country or region and the needs of the beneficiaries are of paramount importance and must, at minimum, be taken into account if the initiative is to succeed (Dia, 1991). I would go beyond this to suggest that the culture(s) of the people of the host country/region must also be respected and valued. Related to this valuing of another person's culture is the concept of cultural relativism.

3.5.2 Cultural Relativism

Cultural relativism is the notion that “reality is socially or culturally constructed” and that “what had previously been considered unchanging is now viewed as a ‘cultural construction,’ subject to variation over time as well as in space” (Burke, 1992, p. 3). This concept has also been defined as “the doctrine that what is right or wrong or good or bad depends on one’s culture...[and that] morality is relative to groups and individuals that make up a culture and, therefore, no universal norms exist that apply to all people and all cultures” (Beauchamp, 1982; cited in Hopkins, 1997). A Western, i.e., Eurocentric approach to, for example, OD, is just such a cultural construct and should be viewed as such. It is not, therefore, intrinsically better than any other (potential) approach, the implication here being that no one culture is better or superior to another. Given the fact that the majority of OD practitioners are white and from countries with Western values, it is also an important concept for white, Western OD practitioners to be mindful of when working in non-Western contexts, in particular.

IV. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE

CHAPTER FOUR — HISTORICAL AND CURRENT KEY OD VALUES

4.1 Introduction

Having laid some of the foundation for the discussion of OD and African cultural values, I would now like to turn to the subject of OD values. The following provides a brief ‘history’ of key OD values and also provides a discussion of current values. Reference will be made, in the case of ‘historical’ values, to literature on the topic. In the case of current (i.e., 1990s) values, I will refer to both relevant literature (e.g., Gellerman, 1993) and

information from the Organization Development (OD) Network, a U.S.-based association with members from more than 90 countries (OD Network, 1999a, p. 1).

4.2 Historical and Current Key OD Values

French and Bell provide a good historical summary of some of the underlying assumptions and values of OD as they relate to people as individuals; people in groups (including leadership); and people in organizational systems (French & Bell, 1973, pp. 65-70). Many of the OD values (and the assumptions about people that underlie them) that have been important historically have been described as “humanistic, developmental... optimistic” (French & Bell, 1973, p. 73), collaborative (Laiken, 1984), and democratic (i.e., equalizing power within organizations) in nature. French and Bell note the congruence of these assumptions with the earlier theories of “behavioral scientist change agents” such as “McGregor, Likert, Argyris, Bennis, Schein, Maslow and Herzberg” (p. 65). French and Bell state, for example, that in regards to the client organization, “members...must...place value in collaborative effort...” and that “value [must be] placed on the welfare of all system members, particularly by the people having the most power over others” (p. 70).

With respect to the values and beliefs of these behavioral scientist change agents, (for the purposes of this discussion, I include OD practitioners in this group), French and Bell (1973) suggest that while these professionals share similar, ‘humanistic’ values, e.g., those related to personal growth in organizations, they do not “constitute a completely homogeneous group” (p. 71) — and this is likely to increasingly be the case as more women and racial minorities make their presence in the OD field felt. Other OD values include a belief that allowing feelings and sentiments to be a legitimate part of an organization’s culture will create a richer and more meaningful work and life (pp. 71-72).

The writings of others also support the view that OD is 'grounded' in (Western) humanistic values (Alderfer, 1977; Bennis, 1969; Golembiewski, 1972; Kahn, 1974; Miles, 1975; White & Wooten, 1986). Additionally, White and Wooten note that Alderfer's review of OD literature also shows an "emphasis on organizational effectiveness" and that there was [as of 1977] a "substantial and significant debate about the value implications of much of OD work among thinkers in the field" (p. 198). The debates of that time seemed to focus more on the possible conflict between pursuing humanistic values vs. pursuing organizational effectiveness.

In a later edition (1995) of their OD book, French and Bell have made some revisions, further clarifying what 'humanistic' means and putting a greater emphasis on the notion of 'democratic' values. They state that OD values "tend to be humanistic, optimistic, and democratic" (p. 68). In their interpretation of OD values, humanistic values "proclaim the importance of the individual...". Optimistic values theorize that "people are basically good, that progress is possible and desirable in human affairs, and that rationality, reason, and goodwill are the tools for making progress." They see democratic values as asserting the "sanctity of the individual, the right of people to be free from arbitrary misuse of power, fair and equitable treatment for all, and justice through the rule of law and due process." (French & Bell, 1995, pp. 68-69).

"Broad categories" of core OD values such as humanistic values and democracy tend to remain fairly constant over time (Margulies & Raia, 1990). Definitions of OD in the literature and) have remained similar over time (see, for example, French & Bell, 1973; French & Bell, 1995; Neilsen, 1984; Beckhard, 1969; Bennis, 1969; Lippitt, 1982; Schmuck & Miles, 1971). As OD has evolved, however, various types of interventions have been 'added' to what is generally considered to be 'OD.' Hence, OD, has become an umbrella for a fairly broad range of concepts and approaches. Some of these

approaches/interventions, as noted by French & Bell (1995, p. 236), include: sociotechnical systems theory (Trist, Higgin, Murray, & Pollock, 1965); self-managed teams (Lawler, 1990); work redesign (Hackman & Oldham, 1980); management by objectives (MBO) (French & Hollman, 1975); quality circles (Drucker, 1980; Lawler & Mohrman, 1985); quality of work life projects (QWL) (Goodman, 1980); total quality management (TQM) (Peters, 1991); reengineering (Hammer & Champy, 1993) (although French & Bell also indicate there are some incongruencies between this process and OD values such as level of employee participation (p. 250) and that reengineering raises “a major ethical issue for OD...if it results in large layoffs” (p.251)). Other more recent OD approaches such as the learning organization (Senge, 1990) and ‘communities of practice’ (Wenger, 1998) also have the potential to achieve both humanistic and organizational effectiveness goals. The introduction of these various OD “technostructural interventions,” specifically aimed at improving organizational effectiveness (French & Bell, 1995, p.236) and the quality of working life, suggest that OD practitioners believe that these goals can be successfully pursued jointly.

Robert Golembiewski, writing in 1993 about OD values vis-a-vis the ‘third world,’ refers to the “normative character of OD,” and notes that OD is a value-laden technology (pp. 1668-1669), and provides a good summary of seven key characteristics of OD, some of which also have associated values that are easy to identify. These features are: (1) an emphasis on openness, trust and collaborative effort; (2) a grounding in “immediate experiences as they occur” and the application of ‘process analysis,’ which is used to understand both individual and group interactions; (4) an emphasis on feelings and emotions (while not neglecting ideas and concepts); (5) an emphasis on the importance of individual participation in the “action research” approach (which is frequently used)—to both generate and respond to data; (6) an emphasis on group involvement in making change happen—as validators of data, as developers and enforcers of norms, and as

providers of emotional support; and (7) an emphasis on initial interaction of groups to create norms, which may involve the reinforcement of “policies, procedures and structures” (Golembiewski, 1993).

Another OD theorist, Evangelina Holvino, writing at the same time, states that:

The values that grounded OD were the values of democracy, participation, and the application of social science to societal problems. Fulfillment and growth, renewal, creativity, authenticity, process, productivity (Tannenbaum & Davis, 1969) and a belief in the potential of people and the promise of organizations (Mirvis, 1988, p. 46) are more specific values invoked in the story of OD (Holvino, 1993, p. 5).

Other authors have also written about OD values. Starting in 1981, Gellerman began coordinating a process for developing “A Statement of Values and Ethics By Professionals in Organization and Human Systems Development” (hereafter referred to as the “Statement”), which included input from more than 500 OD professionals in 22 countries²³ (Gellerman, 1993). Since this process raised a number of issues related to OD values and ethics that OD practitioners face, I have included, in the following section, a description of some of the topics Gellerman pondered during this process. The issue of OD values and cultural differences and discussion of 'democracy' seem particularly relevant to this paper.

In general, during the process of collecting his information, Gellerman (1993) became aware of an “emerging transformation in the practice of OD” in which OD practitioners were... “moving from conceiving of [themselves] as a collection of

²³The OD Network's website indicated that, since 1981, more than 600 people from more than 25 countries have been involved in this participative process (OD Network, 1999c).

independent professionals to...[seeing themselves as] a community of interdependent professionals" (p. 37) [italics in original].

4.2.1 OD Values and Cultural Differences

I would now like to turn my discussion to some specific issues Gellerman dealt with regarding OD values and cultural differences. Gellerman cites Hofstede's work on cultural differences around the world (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 1991) as clearly suggesting that "substantial cultural differences exist along the...four dimensions" (1993, p. 42). These are:

Power Distance (the degree to which unequal distribution of power in institutions and organizations is accepted); Uncertainty Avoidance (the degree to which uncertain, ambiguous situations are threatening and people seek to avoid them); Individualism-Collectivism (the degree to which people are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate family or, at the collective extreme, they expect their relatives, clan organization, or other in-group to care for them in exchange for absolute loyalty to the group; and Masculinity²⁴ (the degree to which people hold masculine values, such as assertiveness and acquisition of money and things, a lack of concern for people and the quality of their lives).

Gellerman's interpretation of Hofstede's work is that the latter's results show that "certain values that seem central to OD-HSD (Human Systems Development) may be more reflections of the U.S. culture that gave birth to the field than they are a sound basis for establishing a global perspective for the field's values and ethics" (p. 42) [italics in original].

In order to help deal with cultural differences among OD practitioners around the

²⁴ Hofstede's "Masculinity" dimension can be critiqued for its stereotypical (and some might say offensive) notions of what constitutes "masculinity." However, such a critique cannot be undertaken within the scope of this paper.

world, Gellerman suggests, as one alternative, the development of a statement on professional ethics based on what he calls "the universalist alternative." This would entail the development of a substantial consensus "around a single common statement throughout OD-HSD's global professional community, but with recognition of and allowances for cultural differences" (p. 43).

He sees this as a possible way of addressing the "contrast between the primary 'I' consciousness of individualistic cultures [like the U.S.] and the primary 'we' consciousness of collectivist cultures [like Africa]" so that a "both I and we" orientation is possible. In this way, the "apparent polarity of individualism and collectivism" is transcended and there is an acknowledgment of the "possibility that individual uniqueness can be enhanced by membership in the collective" (p. 43).

However, for himself, Gellerman prefers an alternative approach "which focuses first on personal identity, then on global identity, and finally on national identity," while at the same time acknowledging that this preference "may reflect [his] development within the conditions of U.S. culture" (p. 43).

I include this part of his discussion to highlight the importance of OD practitioners being aware of these cultural differences and their own "I-we" stance or orientation, notwithstanding their espoused 'communal' approaches to their own practice or the systems-oriented approach they may typically bring to their work. While this is important to the work OD practitioners do in Western contexts, it is, I would argue, doubly important in non-Western, relatively non-industrialized contexts.

4.2.2 Democracy

The term 'democracy' has many different meanings and interpretations, depending on the country, culture, social, political and economic context, and even the individual defining it. Democracy may deal with issues such as representation (e.g. elected representatives of 'the people'); participation in decision-making; and the vehicles for accessing and exercising power. However, this paper is not the forum for a full discussion of democracy. Suffice it to say, that the term 'democracy' will be used here as it relates to participatory decision-making and equalization of power within organizations. Having said this, it is important to keep in mind that 'democracy' within organizations cannot be looked at without taking into account the overall context and environment in which the organizations are operating. It is, therefore, a term filled with complexities and implications. It is also a term that seems to elicit a very strong emotional reaction (at least) among North Americans (typically, they appear to be strongly 'pro-democracy,' within their understanding of the term).

Democracy is also an OD value that appears consistently throughout the literature I reviewed. According to Gellerman's work (1993, pp. 52- 53), there is not necessarily a consensus among OD practitioners about the wish to include 'democratic' decision-making as a key OD value, in part because, while valued, it may not always be "practical" (p. 52). Some of the OD practitioners consulted believed that "participation" and "involvement" would suffice, in its place. However, as Gellerman notes in his piece, while he agreed to change the phrase, "democratic decision making" in the "OD-HSD Statement of Values and Ethics," he (nevertheless) added "'democracy'...so that it was explicitly recognized as a value" (p. 53).

While values such as democracy are not, upon initial review, seemingly

'problematic,' what may be problematic is that notions such as these have been defined within a U.S. geo-political and socio-cultural context. Also, democracy is, as I have suggested, a 'given' within the U.S. values repertoire generally. As such, it is 'taken for granted' in the West (especially in the U.S.) as being an important value to hold. Therefore, a U.S.-oriented definition of democracy may not be applicable to or appropriate to regions such as Africa.

This issue highlights for me what may be a source of internal values conflict among at least some OD practitioners. While many of their espoused values are communal in nature (OD Network, 1999b), some OD practitioners may face an "I-we" struggle, even in their espoused values, because the majority come from individualistic (as opposed to collectivist) cultures. Further, if notions such as 'democracy'²⁵ are not critically examined for their appropriateness in non-Western contexts, this may lead to results that are not in the best interests of the host country and culture(s).

4.2.3 Summary of Key OD Values, 1990 to 1999

Gellerman, Frankel and Ladenson note that as of 1990 a consensus was emerging among OD practitioners with respect to the following OD values:

...freedom; responsibility, and self-control; justice; human potential and empowerment; respect, dignity, integrity; worth, and fundamental rights of individuals and other human systems...learning, development, growth and transformation; whole-win attitudes, cooperation-collaboration, trust, community, and diversity; and widespread, meaningful participation in system affairs, democracy, and appropriate decision making. (Gellerman, Frankel, & Ladenson, 1990, p. 17)

²⁵With respect to 'democracy,' it is worth remembering too that in regions such as 'Africa,' democratic government in the Western sense is still relatively new, whereas the U.S. and other Western countries have often had 200 years plus to 'figure' out what type of democracy works best for them. There is a tendency for Westerners to assume African notions of democracy should be just like the U.S.'s, circa 2000. Further, as Gyekye notes, African traditional cultural values include many 'democratic' elements (Gyekye, 1996, p. 121).

The "International Organization Development Code of Ethics (December, 1991, 22nd Revision)" provides a similar 'list' of OD values:

1. quality of life--people being satisfied with their whole life experience; 2. health, human potential, empowerment, growth and excellence...3. freedom and responsibility...4. justice...5. dignity, integrity, worth and fundamental rights of individuals, organizations, communities, societies, and other human systems; 6. all-win attitudes and cooperation--people caring about one another and about working together to achieve results that work for everyone, individually and collectively; 7. authenticity and openness in relationship; 8. effectiveness, efficiency and alignment --people achieving the maximum of desired results, at minimum cost, in ways that coordinate their individual energies and purposes with those of the system-as-a-whole...9. holistic, systemic view and stakeholder orientation--understanding human behavior from the perspective of whole system(s)...recognizing the interests that different people have in the system's results and valuing those interests justly and fairly; [and] 10. wide participation in system affairs, confrontation of issues leading to effective problem solving, and democratic decision making. (OD Institute, 1999, p. 1)

Thus, while a greater emphasis on "community" and an introduction of the notion of "diversity" is apparent, notions of "human potential," "growth," "cooperation-collaboration," "trust," "democracy," and "participation" seem to have remained as constant core values through to the 1990s. The terms, "meaningful participation" and "appropriate decision-making," appear to have been coined to deal with some of the diverse options regarding using the term, "democracy" (Gellerman, 1993, p. 53), although as was noted previously, Gellerman added "democracy" so that "it was explicitly recognized as a value" (p. 53).

4.2.4 OD Values, 1996 to 1999

The following comprises the values articulated by the OD Network as of August 1999:

[1] Cooperation We promote cooperation and support among colleagues in order to enhance our combined/joint knowledge and wisdom. We promote mutual learning through non-competitive relationships with each other. (2) Systems Orientation/Approach/ Wholeness We demonstrate our appreciation of the interconnectedness of systems by facilitating connectedness, a holistic approach and community. [3] Inclusion We promote the inclusion of people, ideas, perspectives, and cultures. We see

and embrace diversity within our membership. [4] Collaboration We initiate and foster partnership with our clients and other professional organizations worldwide. [5] Professional Development We provide opportunities for ongoing personal and professional development. [6] Knowledge of Self We champion knowledge of self and the understanding of one's impact in the consulting process. We maintain an awareness and appreciation of our members and their needs. [7] Social Responsibility We contribute to the benefit and well being of the earth and its people. We promote our members' appreciation of the increasingly global nature of organizational and societal systems. [and 8] Social Justice We promote social justice in our work as we seek to improve our communities and our society. (OD Network, 1999b, pp. 1-2)

In addition, the "Organization and Human Systems Development Credo (July 1996)," which is based on the "Annotated Statement of Values and Ethics by Professionals in Organization and Human Systems Development" (OD Network, 1999c), includes the following as its set of values that "guide our practice":

respect for human dignity, integrity, and worth; freedom, choice, and responsibility; justice and fundamental human rights; compassion; authenticity; openness, and honesty; learning, growth, and empowerment; understanding and respecting differences; cooperation, collaboration, trust, diversity, and community; excellence, alignment, effectiveness, and efficiency; democracy, meaningful participation, and appropriate decision-making; and synergy, harmony, and peace. (p. 2)

In reviewing the previous 'lists' of values, it appears that there is a great deal of continuity among the values articulated in the OD literature and from 'official' OD associations, from 1990 to 1999. Similarly, many of these "humanistic" and "democratic" values have much earlier roots, as previously noted, and show much resiliency. French and Bell (1995) also indicate that values change over time and that the values that are "widely accepted" today were considered revolutionary in the 1950s (p. 78).

While some OD interventions such as reengineering may contain aspects, such as

downsizing, which would go against the "humanistic" bent of OD values, other more contemporary trends such as "communities of practice"²⁶ (Wenger, 1998) accord with the way OD values have evolved.

A review of the articulated OD values from 1990 to 1999 provided in the above seems to largely support this view, with the overwhelming emphasis being, in my view, on "humanistic" values. One noted exception can be found, however, in the "International Organization Development Code of Ethics," 1991, which does refer to "effectiveness, efficiency and alignment" (p. 1) [emphasis mine]. This raises a very important question, and one which is beyond the scope of this paper except to mention in passing. It is the possible 'gap' between espoused (OD) values and (OD) values in use (Argyris, 1982).

4.3 Some Issues Regarding OD Values

4.3.1 Preferred/Espoused Values vs. Values in Use²⁷

Tichy, writing in 1974, found that "compared with three other types of consultants or change agents, OD consultants were highest in value-action incongruence" (Tichy & Devanna, 1974 cited in Burke, 1994). The extent to which this may or may not be the case now, cannot be explored in this paper but it is an important issue for all OD practitioners and those engaged in social change activities, frequently characterized by 'high ideals.'

²⁶ Communities of practice can be conceived of as groups of people who have "shared histories of learning" (Wenger, 1998, p. 86) Over time, collective learning takes place and a sense of community is created by the "sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise" (p. 45). Thus "mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire of ways of doing things" creates a community of practice (p. 49). In my view communities of practice include notions relating to both culture (i.e., shared ways of doing things) and indigenous knowledge (i.e., collective learning over a period of time).

²⁷ Title refers to notions of Argyris, 1982, pp. 216-217.

French and Bell (1995) provide useful information on the results of a values study conducted within the OD field (Hurley, Church, Burke, & Van Eynde, 1992). This study contained two questions, asked of 1000 randomly-selected OD practitioners, that are particularly relevant to the discussion here. The first question was: "Which values do you believe are associated with OD work today?"[emphasis mine]. The second question was: "Which values do you think should be associated with OD work today?"[emphasis in original] . For the first question (i.e., the "theory-in-use"²⁸ question), the five most important values were: "(1) increasing effectiveness and efficiency, (2) creating openness in communication, (3) empowering employees to act, (4) enhancing productivity, and (5) promoting inquiry and continuous learning." For question two, i.e., the 'preferred values' question, the five most important values were: "(1) empowering employees to act, (2) creating openness in communication, (3) facilitating ownership of process and outcome, (4) promoting a culture of collaboration, and (5) promoting inquiry and continuous learning" (p. 77). French and Bell interpret these findings as indicating that while existing values (i.e., 'values in use' relate to "both organizational effectiveness and to humanistic and democratic concerns," the 'hoped for' (or 'should be') values "all relate to humanistic and democratic concerns." Worth pointing out too, is the finding that the most important 'OD' value "associated with OD work today" was "increasing effectiveness and efficiency," notwithstanding the continuing (espoused) emphasis on humanistic values. This would tend to suggest that Tichy's finding may still have some validity but this topic would need a full exploration before such a claim could be truthfully made. The evident 'gap' between the preferred values and the values that are associated with OD work seems to illustrate the tension that exists as OD practitioners attempt to satisfy what are sometimes seen by clients as opposing goals. It may also indicate a misunderstanding on the part of some clients about OD work generally.

²⁸(Argyris, 1982, pp. 216-217)

On this issue of a gap between espoused values and values in use, Holvino (1993) provides a sharp critique. She argues that "because of its inability to see itself as a social practice and discourse embedded in the social relations and power-knowledge of its time, OD does the opposite of what it claims and promises - it produces inequality by sustaining relations of domination in organizations and supporting the status quo" (p. 50). This inequality has been maintained, in part, by what she sees as OD not having paid sufficient attention to issues of race, gender and class. While Holvino's contention may be challenged by many OD practitioners, it is one that is, in my view, worthy of serious consideration and further study.

4.3.2 Absence of the Phrase, "Eliminate Racism," in OD Values Statements

As previously argued, racism, and its underlying doctrine, White Supremacy, continue to exist, in varying degrees, in every society where whites dominate (i.e., hold political, social, economic and institutional power, regardless of their numbers) and (consequently) occupy a place of privilege. However, this historical (and current) situation can be reversed. The government of South Africa, for example, is currently making strides in transferring power to the black South African majority.

While recent OD value statements include terms such as "diversity" (Gellerman et al., 1990; OD Network, 1999c), "justice," "fundamental rights" (OD Institute, 1999), and "social justice"(OD Network, 1999b), none of these statements speaks directly to the need to eliminate racism in all OD work and practice areas. As noted previously, Holvino (1993) has been one of the strongest critics of this failure, in her view, on the part of OD, to adequately deal with issues of race, gender and class.

Since my focus here is on 'espoused values' as opposed to 'values in use,' I am

citing this 'failure' as what I see as a gap in the OD values statement. However, it also reflects the importance of OD practitioners working pro-actively to help organizations eliminate the racism²⁹ within them. This lack of use of the 'r' word, is, I would hypothesize, reflective of the general reluctance on the part of whites, including I suspect, most OD practitioners, to acknowledge the pervasive, systemic nature of racism.

Although this topic is largely absent from discourse on OD values, a number of writers have recently begun to address this issue (Hassard & Parker, 1993; Holvino, 1993; Mills & Simmons, 1995).

4.4 Significance of OD Values

As is evident in the preceding commentary, values have played a key role in the development of OD (White & Wooten, 1986, p.49). French and Bell indicate that values, assumptions and beliefs are integral to OD and shape its goals and methods, distinguishing it [in their view] from other improvement strategies (French & Bell, 1995, p. 68). Indeed, OD is 'value-laden' and, I would argue, value-driven.

As previously noted, a key aim of OD is changing culture, i.e., organization culture, which includes and is underpinned by values. French and Bell note that while "OD is not a broadside attack on the values held by individuals, organizations, or a society...it does represent a value framework" (French & Bell, 1973). They also state that OD practitioners "try to change people's values in the direction of belief in the worth of the individual...in the dysfunctional aspects of many zero-sum games...[and toward believing] that participation in decisions promotes feelings of self-worth....," etc. They add, however, that most

²⁹ In my work consulting with many diverse organizations regarding employment equity issues, I have yet to find an organization where at least some racial minorities did not feel they had experienced racism or unequal, negative treatment because of race.

practitioners would make their value systems known to the client, who would in turn accept or reject them (p. 51).

Of significance to this thesis topic is the fact that organizational culture and cultural change is such a major aspect of OD theory and practice (French & Bell, 1995). French and Bell have also called OD a "narrative re-educative strategy of change" (French & Bell, 1973), which assumes that norms (society's 'shoulds') form the basis for behaviour and change and that, via a re-education process, old norms can be discarded and new ones put into place (p. 51).

Further, notwithstanding the various types of OD interventions³⁰ that have come in and gone out of favour over the years, a set of (slowly evolving) core values, based on humanistic and democratic values, has endured.

In this regard, Burke asks some important questions that I think are particularly relevant to Western OD practitioners (who are frequently seen as 'the experts'), working in non-Western contexts: "To what values should [the organization] change?" "Who determines the direction and desired end state for the change?" "Are OD practitioners facilitators only? Or does the field of [OD] represent a certain direction of change, an implied if not clear-cut desired end state?" (Burke, 1994, p.194). And, since organizational change typically produces behavioural change in individuals (Burke, p. 12) such change may also affect their underlying beliefs, attitudes and values. While changes such as, for example, a shift from a more 'top-down' style of decision-making to one that is more democratic/participative may seem appropriate in Western contexts, the same may or may not be true in other cultures, such as Africa, where hierarchal decision-making is an important value in traditional culture (Jeppe, 1994).

³⁰ Discussed in "Historical and Current Key OD Values" section.

In addition, as previously discussed, notions of what constitutes 'democracy' vary from country to country and an unexamined, Western definition of democracy is not appropriate to African contexts. Africans, after all, have their own notions of what constitutes democratic/participative decision-making (Gyekye, 1996). In this regard, an additional important question needs to be asked: "What is the likely impact of organizational change, based on Western OD values, on African organizations and organizational members, their families and their communities?"

While I have no answer to this question, it would seem to me to be one that Western OD practitioners doing work in Africa would do well to reflect on continually, along with Madhubuti's question as to whether the action is in the best interest of Africans (Madhubuti, 1978).

CHAPTER FIVE — AFRICAN CULTURAL VALUES

5.1 Introduction

Having provided a discussion of OD values, I now turn my attention to African cultural values.

As indicated in the 'Introduction,' the term 'Africa' represents in a single word, what is in reality a huge and diverse continent. Because it is also a social, political, historical, economic and cultural construct, to speak of it as a single entity is to create a level of analysis where over-generalizations and/or the obscuring of specifics may occur.

Notwithstanding the problems inherent in speaking about 'Africa' as a single entity, and being mindful of the fact that cultural diversity in Africa is an obvious fact (Owomoyela,

1996, p. ix), i.e., a "living reality," similarities in culture among the various peoples of African have existed historically and continue to exist (Sow et al., 1979, pp. 10-11). In addition, there are 'threads' or themes that are 'common' to large parts of the continent if not the entire continent (Dei, 1999). With this understanding in mind, the term 'Africa' will, therefore, be used in this paper in describing those aspects that appear to be held in common throughout Africa.

Having just spoken of commonalities, it is, nevertheless, important to point out that some of the literature refers to 'Black Africa' (i.e., south of the Sahara Desert) as being culturally separate and different from, for example, Arab Africa. This topic is itself a large one and full of contestation. While 'Black Africa' is sometimes used to refer to 'Sub-Saharan Africa,' even the use of the latter term is seen by some to have racist overtones. Further, 'Black Africa' is not always defined or used by all writers in a consistent way.³¹ It is not my intention in this paper to get into this discussion but simply to 'flag' it as an issue in the discourse on Africa. Therefore, I want simply to reiterate that notwithstanding the significant cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity that exists within Africa, one can still speak of some African values that are held in common (Gyekye, 1996).

As a non-African, as a white, Western OD practitioner, I feel I need to be particularly mindful of the Western values that shaped, and may unconsciously continue to shape, my own values and worldview. My ability to really 'get into African culture' is extremely limited, notwithstanding my good intentions, and professed openness to other cultural worldviews and values. My purpose here is to describe African values and culture as articulated by others, particularly Africans and African-Americans. While I do not wish to perpetuate a situation in which "most thinking about the traditional African cultures is...done by non-Africans" (Sow et al., 1979), I recognize I may be unintentionally doing just this in writing

³¹For examples, see Diop (1987) and Morrison, Mitchell, & Paden (1989).

this paper. Additionally, while in the course of reading about African values and culture, I must admit I found some values and beliefs that made me uncomfortable (and many I endorse), the same can be said about many Western values and aspects of Western culture. The difference is perhaps that the latter are so familiar to me that they are 'taken for granted' and thus have become largely invisible. As such, I was not really able to clearly 'see' at least some (Western) OD values until I put them 'under a microscope' and critically examined them. Having African values as a comparative reference point allowed me to see these Western values even more clearly. This exercise has highlighted for me the importance of interrogating one's own culture and tradition (as well as that of others) and, as Gyekye (1997) so effectively illustrates, the fact that no culture is, or should be, immune to criticism.

However, in having first provided a discussion of OD values and now proceeding to a discussion of African values, I am mindful of a (perhaps common) human tendency to cast that which is 'different' into the role of the 'Other' (Clark, Forbes, & Francis, 1993; Miles, 1989). Miles see this process as being a way "to explain the appearance and behaviour of...[different groups] with whom contact has been established and...to formulate a strategy for interaction and reaction" (p. 11). However, as Clark warns, "[t]here is...a real problem of presenting oppositional representations without managing them: in some sense, the other has to be allowed to retain otherness. It must not be constructed as completely knowable, as an object." Gyekye also points out that, at the same time, "we must strive not to construct other cultures as necessarily exotic" (Gyekye, 1997) (p. 3).

Nevertheless, having a 'comparator' (which needs to be seen as equal in every way) did seem to better illuminate the main topic in question. Since OD, its values, and their potential impact in non-Western contexts is a key point of focus here, I see great value in 'utilizing' African values as a 'comparator'-- particularly since my overall aim is to help

white Western OD practitioners avoid any learned tendencies to view African (or other non-Western) values as either inferior or 'exotic.' My goal is to avoid perpetuating a situation which, by some accounts, has led to the "neglect or denigration or subversion of the traditional cultural values of African societies in matters of development and the creation of African modernity" (Gyekye, 1997, p. 233).

Notwithstanding the above, comparing and contrasting subjects need not carry an evaluative aspect. In any case, in my comparison of African values with (Western) OD values, which I will provide later on in this paper, I will not be giving any 'judgements' on African values, since I do not feel that, as a non-African, I have either the right or enough information to do so. Rather, I will be seeking to point out areas of common ground and congruency, which I believe can provide a foundation for culturally-appropriate and potentially effective OD interventions. Additionally, I will be pinpointing those values or aspects of culture that appear to conflict in such a way that utilizing Western OD interventions, even those 'adapted' to an African context, might prove extremely problematic and which are likely not to be in the best interest of Africans.

5.2 African Cultural Values

In discussing this topic, a number of writers refer to the idea of 'tradition' and 'traditional'. This topic has already been touched upon in the definition section provided. The cultural values being described here are traditional values in that they have been held by Africans for a long (perhaps unknown) period of time (Gyekye, 1996). As is the case with any society's values, there may be a gap between what is a 'stated' value and what is realized on a day-to-day basis. However, these values represent, in my view, the ideals that Africa still embraces within its (albeit diverse) societies and cultures.

Gyekye, in two separate books, provides both an excellent introduction to African cultural values (Gyekye, 1996) and a thoughtful evaluation of which values he believes help, or hinder African development (Gyekye, 1997). While Gyekye focuses on the values embraced by the Akan culture of Ghana (1996, p. xiii), he believes that, notwithstanding cultural diversity within Africa, there are "sufficient commonalities" among these cultures to validate his use of the term "African." He also does not claim that these values are necessarily unique to Africa (p. xiv). Gyekye has made use of "beliefs, practices, institutions, myths, folktales and proverbs" (p. xiii) in his research and provides many African proverbs and maxims in his presentation of these values. Since my focus is on the values themselves, rather than an evaluation of them, I will be making extensive reference to his book on African cultural values. Others have also written about African cultural values (Aguessy, 1979; Asante, 1987; Asante, 1980a; Asante, 1980b; Asante, 1990; Karenga, 1978; Nylen et al., 1967; Owomoyela, 1996; Schiele, 1990; Sten, 1993).

Gyekye (1996) includes the following subject areas in his discussion of African cultural values: traditional religious values; humanity and brotherhood; communal and individualistic values; moral values; the family; economic values; chiefship and political values; aesthetic values; knowledge and wisdom; human rights; and ancestorship and tradition. This is also the framework I will follow in this paper. I will include the comments of other writers as appropriate. The issue of where traditional African cultural values 'fit' in modern Africa is also considered at the end of this book and in his 1997 book, Tradition and Modernity. Since these parts of his work are more evaluative than purely descriptive, I will not be focusing on them here, although such an interrogation is, as previously noted, important to do.

5.2.1 Traditional Religious Values

Since religion, (which I am interpreting here as 'spirituality'³² rather than dogma), plays a central role in the lives of Africans (Gyekye, 1997), I will provide a somewhat lengthy summary of its main features. Religion, which Gyekye defines as an "awareness of the existence of some ultimate, supreme being...",³³ has an impact on all aspects of the lives of African people, including their moral behaviour (1996, p. 3).³³ He notes that this is especially the case in "traditional settings" (1997, p. 243) — which I assume to be largely, but not exclusively, rural areas. This view of the centrality and pervasive nature of religion in the lives of Africans is reinforced by other writers (Busia, 1967; Mbiti, 1970, cited in Gyekye, 1997).

Religion is not separate from the non-religious in African life and thought (Gyekye, 1996, p. 4). Jerome Schiele, citing Asante (1980), agrees, noting, "traditional African philosophical assumptions...emphasize the interconnectedness and interdependency of natural phenomena...[so that] all modalities and realities are viewed as one...[there is] no demarcation between the spiritual and material, substance and form" (Schiele, 1990). Aguessy echoes this view, indicating that in the African world view, "[D]ifferent levels of existence and different beings are unified by the 'life force'. The different beings are the supreme being, the various supernatural beings (gods and spirits), the souls of the dead (ancestors), living men, the vegetable, mineral and animal realm, the realm of magic." Further, "the universe (with its different realms), life and society are inextricably interconnected and perceived as a symbiotic unit. The life force is not a separate concept:

³²Spirituality refers, in part, to the interconnectedness, i.e., 'Ubuntu' (Scholars Network for Peace-building in Africa, 1999) of all people and things to the supreme being (Aguessy, 1979; Schiele, 1990) and a sense of communalism (Visser, 1999).

³³This belief in a supreme being pre-dated the arrival of Europeans, who assumed this belief must have originated in Europe (Gyekye, 1996, p. 4).

the spontaneity and endless continuity of its flow makes this unit a dynamic system” (Aguessy, 1979, p. 86).

Africans see the human being as “essentially a religious being” (Gyekye, 1996, p. 5). Religious life is seen as a “communal affair,” i.e., it is not primarily for the individual, and participation in the community’s religious beliefs and rituals is essentially mandatory if one is to remain part of the community (pp. 4 and 17). African religion provides a support for the important values of “[s]ocial solidarity, harmony, and cooperation” (p. 17). In fact, as Aguessy states, “African divinity is...a manifestation acted out in collective rejoicing. In the unity of body and spirit, individual and community, worship and rejoicing, veneration and familiarity, it is expressed by the whole man [sic], the man linked to society, accepting and sublimating everything that makes him a man” (p. 115).

God is seen as being “everywhere.” There is also a complete dependence on God and a belief that God is good, “compassionate, merciful, generous... kind” and just (pp. 10-11). Other deities (“lesser spirits”), which were also created by God, may be the source of good or evil. The human will may also be a source of evil (p. 12).

Traditional African religions include the belief that the soul is a non-physical part of the person and that it lives after the death of a person. In the after life, it provides a report on the person's life to God (p. 13). However, the “destiny of the soul” in the afterlife is of secondary importance to the “pursuit and attainment of human well-being in this world,” [emphasis in original], which Gyekye describes as “unrelenting” (p. 14). He states that, “religion is considered essentially as a means for attaining the needs, interests, and happiness of human beings in this life” (p. 14). This “utilitarian and practical” approach to religion indicates that religion, to Africans, must have social relevance (p. 16). While material well-being is of great importance, non-material (i.e., spiritual) values such as “love,

kindness, compassion, generosity, peace, and harmony” are seen to give “meaning to life” (p. 18).

African religion is also founded on moral values (p. 16). 'Doing the right thing' is both a moral obligation and a religious obligation (p. 19). Further, since Africans see humans as 'limited' and 'inadequate' compared with God, this leads to a sense of humility, both in religious terms and in interpersonal relations (p. 18).

5.2.2 Humanity and Brotherhood³⁴

Gyekye points out that Africans “hold a deep and unrelenting concern for human welfare and happiness” and that recognizing the “value of humanity” is intimately tied to a recognition of “the unity of all people,” whether they are biologically related or not (p. 23). The human being is seen as a “child of God” (p. 24). Showing that one values another human being is, in part, accomplished by, demonstrating “compassion, generosity, and hospitality.” Offering help, when needed, is a “moral duty” (p. 25). Also of great importance is “greeting” another person, which is seen as a way of recognizing the other person's humanity (p. 26).

The human being is of such importance that the death of a person affects the whole community to which s/he belongs. Normal economic and other activities are suspended for a time, even at great economic cost (p. 26).

All human beings are seen to belong to “one universal human family” (p. 26). The

³⁴From a Western feminist perspective, using this term can be seen to be as problematic as using the word, 'man' to also include women. However, since it is not my intent in this paper to critique African cultural values, I am merely noting here the language used, which I am assuming is an accurate indicator of how this value is articulated within Africa. It should be noted that the author, Gyekye, has used both female and male pronouns throughout the book.

term “brother” is used to cover many family relationships, including both male and female cousins, etc. It is also used in a broader sense to indicate that “all human beings belong to one species” (p. 27). Such unity transcends biological, ‘racial’ or ethnic differences (p. 28). In fact, Gyekye notes that “ethnic conflicts in Africa...are primarily and fundamentally political or economic and not purely ethnic, in the sense of sheer ethnic antipathy” (p. 31). Nylen similarly notes the broad meaning of the term “brotherhood,” which he says covers “sons of a polygamous family, but also uncles, cousins, and sometimes all males from the same village” (Nylen et al., 1967, p. 17).

Also worth mentioning, in my view, is the fact that there is no word for ‘race’ in most African languages (language being an intrinsic part of culture) and that racial categories and racialism were introduced into Africa by European colonists in the eighteenth century (Gyekye, 1996, p. 28).

The idea of brotherhood can be demonstrated by acts of hospitality, generosity, showing concern for others, and actions that benefit the community (p. 28). Notwithstanding this ideal of brotherhood, Gyekye recognizes that Africa has sometimes, both historically and in present times, fallen short of realizing this ideal. He cites domestic slavery, human sacrifice, and ‘ethnic’ conflicts as evidence of the gap between ‘real’ and ‘ideal,’ i.e., ‘values in use’ versus ‘espoused values’ (Argyris, 1982).

5.2.3 Communal and Individualistic Values

While not excluding individualistic values, it is clear that the predominant emphasis within African society is on communal values (Aguessy, 1979; Dia, 1991; Gyekye, 1996; Jeppe, 1994). Because this notion of community is of great importance to OD practice in Africa, I will provide a fairly extensive commentary on this topic.

Gyekye defines communal values as those which “express appreciation of the worth and importance of the community...that underpin and guide the type of social relations, attitudes, and behaviour that ought to exist in a community, sharing a social life and having a sense of common good” (p. 35). These include “sharing, mutual aid, caring for others, interdependence, solidarity, reciprocal obligation, and social harmony” (p. 35). Gyekye sees ‘community’ as meaning people who are linked as a result of “interpersonal bonds” and “who share common values, interests, and goals” — in other words, a “way of life” or culture. The community is also characterized by individual obligation to advance the interests of the community and participation in community life (p. 36).

Gyekye defines “communalism” (and differentiates it from “communism”) as “the doctrine or theory that the community (or, group) is the focus of the activities of the individual members of the society.” The individual is not forgotten in the process; rather, the welfare of the individual is dependent upon the welfare of the group (p. 46). Thus no individual is isolated or seen to be self-sufficient (pp. 36-37).

In Aguessy's words, the “ individual and the group are...linked to each other by a thousand indissoluble ties. Such is the case... in Africa...[that] the individual never ceases to be welded to the community” (Aguessy, 1979, p. 94). In fact, these ties are so strong that African society is “a society in which life and the universe could not conceivably be shouldered by the isolated individual reduced to solipsism.”³⁵ The ‘other’ [in the sense of a community of ‘others’] is always implicit; it is always called upon within the framework of that which conditions and perhaps even determines the ‘I’ and the ‘we’ together” (p. 121). Dia also opines that the “frontiers separating collective preferences from individual ones [in Africa] are often non-existent or quite vague” (1991, p. 11).

³⁵Defined in the dictionary as “the view that the self is all that exists or can be known.” (Allen, 1990, p. 1158)

This sense of communalism (Visser, 1999, p. 2) and interconnectedness is also of a deeply spiritual nature (International South Group Network, 1995, p. 1). The African word for this concept is "Ubuntu" (Scholars Network for Peace-building in Africa, 1999). This concept of "Ubuntu" or "African Humanism" (Visser, p. 2) "refers to the humanity of all people (Scholars Network..., p. 2), and can be summarized in the South African proverb, "Umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu," which literally means 'a person becomes human through other people'" (Visser, p. 2). Similarly, "identity is formed by community" (Amazon.com, 1999). This key concept will be discussed further with respect to the comparison of African values with OD values and in the discussion of the proposed approach to OD.

As indicated previously, many of these values have been articulated as proverbs or maxims. With respect to what he calls "the failures and frustrations of extreme individualism" (p. 38), Gyekye indicates that there are a number of African maxims that deal with this topic, such as: "One finger cannot lift up a thing" and "If one person alone scrapes the bark of a tree for use as medicine, the pieces fall to the ground" (p. 37). Similarly, with respect to one leading an individualistic or solitary life, the maxim is: "Solitariness...is a pitiable condition" (p. 38). Other maxims also express the need for collective action or cooperation (p. 38).

Within African society, mutual aid and interdependence are important "social and moral values" so that mutual aid is seen as a "moral obligation." The survival of the group is of paramount importance (p. 46).

Importantly, one's respect and social standing, influence on others, and one's personal sense of responsibility are all evaluated in terms of the degree of sensitivity one shows in meeting the "needs, demands, and welfare of the group" (p. 46). While each is expected to contribute to the welfare of the community, the contribution is based on one's

abilities, so that not all will contribute equally (p. 47).

Notwithstanding the above, the “uniqueness and individuality” of people are still seen as important (p. 47). Individuals are seen as being responsible for their own lives (p. 48) and self-reliance and initiative are valued and encouraged. Complete dependence on others is viewed as “unwise” and leading to “disappointment, frustration and grief” (p. 49).

Gyekye observes that African societies attempt to balance communal and individualistic values, noting that community is seen as “the framework for realizing the potential of every individual” (pp. 50-51). This in turn means that each individual has to achieve this balance in her/his own life (p. 50).

Gyekye states, in concluding this section, that with urbanization, a shift in values is likely occurring in favour of individualistic values. While recognizing that it is important that Africans (themselves) decide if communal values are worth maintaining, he opines that “the African people and their cultures should resist the path of extreme individualism, which will only lead to the rise of lonely crowds...and the fragmentation of values...[and an undermining of] the whole meaning and essence of human society” (p. 51).

5.2.4 Moral Values

While many of values previously described can, in my view, be seen as providing the basis for a society’s morality, Gyekye highlights several specific ones in his piece on moral values.

Gyekye defines morality as a “set of social rules and norms intended to guide the

conduct of people in a society." Moral values are "forms or patterns of conduct that are considered most worthwhile and thus cherished by a society" (p.55). According to Gyekye, African moral values are based on people's experiences as they live together or in attempting to establish a "common and harmonious social life" (p. 57). Thus African values are related more to humanistic and social considerations than religious ones (p. 57).

In African terms, "good" is seen as being identical with the welfare of society. Some key moral values include: "kindness, compassion, generosity, hospitality, faithfulness, truthfulness, concern for others, and...[any] action that brings peace, justice, dignity, respect, and happiness." By contrast, "backbiting, selfishness, lying, stealing, adultery, rape, incest, murder, and suicide" are seen as evil and to be avoided (p. 58).

Worth stressing again, is the non-individualistic approach that is inherent in African morality. "Social morality," which emphasizes the well-being of every member of society is differentiated from an individual-oriented one. Social morality denounces egoism and selfishness (p. 59). Rather, responsibility for others, not one's own individual rights, is held to be "the supreme principle of morality" (p. 63). However, it is also acknowledged that the individual should ensure that her/his own needs are taken care of "within limits" (p. 64).

With respect to the issue of "character," African cultures place a high value on this (p. 65). The "degeneration" of individuals affects families, which in turn affects nations. Good character traits are seen to include (there is some overlap with the list of "good" values): "probity, patience, kindness, fairness, humility, gratitude, moderation, temperance, generosity, contentment, hospitality, perseverance, trustworthiness, truthfulness...honesty, respect for older people, chastity before marriage, and faithfulness in marriage." As Gyekye points out, the majority of these traits are "other-regarding," i.e., aimed at benefitting others (p. 68).

5.2.5 The Family

Within the communal structure of African society are strong bonds of kinship which highlight the importance of the family. Nylén, writing in 1967, noted that, “[g]reatest importance was [traditionally] attached to the family, its welfare and perpetuation. There was a place and a function for each member” (p. 17). ‘Family,’ in the African context, denotes an extended family (Dia, 1991; Gyekye, 1996; Nylén et al., 1967), comprising “a large number of blood relatives” with links to a common ancestor (Gyekye, 1996, p. 75).

The family is the forum in which the communal values previously mentioned are usually demonstrated (p. 75). In addition, typical ‘family values’ include: “love, caring, cohesion, solidarity, mutual respect, and mutual responsibility” (p. 90). And, as Gyekye emphasizes, “the family itself is held as a fundamental value—a social as well as moral value” (p. 75). With respect to these responsibilities, Nylén observes that “there [are] usually prescribed patterns of relationships and responsibilities to the group as a unit and among family members. In return for fulfilling the responsibilities which membership [demands, the] family group provide[s] meaning to existence with companionship and physical and psychological security for the individual and his [sic] children” (p. 17). One of the responsibilities of each member of the family is to “seek and maintain the cohesion of the family” (Gyekye, p. 75).

In addition, marriage is seen as being “essential to the development and enlargement of kinship ties...a characteristic feature of African society.” Both men and women are expected to marry and have children. Women who do not marry are “almost an anomaly” (Gyekye, 1996, p. 76). Nylén reiterates the fact that girls “were, and were expected to be, married as soon as they were ready for childbearing...” (p. 17). Gyekye indicates that, with respect to men, a married man is highly respected and called upon by

younger members of the group to give advice, settle disputes, etc. (p. 77).

Marriage is really between the two families of the wife and husband, rather than being solely between the wife and husband. Each family takes an interest in the “worthiness or suitability” of a prospective spouse (p. 79). The search is usually for “a good woman, a woman...of good character, obedient, hard-working, and generally well-respected in the community” (p. 82).

Of great importance, too, is the ability of women to have children, which is seen as a woman’s primary role in marriage. Women who are unable to have children may be divorced or suffer ridicule and abuse (pp. 82-83). According to Gyekye, “infertility is never attributed to the man,” in traditional African societies (p. 82).

In addition, women are seen as “a precious gift, to be treated with love and kindness and to be fully dependent on...[a] husband, and a man is expected to take full responsibility for his wife’s total welfare” (p. 82).

With respect to the desired relationship between parents and children, virtues such as “respect, honesty, cordiality, and mutual trust” should provide the basis for this relationship. The greatest responsibility placed on an offspring is to take care of her/his parents in their old age. This includes caring for them in the daughter’s or son’s own homes (pp. 88-89).

The elderly are “respected...venerated...[and] enjoyed.” They are also frequently seen as the “embodiment of experience, wisdom, and traditional lore” (p. 89).

5.2.6 Economic Values

Although African society is extremely communally oriented, private property and private enterprise do exist alongside state or communal operations. Traditional chiefs are not responsible for managing the economy but do receive taxes and “tributes.” This money is to be used for the welfare of the chief’s people. Gyekye notes that the traditional state was, “to all intents and purposes, a social welfare state” (p. 105).

Wealth and money are highly prized, although the “generous use of wealth is greatly encouraged” (p. 104). In fact, Dia notes that “the only riches are those shared with — and socially visibly to the community...[and that there] is a social and mystical need for what westerners call ‘wastefulness’” (p. 11). Nylén also comments on this issue, stating that (as of 1967) “[m]any of the new values [resulting from the influence of the West] of greatest appeal are material. Money and power often become ends in themselves” (p. 18). Regarding obtaining the means for achieving financial success, education is “devoutly desired” in Africa. Dia sees education as being valued in Africa, to a large extent, “as the means to the new world of things...” (p. 18).³⁶

With respect to issues of family and money, Dia indicates that the extended family “is always present and always likely to be imposing itself...excess income is distributed first to close members of the extended family, then to the neighbors, and then to the ethnic tribe...[and that] economic success in itself does not lead to upward social mobility. In fact, if achieved outside of the group, it may even lead to social ostracism” (p. 11).

He adds that the resources of the state sometimes “become fair game for ethnic groups and extended family to build their own basis of support and legitimacy, through

³⁶This is often also the case in the West as well.

patronage, or sometimes, outright graft. Most of this wealth, however, generally ends up in conspicuous consumption...instead of productive investments" (p. 11).

This phenomenon, according to Dia, is sometimes justified by the "need for security." In this regard, the person who "provides sumptuous hospitality and redistributes his wealth can expect to count on the beneficiaries in periods of need. A desire for prestige frequently provides a second reason." In Dia's opinion, little value is attached to the type of self-control needed for saving money (p. 11).

The preceding account stands in contrast to a traditional value cited by Gyekye, namely, that individuals are encouraged to be thrifty, save their money, accumulate capital and manage their money prudently. He states that in the African work ethic, hard work is highly valued and is seen as a "moral obligation" (1996, p. 102). This is perhaps a good example of the type of 'gap' that can exist between a society's espoused values and its values in use (Argyris, 1982).

With respect to African values regarding work, Dia states that because of the importance of group solidarity and socializing, Africans "attach a high value to leisure and the attendant ability to engage in rituals, ceremonies, and social activities." In this regard, he notes that "leisure has often been misconstrued by outsiders as 'laziness'...[however,] in Africa, these activities serve...[to reinforce] social bonds, which are the foundation of [African] society" (1991, p. 12). In addition, there may be an additional value relating to the African sense of 'time.' Sten indicates, from her 3-month experience in Kenya as an OD practitioner, that "Africans do not surrender to time." In her words, "[T]ime, for most Africans, flows rather than proceeds in measured jumps." Further, "personal relationships [do] not suffer on account of time because schedules always [are] a lower priority" (Sten, 1993, p. 22).

In Dia's view, it is crucial to economic development that there be a "reconciliation of these traditional values with the imperatives of economic efficiency and accumulation," based on a foundation of "effective indigenous management practices" (p. 12). He notes that other societies, such as "Japan, The Republic of Korea, and Taiwan Province of China" have succeeded in their modernization efforts "without renouncing local customs, culture or traditional values." This, he argues, shows that "acculturation is not a prerequisite to development" and that success and sustainability of development efforts is dependent upon "how well it takes account of the needs and culture of the beneficiaries" (p. 12).

5.2.7 Chiefship and Political Values

Dia indicates that "African society is generally very paternalistic and hierarchical" (1991, p. 11). In the traditional African state, a chief is both the political head and the religious head. Only men are chiefs and they are selected (and sometimes elected) from a recognized royal family (Gyekye, 1996, p. 109). The functional authority of the chief comes from the people.³⁷ The chief rules on behalf of the people and there is a close relationship between the two. A chief is not to abuse or insult his subjects and should show respect for them; share, in a reasonable manner, the wealth of the community; and never act without the "advice and full concurrence of his councilors," who represent the people (p. 114).

Julius Juppe also notes that African society is hierarchical, with the "central leader in African communities [being the...tribal chief, supreme chief...]." A "subordinate hierarchy of leaders (of tribes, wards, family groups) occupy their status and authoritative positions on hereditary (privileged) grounds dictated by a well developed system of seniority and ranking" (Jeppe, 1994). The power of the chiefs is limited and those who abuse their power can be removed (Gyekye, 1996, p. 121).

³⁷Gyekye also notes that in some cases, "systems of despotism and authoritarianism existed in some places" (p. 111).

Dia indicates that there is a tendency for egalitarianism to exist within groups whose members are of the same age, but a hierarchy in "group-to-group relations, with marked subordination of the younger members." Also, although individuals in a group have the same legal status, someone who wants to go "beyond his or her own circle" must have the permission of the father or another authority such as a tribal chief to do so (p. 11).

Dia also notes that these "paternalistic and hierarchical structures have often been regarded by Westerners—who highly value assertiveness, individual freedom, and responsibility—as running counter to productivity and creativity." However, he does not think this has always been shown to be the case and cites the Bamoun tribe of Cameroon as a case in which a society that was "founded on dependence and paternalism" proved to be "just as creative as any other" (p. 11). Dia also contends that, although paternalism and dependency may slow the "pace at which an entire population changes and evolves, they need not hinder progress, research, and economic development" (p. 11).

Gyekye indicates, as well, that leadership is "continuous (not interchangeable)." It is carried out within "socio-political structures and communities, and is normally for life" (p. 121). Jeppe also notes the importance of religious beliefs regarding leaders, namely, that these leaders are seen to be "representing... forefather hierarchy" (1994, p. 8).

With respect to the decision-making process, people are free to express their views in the council of chiefs and in other assemblies. Matters are discussed until consensus is reached (Gyekye, 1996, p. 111). Sten notes that regarding the process Africans follow in meetings, "people contribute to their relationships by making time to truly listen to each other, to hear each other out; interruptions are unheard of" (Sten, 1993, p. 22).

Gyekye emphasizes that consensus was the “most outstanding feature of the decision-making process in traditional African political practice, where the values of equality, reciprocity, respect for others, and mutual recognition are implemented.” This is important since the whole clan or group must sanction a program before it can be carried out (1996, p. 111).

Dia's comments supports Gyekye's view, indicating that “Africans tend to seek unanimity and are generally prepared to engage in seemingly interminable discussions.” In some places custom even requires that a dispute be “brought to an end by songs and dances, signifying that the two parties have agreed to maintain harmony and understanding” (p. 12).

As Gyekye notes, in concluding his comments on this topic, the processes of consultation and consensus decision-making, the openness of meetings and freedom of expression are all “important elements of the democratic principle” (p. 121).

5.2.8 Beauty (Aesthetic Values)

For my purposes here, it is not necessary for me to delineate this aspect of African culture. Out of interest it may be noted, however, that beauty is a “central notion in African aesthetics” (p. 133) and that in regards to people, inward qualities such as moral behaviour are seen as being more important than external 'beauty' (p. 131).

5.2.9 Knowledge and Wisdom

Gyekye differentiates between knowledge and wisdom. “Knowledge,” literally [a]

“thing observed” (in the Ewe language), is experience-based or empirical (i.e., not theoretical) in nature. Experience or observation is seen as the “primary source of knowledge” and knowledge is seen to be of great value since it can assist with life situations or human problems (p. 138). Wisdom, which is complementary, in my view, includes “the ability to...analyze and solve...practical problems of life.” It is the ability to “pay reflective attention to [the] fundamental principles underlying human life and experience” and can be either practical or theoretical, i.e., philosophical (p. 137). The main purpose of wisdom is to ensure “human well-being” (p. 143).

According to Gyekye, there has been little interest in African cultures in “knowledge for its own sake.” Of greater importance and value, is knowledge that has an “immediate practical application or relevance” (pp. 139-140). Similarly, wisdom, even if theoretical, needs to be directly related to “practical problems of life...[and] concrete human problems (p. 141).

In addition to observation and experience, there is a belief in African cultures that knowledge can also be gained by certain individuals (e.g., diviners and mediums) through “paranormal or extrasensory cognition” (pp. 140-141).

While elders are seen as the traditional custodians of knowledge, they are not viewed as being the only ones who can possess wisdom; youth can also be seen to be wise. An Akan (Ghana) maxim related to this —“Wisdom is not in the head of one person” — suggests that many can possess wisdom and also calls for intellectual openness and modesty about one’s own ideas (p. 145).

5.2.10 Human Rights

Notwithstanding the existence of human rights abuses (sometimes systematic) in some African countries in the 'post-colonial' period (which Gyekye condemns as "morally reprehensible and unacceptable"), Gyekye indicates that a human rights concept does exist in traditional African culture (p. 150). Drawing again on Akan culture, he points out that in Akan belief, "a divine element called soul" is seen as having "intrinsic value" and as being "worthy of respect" (p. 150). There is also "equality in the moral worth of all human beings [as]...children of God" (p. 150) [emphasis in original]. These concepts of "human dignity, intrinsic value, and equal moral worth" are linked to the notion of innate rights (pp. 150-151). However, within the African context, this recognition of rights is both communal and individualistic in nature. These 'joint' rights are seen as compatible since communalism "does not...absorb individuality but accommodate[s] it..." (p. 151).

Some of the rights recognized are: the right to food and protection from hunger; the right to use land that belongs to the lineage (family) —and thus the right to work; the right to own private property; the right to a fair trial (if accused of a crime); the right to practice one's own religion; the right to freedom of speech; and, the right to political participation (including the right to remove rulers) (pp. 154-156).

5.2.11 Ancestorship and Tradition

Ancestors are always present in the consciousness of African peoples. The way Africans have honoured their ancestors is through the preservation of their ancestors' culture and practices and by celebrating the memory of them. In addition, since ancestors, as "spirits," are viewed as being able to influence their lives, Africans have revered them (in part) to obtain good treatment from them (Gyekye, p. 161).

The comments of Nylén support this view. He states that there is a fear of offending ancestral spirits. This fear supports a normal predilection to “accept the authority of parents and elders and to conform to family expectations.” Since economic and social opportunities outside of the family situation have often been limited, “alternatives to acceptance of group controls” are seen as “impractical.” This, in turn, has made the family group very influential in all aspects of life. This type of “control” has also sometimes replaced “internal autonomy and self-direction” (1967, p. 17). “Trust was placed in one’s kin” (p. 18).

There is also a belief in the ability to communicate between the living and the spirit worlds. In addition, because of the ancestors’ experience, they are seen as being able to “guide, help, and bestow honors” on their descendants. The ancestors are seen as the “custodians of traditional moral order” and it is believed that ancestors are capable of either punishing “their earthly kinsmen who break the traditionally sanctioned code or fail to fulfill...moral obligations to their relatives,” or, alternatively, rewarding those who follow the traditional code (p. 162).

Worth noting, too, is the fact that, traditionally, the respect ‘due’ to living chiefs is an extension of that which is given to ancestors, irrespective of whether the chief is virtuous or not (p. 164).

With respect to the impact of this set of values on African society, Gyekye is of the opinion that there is an “excessive veneration of the ancestors” and a similarly “excessive attention to tradition.” He believes strongly that there should be a “serious, profound, and extensive evaluation of the cultural traditions inherited from the forebears” (p. 165). He undertakes such an evaluation in his book Tradition and Modernity (1997). While it is not my intention to undertake such a critique in this paper, it is important that critiques of

African traditions, such as Gyekye's, continue to be proffered — by Africans.

CHAPTER SIX — AFROCENTRICITY

6.1 Introduction

Having previously alluded to Afrocentricity, which provides the foundational perspective for the OD approach that will be presented, and having just provided a description of African cultural values, which provide the basis for Afrocentricity (Schiele, 1990, p. 146), it would seem appropriate to describe Afrocentricity at this point in the narrative. I will attempt a brief summary of the key points as I see them. I will also compare/contrast 'Afrocentricity' with 'Eurocentricity,' which may serve to better clarify what is meant by the (sometimes controversial) term, 'Afrocentricity.' The reader is also referred to Asante's works (e.g., 1980a, 1987, 1990) and others such as Schiele (1990) and Verharen (1995) for a more complete description.

6.2 Definition of 'Afrocentricity/Afrocentrism' and Comparison with 'Eurocentricity/Eurocentrism'

Afrocentricity is a perspective, a belief system, and a process of liberating the mind and spirit. It was formulated and articulated by Molefi Kete Asante (1980a; 1987; 1990), although he also cites important influences (Karenga, 1978). Afrocentricity has its basis in Egyptian or Kemetian (circa 2000-4000 B.C.E.) philosophy and emphasizes the idea of "holism," which includes both the physical and the spiritual aspects of being (Verharen, 1995). As Verharen puts it: "The essence of Afrocentrism is holism, the philosophy that all humans are united not only with one another but also with the planet and the universe" (p. 73). An aspect of both African culture and Afrocentrism is an "emphasis on discerning

similarities or commonalities of a people and their condition, instead of discerning and emphasising individual differences...[therefore] Afrocentrism gives preeminence to the group" (Schiele, 1990, p. 149).

In contrast to this, Eurocentrism, as critiqued by Mazama (1998), carries with it a sense of Europeans' supposed 'inherent superiority.' The 'other', frequently people of colour, is focused on as being different from the European and, in the Eurocentric paradigm, 'different' inevitably equals 'less than.' The author states that Europeans have succeeded "in invalidating all other peoples' experience while holding their own [experience] as superior and universal" (p. 14). Mazama provides a poignant example of how this works, in describing the Eurocentric perspective on writing vs. oral language. Mazama criticizes the Eurocentric notion that writing has "some special effects on the brain, [and] triggers and enhances rationality [and that] Europeans [being, it is argued]...the most literate people, ...[have] their higher cognitive power and precocious...progress, whereas the rest of us, more or less stuck in our oral quagmire, stagnate..." (p. 3). She also criticizes other writers in the discourse on Africa, among them, Stubbs (1980), who "went so far as to even try to dismiss pictographic systems (such as Kemetic hieroglyphs) as not being 'true writing systems'..."(Stubbs, 1980, p. 5).

Mazama notes that the "major flaw of the grandiose claims made about the impact of writing and literacy is that they have not been convincingly argued at all...most of the time, one simply finds a succession of strong statements...without any proof to validate them, or with very weak and confused justifications" (p. 8). She also notes that 'objectivity' and the view that a written text is 'value-free, and purely factual' are both European myths (p. 9).

Mazama also provides an acute description of how destructive the Eurocentric

paradigm has been for African peoples. She states that the "end result of this process of training [literacy training, etc.] into the European worldview has been an increased Westernization of the world (Latouche, 1992), whereby [indigenous] paradigms were discarded, and at times lost, to be replaced by European ones" (p. 14).

'Afrocentricity' by contrast is, in Asante's own words, "the belief in the centrality of Africans in post modern history..." (pp. 9-10). Within the African context (Asante and others argue that it is applicable anywhere), it places Africans at the centre of their own experiences and allows them to obtain self-knowledge (Verharen, 1995, p. 67) that is not filtered through Eurocentric lenses and concepts. In Asante's words, "Afrocentricity represents a deepening of the conceptual frames which bring us close to ourselves and a sharpening of the distractions which will help [us] rid ourselves of the peripheral vestiges of a Eurocentric reality" (p. 99). Thus Africans can retain or regain a sense of 'agency' — that is, they have the "capacity to project [themselves] onto [their] own existence— [rather than live] on borrowed European terms" (Mazama, 1998, p. 14). With respect to Africans taking control of how they and Africa are portrayed in academic literature, 'agency' means African scholars exploring "knowledge that directly speaks to the African human condition and realities...[and allowing] African communities to become subjects of their own study [rather than objects of Eurocentric scholars]" (Dei, 1998a, p. 148).

In contrast to Eurocentricity, this "centering in self," i.e., the grounding of "observation and behavior in one's own historical experience" (Asante, 1990 cited in Verharen, 1995), facilitates, on an individual level, a "transcendent" process during which one can become conscious not only of one's oppression but also of one's possible victory over that oppression (Asante, 1980a, p. 58). Asante notes that "[e]ach person chooses to become Afrocentric; [and that] this is the only way to accomplish it" (p. 112). This "breakthrough" Asante speaks of is essentially what I would call consciousness-raising and

the adoption of a new paradigm, one that places Africans at the centre of their own experiences and allows them to view and analyze all matters from that perspective.

Charles Verharen, in writing about what he calls "Afrocentricism," states that each person must start with what s/he knows, namely her/his own culture, because to do otherwise "will destroy a sense of self" (p. 69). He also sees Afrocentrism as a "philosophy of inclusion rather than exclusion" and notes that the "Afro in Afrocentrism is not simply a substitute for the Euro in Eurocentrism. Rather[,] it stands for an indeterminate variable whose value can be taken by any culture. It is a philosophy centered on each individual, but only with the understanding that it is the individual that makes the whole possible, just as the whole makes the individual possible. Any separation of the two is purely artificial" (pp. 71-72).

Verharen also deals with the concept of 'acentrism.' This he defines as: "the view that no single group can claim a center stage except in the context of incomplete descriptions. Each group must constitute its own center, but these 'polycenters' coalesce to form the whole" (p. 66).

He also notes that, in a holistic philosophy (which Afrocentricity is), "there can be no ethnocentrism...one group cannot claim to stand as the center for all humans, as Eurocentrists have tried to do...[and that each] group of humans must stand as its own center, so Afrocentrism is 'polycentric'...[but that...] these centers coalesce to form the whole, and in this global sense, Afrocentrism is 'acentric'"³⁸ (p. 73). Additionally, he notes

³⁸Some may, notwithstanding the description of 'Afrocentricity/Afrocentrism,' have difficulty seeing it as inclusive, rather than an exclusive concept such as 'Eurocentricity/Eurocentrism.' This is unfortunate, since 'Afrocentricity' connotes what is essentially a 'shifting' centrism, one that places formerly marginalized people at the centre. Some may, therefore, be more comfortable with the term, 'acentrism.' While I am more concerned with seeing the approach utilized than with how it is labeled, I also believe that acknowledging the source of the concept, via using its name from the literature, is important. I will, therefore, continue to use the term as it stands, and will argue its applicability beyond Africa's borders.

that “the centeredness of Afrocentrism must be diametrically opposed to the centrism of Eurocentrism” (p. 75). Finally, Verharen reminds the reader that “unless every center is supported, the whole cannot stand” (p. 74) [emphasis in original].

In summary, the Afrocentric paradigm speaks to notions of commonality, holism, inclusion, racial equality and unity, while the European paradigm is implicated in perpetuating individualism, difference, exclusion, racial inequality, and disunity. Having said this, it is important to point out that Afrocentricity also has its critics, such as Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Houessou-Adin, 1995). For my purposes here, I have accepted Afrocentricity as the preferred approach to OD in Africa, while also recognizing that it may have some limitations within this or other contexts or regions. Such limitations would need to be explored in further studies.

6.3 African Cultural Values and Afrocentricity

The preceding sections have provided a description of the concept of Afrocentricity and the traditional African cultural values upon which this philosophy and paradigm are based. These two cornerstones provide the theoretical, philosophical and cultural perspective and framework upon which the OD approach I will be presenting is based.

V. KEY FINDINGS/DISCUSSIONS

CHAPTER SEVEN — COMPARISON OF AFRICAN CULTURAL VALUES AND WESTERN OD VALUES, AND IMPLICATIONS OF CONGRUENCIES AND INCONGRUENCIES FOR OD PRACTICE IN AFRICA

7.1 Introduction

All of the African cultural values described previously are important for the Western OD practitioner to be aware of when providing OD services within Africa, since they provide the overall cultural context in which the work is to be done. However, several values in particular stand out as having potentially greater significance to OD practice. Some of these values such as 'Ubuntu' accord with OD values such as 'community'; others, such as paternalism and hierarchy, seem to 'clash' with OD values relating to democratic participation and Western notions of human rights and 'equality' between the sexes. What has become clear to me, as a result of the literature search for this paper, is that traditional African values were usurped during the process of colonization and have been 'replaced,' at least to some extent, with Eurocentric values such as consumerism (Visser, p. 2). While some may argue that there have been some positive impacts as a result of the introduction of Western values, many other writers, especially African writers, see that the adoption of many of these Western values has not been 'in the best interest of Africans,' (Asante, 1987; Dei, 1998a; Dei, 1999; Madhubuti, 1978) or traditional African spirituality (Dei, 1999).

OD, as a practice, has similarly found a number of typically 'Western' values such as authoritarian and bureaucratic decision-making to be problematic and in need of change. OD's espoused values, as articulated previously in this paper, represent an

attempt to 'shift' organizations and organizational culture in more 'humanistic,' 'democratic,' and 'communal' directions.

7.2 Comparison of African Cultural Values and Western OD Values

In the course of my comparison of African values and OD values, I will be pointing out some possible implications for OD practice in Africa. The African cultural values I will be focusing my attention on are: traditional religious values; the emphasis on communalistic values (with an emphasis on the notion of "Ubuntu"), as opposed to individualist values; values relating to the family; moral values; the value and acquisition of wealth; the African work ethic; the acceptance of 'hierarchy' in the form of a chief, coupled with the value of consensus decision-making (chiefship and political values); the emphasis on obtaining knowledge via observation and experience; the importance of knowledge being seen to be of immediate practical or utilitarian use (instead of just knowledge for its own sake); the emphasis on both individual and communal human rights; and the importance of ancestors and tradition. With regard to OD values, I will be focusing on those most pertinent to the discussion regarding congruency or incongruency of values. In addition, the issue of the possible impact(s) of Western OD interventions on African culture will be addressed.

7.2.1 Traditional Religious Values and OD

While many people in the West see themselves as 'religious,' and while religious values per se do not necessarily conflict with OD values, I think a key point here is that most organizations in the West are secular in nature. In the West, in fact, overtly practicing one's religion 'at work' can be seen to be (and in cases may be) 'offensive' to others. OD values had their genesis in 'humanistic' and 'democratic' values (defined, at least initially,

within an individualistically-oriented U.S. culture). OD, with its emphasis on groups and teams, and, later, 'community,' (OD Network, 1999b), has tried to mitigate against this emphasis on individuals, while at the same time focusing, in the main, on people's potential (Tannenbaum & Davis, 1969, cited in Holvino, 1993). Holvino also indicates that OD has a "tradition" of attending to social issues (p. 7), and OD's concern for "fair and equitable treatment" in the workplace (French & Bell, 1995) is now evident in OD's espoused value statements. However, OD, as a practice, has not, until recently, been concerned with 'spiritual matters' as such—although a number of books and articles are now being published on the topic (Helliwell, 1999; Skelton, 1999) and workshops on 'spirituality in the workplace' are now being held (Centre for spirituality at work, 1999).

I think the point to consider with respect to African religion,³⁹ is that, as previously indicated, it is (apparently) 'central and pervasive.' Also, I would hypothesize that African spirituality and its related notion of "Ubuntu" are qualitatively different from Western OD notions of spirituality and communalism, notwithstanding the use of common terms to describe these phenomena. The reason I think there is a difference in meaning of the espoused values, is that the respective cultures of Africa and the West are quite different.

This discussion leads to a question similar to that previously noted. In this case it is: To what extent can an OD practitioner really relate to (i.e., understand) the terms 'spirituality' and 'community' in the way they are understood by Africans, since those terms are, themselves, cultural constructs and, as such, may mean different things in different cultures? Further, although Western OD practitioners can, no doubt, relate to a notion of 'community,' both in a spiritual sense of emotional support and well-being, and in a practical or functional sense of sharing insights, knowledge and skills (i.e., learning), can it

³⁹ I consider African 'religion,' based on my readings, to mean 'spirituality' in the sense of 'spirit' rather than dogma. The interconnectedness of all people and things to the supreme being seems deeply spiritual to me, although this interpretation may or may not reflect a typically 'Western' concept of spirit.

truly be said of Western OD practitioners that their very identity is formed by community in the sense that is seemingly the case in Africa (i.e., the notion of Ubuntu)? My view is that the individualistic values system in the U.S. so heavily influences Western OD practitioners in their formative years that there are, of necessity, substantial differences in the meaning of the terms, 'spiritual' and 'community' within the West and Africa. To equate these terms, even at the level of 'espoused' values (or in the case of Africa, as traditional values), seems to be in error. Having said this, it is possible, in my view, for a culturally-sensitive Western OD practitioner to 'get into' African culture and to understand its value system to some extent, but there are (perhaps severe) limitations to this capability that are important for the Western practitioner to recognize, understand and accept.

In any case, the pervasive nature of African 'religion' appears to have the potential to create a workplace environment that is very different from the workplaces a Western OD practitioner may be used to in, for example, Canada or the United States.

In a different vein, it is also important to note that, notwithstanding the fact that Africans have traditionally had a strong religious orientation, they have, historically, also had a strong empirical orientation—although this knowledge has not necessarily led to the development of scientific theories, *per se* (Gyekye, 1996, p. 243).

7.2.2 Communal African Values and Western OD Values

The issue of 'communal values' is intrinsically linked with African religion or spirituality within the notion of "Ubuntu." I am not the first writer to point out that a key difference and potential point of cultural conflict between African values and Western values is the fact that African culture is group-oriented or collective in nature, while Western culture as a whole and that of the United States, in particular, (which was 'home' to OD

historically), is extremely individualistic. Schiele (1990) points out that a “fundamental characteristic of mainstream or Western theories of organizations is the emphasis placed on the individual organization member.” Even “the human relations model [which is a foundational piece of OD], with its focus on the small-group process, uses this process to affect the individual's job satisfaction and productivity” (p. 148) – albeit to improve group relations and performance. Schiele also states, citing Akbar (1984), that “[i]ndividualism is emphasized in the Eurocentric model...because human identity is conceived [of] insularly” (p. 148).

OD's focus on groups and teams represents an emphasis on communalism. This, in turn, suggests that OD is already moving in the direction of 'Ubuntu' and toward an 'Afrocentric' approach to OD, although not everyone may wish to use this term to describe this approach. Thus, a congruence between Western OD values and the traditional African values of community and communal spirit appears evident.

In the 'Afrocentric' organizational model that Schiele describes, the “interests of the organization as a whole or collective would be the primary concern...although individual interests and concerns would be recognized...organizational and group survival [would replace] productivity as the overriding concern”⁴⁰ (p. 150). This comment is interesting in light of the results of the survey of OD practitioners described in French and Bell (1995). Reflecting upon the results of this survey regarding the values which (1) the practitioners believe are associated with OD work today, and (2) those that they believe should be associated with it, one notes that “increasing effectiveness and efficiency” (which I see as being related to productivity) was seen as the most important value for item 1 and “enhancing productivity” ranked fourth (out of five) for that question. “[E]mpowering

⁴⁰Laiken has pointed out that OD would disagree with this aspect of the approach, noting that organizational and group concerns would not “replace” productivity concerns but would underlie them (Laiken, 1999).

employees to act” was seen as the most important value for item 2. Issues relating to employees as a collective or to group survival did not appear — among the top five values, in any case. This finding, while inconclusive and not sufficient to predict the likelihood of Western OD practitioners being able to fully utilize an Afrocentric paradigm in their work, is nevertheless interesting and indicative of some of the challenges involved.

Additionally, the fact that 'cooperation' is also part of African values, related to collective action (Gyekye, 1996, p. 38), provides another point of congruence with OD values, inasmuch as collaboration is a very important OD value (French & Bell, 1973; Laiken, 1984). Also, according to Golembiewski (1993), another OD value is an emphasis on group involvement which accords with (as previously noted) African collectivistic values and traditional participative, consensus decision-making practices (Visser, 1999, p. 4).

7.2.3 Values Relating To The Family

The importance of family and kinship ties is a value that is different from OD's espoused values (in fact OD is largely silent on this issue). It is not, I think, that family is unimportant within the Western organizational context, but the communal structure of African society, compared with the 'nuclear' structure of Western families, places added responsibilities upon African workers that Western workers do not necessarily have. As previously indicated, this is particularly the case in regard to taking care of the needs of an extended family and even at times an entire tribe or village. In contrast to this, within Western organizations, the issue of 'family' is still largely seen as to be outside of the purview of the working world, although recently there has been an increased emphasis on the needs of employees with respect to balancing the demands of work and family.

Within the African context, the responsibilities and the financial obligations that result, as a consequence of the emphasis on the family and on kinship ties, need to be kept in mind if OD practitioners are undertaking OD work in Africa. This aspect is also dealt with in the section, "Value and Acquisition of Wealth."

Another African value of which the OD practitioner should be aware is the importance of marriage to both women and men in Africa. Along with this is the expected role of married women, which is to have children. The expected role of men is to marry and provide financially for their wives, children and extended family. These role expectations will necessarily, I would argue, have an impact on the workforce demographics and occupational structure of African organizations, as well as workplace culture and employment policies and practices.

This difference in values also relates to social and workplace equity issues. Equity is a major consideration in many Western organizations and is an important OD value. Within the African context, the issue of what constitutes 'equality' needs to be looked at from an African perspective.

7.2.4 Moral Values

As previously noted, many of the values indicated could be considered under the umbrella of 'moral' values. Some specific African values mentioned — kindness, compassion, generosity, truthfulness, concern for others, etc.— would presumably also fit within the humanistic values advocated by OD practitioners.

However, as is usually the case when one is speaking of the African context, one needs to pay attention to the extremely collectivist nature of African society, culture

(including individual identity), and the African worldview. In this regard, moral values relate to the group rather than solely to individuals. I would suggest, therefore, that notwithstanding OD's increased explicit reference to a more collectivist stance in its 1990s values statements, Africa's collective sense is more deeply embedded in the minds of Africans than is the case with Western OD practitioners. In the latter case, the culture in which they were raised and within which they typically operate is overwhelmingly individualistic in its orientation, which I suspect would still affect their conception of 'community.' I believe that 'community' is, not excepting the use of the same word, conceived of in somewhat different ways within African culture and Western culture (including the OD community). Nevertheless, the fact that 'community' is an important value to both the OD practice and African culture, provides another point of congruence.

In a more general way, this example highlights the issue of moral relativism and the fact that what is considered 'good' or 'bad,' 'right or wrong,' or 'moral' or 'immoral' may vary from culture to culture, or even from individual to individual. While interrogation and discussion of what constitutes 'morality' is important, so too is the need to suspend one's judgement regarding what one may perceive as being another person's or culture's 'morality' or 'immorality.' Espoused OD values typically include a need to be sensitive to, and non-judgmental about, these matters.

7.2.5 Value and Acquisition of Wealth (Economic Values)

As previously indicated, wealth and money are highly valued within African culture (Gyekye, 1996). This would seem to accord with Western values in general. In the organizational context, this aspect relates to the issue of effective motivation of African employees. In this regard, the OD practitioner needs to be aware, as previously suggested, of the strong cultural obligation on Africans to take care of their immediate and

extended families. And, as Dia notes, the “value of economic acts is measured in terms of their capacity to reinforce the bonds of the group” (1991, p. 11). This valuing of wealth and money may be ‘misread’ by Western OD practitioners (and managers) who may (perhaps) erroneously assume that because Africans appear to be strongly motivated by monetary rewards (in keeping with their financial obligations), they will not be motivated by other potential rewards.

This aspect also touches on the rather controversial issue of African officials who accept gifts, in return for services or products provided. The Western tendency is to immediately condemn these practices as ‘bribes,’ but, in my view, this issue needs to be looked at within its own cultural context. One needs to be mindful of the fact that within Africa, the “need for [material] security is a primary [concern]” as is the need to care for one’s extended family and possibly one’s ethnic tribe (Dia, p. 11). Those who provide gifts or redistribute their wealth “can expect to count on the beneficiaries in periods of need” (Dia, p. 11). Thus, a reciprocal and ‘symbiotic’ relationship would appear to exist in these cases, based, mainly, on the need for material security and cultural norms.

As I indicate later on in this paper, in the section on human resource development challenges in Africa, the decision about whether or not it is appropriate to ‘allow’ such ‘gifts’ should rest with Africans themselves. It is not appropriate (and is in fact arrogant, in my view), for Western OD practitioners or managers, etc. to pass (even silent) judgements on issues such as this.

With a number of these issues, therefore, I would argue that, what is needed, at minimum, is an indepth understanding of African culture and a willingness on the part of the OD practitioner to learn how to see African culture ‘with African eyes,’ i.e., from an African-centred perspective and with a solid understanding of African culture. It is also important,

of course, to recognize one's limitations in being able to do this.

7.2.6 African Work Ethic (Economic Values)

It is worth noting, as Gyekye points out, that within African culture, hard work is not only highly valued but is also seen as a "moral obligation" (1996, p. 102). With respect to OD values on productivity, while OD does not explicitly state that 'increasing productivity' is an OD goal, I think it can be inferred that this is a given as part of OD's mandate of improving organizational effectiveness. Also, it would likely be on the mind of many, if not most, OD practitioners' clients.

I am highlighting this value of hard work as being a traditional African value because, within Western culture, negative stereotypes about African workers still persist. In addition, some of the literature on organizational effectiveness (including organization development) and human resource development and management in Africa, especially that related to motivation of African workers, serves, in my view, to perpetuate (however inadvertently) these stereotypes (Blunt & Jones, 1992; Blunt & Popool, 1985; Kiggundu, 1989).

In this regard it is important to note Dia's comment that 'leisure' is highly valued and that this has often been erroneously interpreted by "outsiders" as "laziness," when in fact leisure activities play an important role in reinforcing social bonds within African society (p. 12). The OD practitioner, for her/his part, needs to be mindful that such stereotypes are prevalent within Western culture so as not to be (mis)-guided by them.

Having said this, there appear to be some significant motivational challenges within

African workplaces (as there certainly still are in Western companies). These issues need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the specifics of the situation and organizational and environmental factors that may be affecting an employee's job performance.

7.2.7 Hierarchy and Consensus Decision-Making (Chiefship and Political Values)

The acceptance of chiefs and 'sub-leaders' as the rulers in traditional African culture seems, in my view, to suggest a certain comfort level, within African society, with the existence of hierarchy. While the cultural context may be different in cities, I would hypothesize that, based on the existence of hierarchies in traditional African culture, together with its relatively long history in African organizations (since at least colonial times), hierarchy is an important part of the African 'psyche' and is seen, for the most part, as an acceptable way of organizing one's society — likely more so than in the West.

In addition, as Dia (1991) points out, "paternalistic and hierarchical structures have often been regarded by Westerners...as running counter to productivity and creativity" (p. 11). However, Dia, citing the highly-centralized and organized yet very creative Bamoun tribe in Cameroon, argues that this is not always shown to be the case (p. 11). What is perhaps more important an issue for Africans is those situations (which are well-publicized in the Western media), of African rulers who misuse their power and authority for self-aggrandizement or to 'feather their own nests'-- at the expense of their people.

Africa is frequently faulted (possibly unfairly) for being extremely hierarchical and bureaucratic (Blunt & Jones, 1992; Jones, 1990; Montgomery, 1987), with resultant delays and frustration for the client. Also, there is a discourse in the literature which

suggests that "instrumental orientations towards work predominate in Africa"(Blunt & Popool, 1985, p. 162). Consequently, participative approaches to decision-making, such as those which might be accomplished via team-work, which may be attractive to employees in the West, may need to be adapted if they are to succeed in Africa. For example, it has been suggested that, in the case of Africa, increased "responsibility, autonomy and higher skill levels should be tied to increased material incentives" (Blunt and Popoola, p. 162). While the same may hold true in the West, the great need for material security in Africa means that more attention needs to be paid to this aspect of working conditions.

A further example of the need to carefully assess what is really going on in a culture is provided by the issue of decision-making. African culture may appear, on its face (i.e., as far as many Westerners are concerned), not to provide much opportunity for input from the people, including perhaps in organizations. However, within African cultural values, as Gyekye points out, consensus decision-making is both valued and routinely carried out. As Visser has pointed out, the "search for culturally appropriate alternatives to the hierarchical bureaucratic organisational structures of the North West has deep cultural roots to draw from in South Africa. The origins lie in participative, communal decision making in the tribal context, which were still firmly in operation as recently as the years of President Nelson Mandela's youth" (p. 4). I think the point to be made here is that there may be a conflict within African culture itself, or at least within African organization culture on the issue of hierarchy and participative decision-making. This may be the result, at least in part, of the colonial legacy and the imposition of bureaucratic, hierarchical organizational structures (Visser, 1999) and the reluctance of European civil servants to trust Africans with any decision-making powers.

Nevertheless, OD also values decision-making by consensus, so this is a point of

commonality that the OD practitioner can build upon in her/his work. However, to avoid any possible conflicts relating to cultural values, it would seem to me that a Western OD practitioner would need to carefully interrogate the question as to whether or not it is appropriate for her/him to introduce or promote (which I would argue is a type of imposition) Western notions of 'democracy' and power-sharing into a culture that may have a different (but no less valid and 'moral') idea about what constitutes participative decision-making in particular and 'democracy' in general.

7.2.8 Knowledge Via Observation and Experience

The African valuing of obtaining knowledge via observation and experience is most pertinent perhaps to issues of teaching-learning, including the development of student-centred curriculum and teaching-learning methodologies. Related to this point is the "great emphasis on education through practice [which is] generally evident in traditional African societies..." (Fyle, 1993, cited in Brock-Utne, 1995). This 'indigenous' educational approach stands in opposition to the traditional 'colonial model,'⁴¹ which was the predominant approach used in formal 'education' in Africa during the period of colonial rule, and which is still prevalent in Africa (Brock-Utne, 1995). In Brock-Utne's article (p. 189), she cites Joseph Ki-Zerbo, who argues that "the present crises in African education [lie] in the fact that the present educational system is dysfunctional for Africa" (Ki-Zerbo, 1990).

⁴¹The 'colonial' model of formal education, as it was imposed on Africa (albeit with some resistance on the part of Africans (Bledsoe, 1992)), can be characterized by, for example, formal instructional methods (such as lectures); content that has been subsequently seen by many as "irrelevant and inappropriate;" curriculum that emphasizes the "passing of examinations at the expense of acquisition of knowledge and skills..." (Brock-Utne, 1995), p. 181. Watson also points out that a "crucial part of the school system was the transfer of knowledge through the curriculum and textbooks, reinforced by examinations set and controlled by...the universities of Cambridge and London, or the overseas section of the French Ministry of Education" (Watson, 1994.) Most importantly, perhaps, is the fact that local, indigenous knowledge is typically denigrated, and indigenous approaches to learning ignored — in favour of supposed 'superior' Western knowledge and teaching methods. One overall result has, typically, been continued dependency (see Watson, 1994).

OD approaches to teaching and learning seem to accord well with indigenous African ones. OD values and practices experiential learning and participative, student-centred learning (as opposed to the 'expert-teacher' mode) as a training methodology, so this seems to be an area of congruence with African values on which the OD practitioner can capitalize.

Another value area where there may be a possibility for some congruence is the emphasis in OD on the importance of feelings and emotions (Golembiewski, 1993). In the latter case, as Schiele notes, African culture sees knowledge that is gained via the emotions or 'affectively' as being valid information (p. 147).

7.2.9 Emphasis on Immediate, Practical Knowledge

In a similar fashion to the previous value discussed, this aspect of African culture would appear to be important, within the OD context, to issues of teaching-learning. In this context it is important to recall that African values appear to favour knowledge that is of an immediate, practical use rather than theoretical knowledge, unless the latter is being related to concrete matters at hand. Similarly, "knowledge for its own sake," is seen as being of little value (Gyekye, 1996).

This emphasis on immediate, practical knowledge does not, in my view, represent any conflict with OD, which, in my experience, utilizes both theoretical and practical knowledge, and as Laiken has pointed out, "emphasizes 'action/reflection learning'" (Laiken, 1999). Also, as Brown and Duguid point out, the 'communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1990; Wenger, 1998) approach emphasizes the need to focus on 'practice' as being "central" to understanding the task at hand (Brown & Duguid, 1996, p. 59). Further, Lave and Wenger's work, together with Orr's "empirical investigation" on work-related

learning (Orr, 1987a; Orr, 1987b; Orr, 1990a; Orr, 1990b, both cited in Brown (p. 59)), indicate that separating “knowledge” (i.e., theory) from practice is “unsound, both in theory and in practice” (p. 59).

7.2.10 Emphasis On Both Communal and Individual Human Rights

As indicated in the section on African cultural values, Africans have their own notion of what constitutes human rights, which includes the “human dignity, intrinsic value and moral worth” of human beings (Gyekye, 1996). Human rights in Africa are conceived of both in communal and individualistic terms; however, the general orientation of African values is toward the welfare of the group or community. OD has a similar 'group' focus, although issues such as paternalism and some notions regarding the expected roles of African women (see section on “The Family”) conflict with OD values regarding human rights and workplace equality regarding the sexes. These differences in perspective need to be kept in mind and understood within their own cultural contexts.

7.2.11 Importance of Ancestors and Tradition (Tradition vs. Modernity⁴² Issue)

The importance of ancestors and tradition within Africa would appear, at first glance, to be another point of divergence from Western OD values. OD is based, as previously noted, on behavioural science, although myths and story-telling, as well as ritual are sometimes also used (Laiken, 1999). Science is linked in the Western mind to notions of technology and progress. 'Tradition,' on the other hand, especially with reference to non-white, relatively non-industrialized societies, comes to symbolize, in my experience, a lack of 'progress.'

⁴²For an interesting and indepth discussion of this topic of “Tradition and Modernity” within the African context, see Gyekye, 1997.

In the Western culture, ancestors are of genealogical interest but do not figure in day-to-day living or the workplace (this is also the case, I would argue, with respect to OD). The Western view on 'tradition' in general is, however, I believe, more complex. My hypothesis on this is that, on the one hand, Western traditions are seen as being essentially 'good,' perhaps because they tend to be seen as being largely ceremonial in nature or at least not job-related (i.e., they don't interfere with issues of 'real' importance, like work). On the other hand, however, I believe that tradition, because it involves cultural aspects that are largely 'taken-for-granted' and not subject to scrutiny, nevertheless has a major impact on how Western society and organizations operate. This stands in contrast to, as just noted, how tradition is seen with reference to other peoples, and particularly, it seems, with respect to people of colour, such as Africans. In the latter case, 'tradition' is typically seen by Westerners as being 'bad.' It is also frequently seen by both Westerners and some Africans as keeping Africans from 'progressing' or becoming 'modern' (Gyekye, 1997). Whether or not OD practitioners, as individuals and as a group, share this view of tradition with the broader Western culture remains a question. Certainly, OD's focus on client-centred problem-solving provides an opportunity for local or indigenous knowledge⁴³ to be utilized in an OD intervention.

One way in which Western OD practitioners can, therefore, re-frame notions of tradition (where this is necessary) is to see tradition as providing valuable indigenous knowledge that has helped cultures deal with life problems and issues, over a long period of time, in a (usually) successful manner. This 'definition' of tradition is, in fact, similar to the definition of 'culture' provided by the OD theorist, Schein, cited previously in the definition section, "Culture," — although Schein does not explicitly speak of indigenous knowledge. Gyekye (1997) suggests, through providing examples, that the preservation of certain

⁴³(For more information on this topic see Dei, 1998b; Dei, 1999; McIsaac, 1995. Also, see section 12.2.5 "Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Approaches.")

cultural African traditions (as would be the case elsewhere) has had both positive and negative consequences. He calls for neither a “wholesale condemnation” nor a wholesale “exaltation” of African traditions but rather a “realistic normative assessment” of these traditions (p. 241).

CHAPTER EIGHT — VALUES CONFLICTS, ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS, AND SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS FOR OD PRACTICE IN AFRICA

From the preceding it should be clear that there are many commonalities and congruencies between African cultural values and Western OD values. These provide a foundation (potentially) for Western OD practitioners to provide culturally-sensitive, appropriate and effective OD services to Africa. However, there are also some important differences. These differences, if not recognized, appreciated and incorporated into the OD approach, can lead to values conflict and inappropriate and possibly damaging interventions.

A Western OD practitioner doing OD work in Africa would thus need, at minimum, to be mindful of these differences and to avoid making any judgements on values that may not accord with her/his own set of values and worldview. In addition, because OD has certain 'fixed' values, some of which the practitioner may see as 'non-negotiable,' the OD practitioner may need to decide if s/he can effectively perform the work required. Otherwise, it would seem to me that ethical considerations should prevent the OD practitioner from agreeing to undertake that work.

Golembiewski points out another issue which has some ethical implications. This issue deals with OD interventions in what he calls the “third world,” and “closeness of fit”

between the suggested OD approach and the client organization's present 'condition' or situation (including values). He disagrees with "most organizational theorists" who recommend a closeness of fit, noting that there is "evidence that OD works, on balance, in a broad range of contexts" (Golembiewski, 1993, p. 1667). In making his argument he suggests that "OD practitioners can (and do) make reasonable situational adjustments to the cultures in which they operate; and [that] OD technology has powerful generic features that facilitate adaptation...[such as] action research" (p. 1673). In addition, he indicates that "since OD approaches to process are value laden...they will [always] be incongruent with local behaviour or cultural patterns" — in other words, this situation is a given. In my view, this may or may not always be the case. Nevertheless, care must be taken by the OD practitioner in this regard to ensure that all OD interventions are culturally appropriate, and, in the case of Africa, in the best interests of Africans (Madhubuti, 1978). In addition, I would argue that cultural considerations should not, from an ethical standpoint, be looked at in the absence of a people's historical experience. This is especially true when that history has been one of colonial domination and racial, economic and cultural oppression, and where powerful negative stereotypes about people of colour still operate. One cannot simply dismiss what has gone on before, as if it had not occurred. For these reasons, and for ethical considerations relating to the possibility of imposing alien and inappropriate technologies and values, I cannot, as a general principle, agree with Golembiewski's view that "[s]ometimes distal fit is more appropriate" (p. 1685).

Regarding the literature on this topic, it is important to note that this 'extra layer' of complexity is increasingly being addressed in OD-related literature (Gellerman et al., 1990; Hassard & Parker, 1993; Holvino, 1993; Schiele, 1990; Sten, 1993; White & Wooten, 1986).

Additionally, white Western OD practitioners have, in my view, a special

responsibility, because of their espoused values, to critically examine themselves and their worldviews for any possible tendencies to stereotype groups or to 'buy-into,' however unconsciously, racist notions. As Dei points out,

Knowledge begins with self and interactions with others. Racial identity contributes to knowledge production about development [issues]. Similarly, the dynamics of social difference (race/ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality) significantly implicate how development experts and practitioners come to produce, validate, and use knowledge in marginalized communities. (Dei, 1998a, p. 144)

Notwithstanding the above comments, OD, with its focus on the needs of the client(s) and its espoused values, already shares many elements in common with an Afrocentric approach. Placing the client organization's needs (including the various stakeholder groups) at the 'centre' of OD intervention is a standard approach in OD practice and reflects OD values regarding honouring the knowledge the members of the organization bring to the situation or problem to be solved.

Based on 'where' a client is initially (i.e., current condition) and 'where' it wants to be at the desired 'end point' (i.e., 'here' compared with 'there'), culturally appropriate and effective OD approaches and techniques could be developed. While there may be a large gap between the client's 'here' and 'there,' the OD approach utilized in non-Western contexts could, in my view, be sufficiently flexible to accommodate itself to the task at hand. The approach I will be presenting in this paper will, hopefully, provide an appropriate and useful theoretical framework in this regard.

CHAPTER NINE — ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT⁴⁴ IN AFRICA

9.1 Current State of Research and 'Knowledge'; the Researcher; and, the Portrayal of African Organizational Effectiveness and Human Resources Management in the Literature

We certainly have no knowledge of what reforms might be used to improve the performance of Africa's public organizations. We can be reasonably certain that [management⁴⁵] techniques imported from the West will fail unless they are revised quite fundamentally. Yet we also know that some African organizations are performing much better than others. What we do not know is why. (Leonard, 1987)

I will start off by dealing with Leonard's comment regarding the need for research because it would seem to me to be a fundamental aspect of any discussion of organization effectiveness and human resource development and management in Africa. The other issue, namely, what can be done to 'revise' Western organizational effectiveness approaches such as OD, is the main focus of this paper.

According to Blunt and Jones (Blunt & Jones, 1992, p. 7), Leonard's first comment

⁴⁴ While the concept of human resource management is no doubt well understood in the OD field, I have provided a working definition of it for the purposes of this discussion. One definition that captures the essence (for me) is: "creating systems and situations in which human beings in an organisation can make their best contributions to achieve their individual goals and to develop the enterprise" (Eze, 1995).

⁴⁵ Although the term "management" is used in much of this literature I reviewed, it is frequently used in a very broad sense, relating to many aspects regarding organizational effectiveness, including both technical/structural issues and human resources management issues. While this term may be problematic vis-a-vis OD discourse, the understanding I am bringing to the term, when it is used (by other writers) in this paper, is that it really includes a broad range of organizational effectiveness issues, rather than only individual-oriented, 'traditional' human resources management issues.

appears to still accurately reflect the state of research on this topic circa 1992. Blunt and Jones concur with Ahiauzu (Ahiauzu, 1986) on the need for more research and add that much of the literature on socio-cultural influences on organizations is of "poor quality" (p. 10). In addition, Jones and Blunt (1993) indicate that "[l]ittle is known about organizational functioning and managerial behavior in Africa [and that the] need for organizational development and change is urgent" (p. 1735).

Notwithstanding Blunt and Jones' comment, a number of seemingly useful books on this topic have been published in the past 15 years or so. Some of these include: Blunt and Jones (1992) and Jones and Blunt (1993), who address OD issues, specifically, as well as more general issues related to organizational effectiveness and human resources development and management. Other works include: Management Problems in Africa (Damachi & Seibel, 1986); Global Human Resource Development (Marquardt & Engel, 1993); African Crisis: Is There Hope? (Muriithi, 1996); HRD International Perspectives on Development and Learning (Jones & Mann, 1992); Economic Restructuring and African Public Administration (Balogun & Mutahaba, 1989); Managerial Challenge in the Third World (Saeed, 1986); Nothing Wrong With Africa Except... (Chileshe, 1988); Human Resource Management in Africa: Problems and Solutions (Eze, 1995); Managing Organizations in Developing Countries (Kiggundu, 1989); and Indigenous Organizations and Development (Blunt & Warren, 1996). Eze, in particular, highlights several indigenous studies and describes various "indigenous models" developed to deal with organizational effectiveness and human resource management problems in Africa. The issue of indigenous knowledge and indigenous approaches will be taken up near the end of this paper.

Determining more accurately what the 'true' state of affairs with respect to research on human resource management in Africa is, would require a more indepth review than

this paper can provide. However, it is interesting to note that, notwithstanding what still may be a relative lack of research, Jones and Blunt are quick to proffer, here and elsewhere in their writings, 'the solution' (e.g. Western Organization Development (OD) techniques) to the as yet 'little understood' problem.

What should also be noted at this point is the fact that although research may still be desirable and even necessary, it is not necessary for Western researchers to know,' in order for things to be 'known' (i.e., by others), or even to be seen to be 'known.' In this regard, I contend, along with others such as Dei (1998b; 1999), that Africans themselves possess the knowledge necessary to answer these questions, and to provide solutions to their organizations' human resource management and general management challenges (whether the ideas have been articulated in written form and published or not). In this regard, OD is well situated, at least at the level of its espoused values, to make good use of indigenous knowledge in OD interventions (unlike many other 'development' interventions). As previously suggested, OD approaches and values include cooperation, collaboration and a valuing of the knowledge that people bring. OD then helps to facilitate the process of utilizing that knowledge.

While this paper is not the place for a full discussion of what constitutes an appropriate role for Western researchers, it should be noted that (at least in my view) the role of such researchers should, in part, be one of providing a 'forum' or space in the literature for African researchers. Westerners should also play the role of facilitating the opportunities for Africans to speak in their own voices, with their own sense of agency on these issues. As Dei has pointed out, there is a need to 'decolonize' research and writing relating to Africa and issues such as what constitutes 'development' (Dei, 1998a). This process of decolonization involves, in part, researchers reflecting on their own racial and other social identity factors (e.g. ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality) and linking this

knowledge to their research, including power relations with the “subjects of study” (Dei, 1998a, p. 145). Dei also points out that decolonizing research involves ‘asking new questions’ relating to, among other things, the “politics of development” (p. 145). A key goal for this process is to ensure that “the African human condition is not constructed in Western or European American hegemony and ideology” (p. 145). This includes ‘shifting’ the discourse from looking at Africa in terms of ‘what it lacks’ or what stage of ‘development’ it has not yet achieved, to focusing on, and building upon, success stories.⁴⁶ It also entails a fundamental questioning of what should constitute ‘development’ within the African context, and ensuring that an African-centred definition is articulated (i.e., one that is in the best interests of Africans — as opposed to one that serves the interests of international capitalism) (Dei, p. 147). Similarly, decolonization of research means that the researchers involved “resist and refuse conventional discursive onslaughts in the North and...shift the discourse on alternative development to African-centered ground or parameters” (Dei, p. 146). Through this process of decolonization, “many indigenous and local peoples in Africa today are reclaiming and reinvigorating their marginalized voices and knowledges. People are speaking for themselves and acting on their own behalf” (Dei, p. 147). By decolonizing research, African peoples, including researchers, can both resist Western hegemonic discourse and regain/maintain a sense of agency.

Relating this notion of agency to issues of organization effectiveness and human resources management in African organizations, Africans should be both asking their own questions and providing their own Africa-appropriate answers. This ‘shifting’ of the current research paradigm from what I would call a ‘missionary’ or paternalistic stance to one of ‘subject-centredness,’ i.e., to an Afrocentric one is, in my view, the only appropriate, valid and, in the end, truly helpful approach to African research to take. Ideally, most of the

⁴⁶ it is interesting to note that there exists, within the OD field, an approach called “appreciative inquiry,” (Bushe, 1999) which seems to mirror the approach advocated by Dei and others. I think it is fair to say, however, that not all OD practitioners have embraced it (Livingston, 1999; McLean, 1999), although its merits have also been recognized (Livingston, 1999).

researchers will be Africans, with Western researchers playing a support role. Again, espoused OD values (as well as values in practice for many if not most OD professionals) support such a role.

Related to the issue of who controls the research and the subsequent production of knowledge (i.e., as written in, and disseminated via the literature) is the resultant portrait of Africa which is created and in turn may become 'the truth'--at least as far as many Westerners, including OD practitioners, are concerned.

A number of authors (Blunt & Jones, 1992; Blunt & Popool, 1985; Kiggundu, 1989) have written about organizational effectiveness and human resource development and management in African organizations. Based on an uncritical reading of their works, a Western (and perhaps also an African) reader might be tempted to conclude that the situation regarding organizational effectiveness and human resource management in African organizations is, indeed, in a state of 'crisis.' This is the way Africa is typically portrayed in the relevant literature (and, I would suspect, how it would be portrayed in the Western media, were they to focus on this subject). This impression is created whether the term 'crisis' is actually used or simply present by implication.

One book I consulted was African Crisis: Is There Hope? (Muriithi, 1996). While Muriithi's aim in his book was to "change the way Europeans, Americans, Asians and Africans view Africa and its crisis" and to "give hope to the hopeless" (pp. ix-x), the chapter on management that I read, unfortunately and no doubt unintentionally, served (in my view) to reinforce the (seemingly) desperate nature of the situation.

I would hypothesize that, more often than not, the word 'crisis' is used without being critically assessed for its validity. Kankwenda suggests that it has become a generally

accepted fact that Africa is in a state of crisis (Kankwenda, 1994). In any case, the overall impression of Africa produced in the literature and in the Western media is a bleak one indeed. Another more damaging result is the possible creation of the false impression that Africans cannot manage their own organizations or affairs. This, in turn, plays into White Supremacy and white hegemony and provides a 'rationale' (in the minds of some white Westerners) for their continued, frequently inappropriate and potentially harmful interventions, many in the name of 'aiding' Africa. In fact, as Blunt et al. note, (while not conceding that the 'crisis' is an illusion), some agencies outside of Africa, "including the World Bank, have interests entrenched in an African crisis; their importance, the resources they command, perhaps even their very existence, depend on a perceived need to rescue Africa from disaster" (Blunt, Jones, & Richards, 1993, p.4).

However, even when researchers such as Blunt and Jones indicate they are aware of what I would call the creation of a 'cult of crisis' regarding Africa, their own writings often serve, however unintentionally, to help perpetuate this negative, and in my view, unhelpful portrayal of Africa. This comment is intended to point out the difficulty that no doubt many researchers have of striking an 'honest' balance between accurately (in their view) portraying the situation and yet not creating a sense either that 'everything is fine' or that the 'sky is falling.' The latter scenario, as previously noted, serves the interests of white hegemony and may also lead the reader to a sense of being overwhelmed by the seeming vastness of the problems.

I would also like to comment briefly on the issue of language usage in writing about Africa. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a more detailed discussion of this related topic, I would like to state that I believe the choice of the language used (and I emphasize that it is a choice), in addition to many other important factors, such as the reader's worldview and research paradigm and the resultant determination and selection

of 'evidence' (the researcher's or others'), determine whether Africa is portrayed as a glass 'half-full' (or perhaps even 'full') or 'half-empty', or worse. And, as is the case with many types of research on Africa, some of the 'loudest' voices in the literature (i.e., most widely published and quoted) are Western ones. For example, Blunt and Jones are quoted extensively by other authors, including some African ones.

Having laid out some of the difficulties for a Western researcher such as myself in writing about Africa in a way that may assist, rather than harm, Africa and its people, I will be providing, in a subsequent section of this paper, a brief overview of some of the challenges and concerns regarding organizational effectiveness and human resource development and management in Africa, as described in the literature. The challenges identified represent the types of issues with which an OD practitioner might be called in to assist an organization. In undertaking this exercise, I am mindful that I may very well find myself in some of the same characterization 'traps' in which I have seen other writers on the topic caught — whether they have entered them unwittingly or by design.

9.2 Overall Development, Organizational Effectiveness, and Human Resource Development and Management in Africa

Organizational effectiveness and human resources development and management within organizations in Africa appear to be both important aspects of the continent's overall 'development' and two of the many challenges currently facing Africa as it 'develops.' A 'recent' survey on the performance of Africa's formal organizations highlighted the importance of organization and management practices to African organizations if Africa is to "pull out of its present doldrums" (Kiggundu, 1988, cited in Blunt & Jones, 1992, p. 1). Jones and Blunt also make the link between the need for organizational effectiveness and

its impact on African development in general by stating: "reform of the organizations inherited at independence, which have...failed to measure up to the tasks of development, is perhaps the most urgent need" (Jones & Blunt, 1993, p. 1744). While this statement should be examined for its accuracy, I think there is a link between having effective organizations (however this is defined), whether in the private, public or other sectors and at least a potential for improvement in the quality of the daily life of Africans.

9.3 Impact of Westernization, and the Social, Economic, Political, Environmental, Cultural and Organizational Context

It is appropriate here to briefly describe the current situation regarding African cultures and values, the latter which comprises an important part of the context for the discussion of organizational effectiveness and human resource development and management challenges in Africa — challenges which frequently provide a 'reason' for an OD intervention to be initiated. While I do not intend to focus too much attention on this topic, it is important for any Western OD practitioner doing work in Africa to understand the current cultural (and broader) context and how this cultural context has been and is being affected by westernization.

Mazrui sees Africa as being in a state of cultural transition. While, in his view, African cultures are not "close" to those of Western countries, they have been "experiencing the most rapid pace of westernization witnessed this century. [And the] continent is controlled disproportionately by westernized Africans." This "clash of cultures" has led Africans to be caught between "rebellion against the West and imitation of the West" (Mazrui, 1980, pp. 2-3). Visser (1999) is of the opinion that this "value inculcation by the West has left many Africans 'schizophrenic'" (p. 2).

Mazrui (1980) summarizes the key Western influences on Africa as being: "Christianity, western liberal democracy, urbanization, western capitalism, [and] the rules of western science...and of western art" (the latter two with their emphasis on individual attribution and 'who gets the credit' for an idea) (p. 68). Two key vehicles for transmission of Western culture have been Western science and Western Christianity, the latter via missionary schools (p. 50).

A key impact of this Western acculturation in Africa has been a shift in the balance between pursuing individual goals and concern for the welfare of the collective. While in traditional African societies the emphasis had been on taking care of one's "clan," second only to immediate basic individual needs, the shift now is to subordinate clan needs to the "imperative of personal advancement" (p. 59) -- in other words, a greater emphasis on the individual and her/his needs.

In the spheres of economics and work, this shift toward individualism has been accompanied by a greater emphasis on "profit" (i.e., based on Western capitalist values) and a continuing emphasis on "prestige," based on traditional values. In its 'new incarnation,' the search for prestige is exemplified by more ostentatious consumerism (pp. 59-60). This shift also accords with the Western systems of production and distribution and the importation of new types of jobs and skills which "transform the nature of individual ambition and occupational aspirations" (p. 65).

Importantly, Westernization has deeply affected African identity. Mazrui, referring also to the work of other scholars (see Gyekye for example), points out that Western colonialism has not only created new nation states but it has also created the "phenomenon of 'tribalism'... 'tribal reserves' and the whole paradigm of looking at people in ethnic terms" (p. 66). Along with this, it has created the "problem of race consciousness,"

which he sees as having had some positive results (e.g., it has helped to deepen racial solidarity) and some negative ones such as the expulsion of Asians in Idi Amin's Uganda and racial conflict (p. 66).

In addition, Mazrui notes that Western liberal thought, with its principles of individualism and personal accountability, may well have intensified "the identity of the individual as a distinct personality" (p. 66).

This emphasis on the individual, individualism and concerns about self (e.g., self-actualization), which has its main impetus (if not its genesis) from within Western liberal thought has already, as previously noted, made a significant impact on African values and value systems.

In addition to some of the key impacts of Westernization noted, Kiggundu (1988), as cited in Blunt and Jones (1992), also points to the need to consider the broader environment in which African organizations operate. This includes the social, economic, political, environmental and cultural context. He notes that "in Africa...society and environment pervade organisation and management" (p. 169). According to Blunt and Jones, some of the societal and environmental factors that need to be taken into account in trying to understand human resource management issues and challenges in Africa are:

- 1) **Africa's economic crisis;**
- 2) **forms of organizational activity, namely the public, private and informal sectors, and public enterprises; the "obvious features of African societies...political centralisation; patronage; poverty of resources; low capacities for growth; low risk political strategies; and political instability" (p. 8);**
- 3) **political context (political patronage, and managerial success being dependent upon the building and maintenance of political connections, p. 9);**

- 4) **socio-cultural context** (“patterns of management and employee behavior...[that are] largely culture-bound”) (Ahiauzu, 1986, p.3);
- 5) **transportation, communications and technology;**
- 6) **agriculture;**
- 7) **population growth and urbanization;**
- 8) **physical environment and resources; and**
- 9) **labour market trends.**

In addition, Dei points out that an “understanding of...African experiences must be located in the broader social structural and political forces of society and how global situational and contextual variables account for separate and yet connected experiences of groups, communities [I would add organizations] and nations” (Dei, 1998a, p. 148).

Since the focus of my paper is on OD and African culture and values, I will not be addressing this myriad of interconnected and often interdependent factors that potentially have an impact on organizational effectiveness and human resource management in Africa in anything but a very superficial way. However, it is worth noting that these topics cannot be usefully viewed in isolation from these factors. For example, Blunt and Jones (1992) point out that organizational design in Africa is complicated by the “more turbulent and changing political, economic, and social environment...and by severe resource and infrastructural constraints” (p. 133). Chileshe points out several factors, in particular, that have an impact on organizational effectiveness in public enterprises, for example, the inadequacy of research due to lack of funds, and inadequate or inappropriate corporate planning (Chileshe, 1988, pp. 112-113).

Damachi and Seibel echo this general view and add that the “colonial past continues to be a factor influencing the way an African economy and its firms are

integrated into the world economic order" and "it shapes managerial styles..." (Damachi & Seibel, 1986, p. xii).

In addition, the many difficulties that exist with respect to education in Africa such as: inadequate funding; low levels of enrollment; structural imbalances in the education system (primary to tertiary levels); the neglect of non-formal education; and an inappropriate or irrelevant curriculum also have an impact on the ability of some organizations to have staff with the necessary skills and expertise (Ojo, 1986, pp. 33-68). Similarly, the African 'brain drain' robs African organizations of much-needed local expertise.

Notwithstanding the above commentary, these factors and the way in which Africa is often portrayed in the literature as being in an ongoing state of 'crisis' (Kankwenda, 1994) with respect to many if not most of these societal and environmental aspects, need to be critically examined from an African-centred perspective.

Further, what all this seems to suggest is that, at minimum, many of the solutions to the challenges that Africa faces with respect to its organizations will need to be implemented using broadly-based, multi-faceted, systemic approaches and strategies, as well as undoubtedly some 'micro-solutions.' Again, however, worth reiterating is the fact that these solutions must be African-centred, based on where African organizations are currently, where they 'want to go' (i.e., their goals and 'visions') and what Africans determine are the real problems, as they see them. Solutions should, as previously noted, make use of local, indigenous knowledge.

9.4 Organizational Effectiveness and Human Resource Development and Management Challenges and Concerns in Africa

9.4.1 Introduction

The following provides a summary of some of the important (as I view them) challenges and concerns relating to organizational effectiveness and human resource development and management in Africa as described in the literature. As previously noted, these issues demand, in my view, more research and research that is African-centred and African controlled, with Africans providing both the appropriate questions and the answers (Dei, 1998a; Dei, 1998b) that will, if implemented as solutions, be “in the best interest of Africa and African peoples” — from their perspective (Asante, 1980a; Dei, 1998a; Madhubuti, 1978).

9.4.2 Leadership and Management Styles

According to Blunt and Jones (1992), organizational leadership in Africa is “urgently needed” and in “short supply.” The authors cite Kiggundu (1988, p. 226) in stating that the prevalent management styles seem to be “authoritarian, personalised, politicised,” and “not conducive for management development and the emergence of new leadership. Entrepreneurial, creative and development talents are suppressed in favour of bureaucratic risk-averse administration based on absolute obedience” (p.81). Further citing Kiggundu and his work in Uganda, Kenya and Ghana (Kiggundu, 1989), they note that “top managers in a typical organisation in a developing country are authoritarian and paternalistic, autocratic, overworked, highly educated, articulate and well travelled. However, they tend...not to provide much in the way of visionary leadership or example” (p. 131). The authors also state that Choudhry is “of a similar opinion” and that the “general

tone of management in Africa is prescriptive...often authoritarian, inflexible, and insensitive" (Choudhry, 1986 cited in Blunt & Jones, 1992, p. 81).

Having provided this description of organizational leadership and management that, unfortunately, tends to play into the creation of both a 'crisis' scenario and (in some Western eyes) negative images of African managers, Blunt and Jones (p. 81) at least provide some balance to the picture by citing Abudu, who believes that "some of the causes of this style of management can be traced to Africa's colonial past (Abudu, 1986) [wherein colonial] administrators had scant faith in the ability of their African subordinates" and kept managerial authority in their own hands. However, the contention here is that since authority was not delegated, the resultant 'typical' African management style became one which "tends to concentrate managerial authority and functions in a small number of positions at the apex of the organisation" (p. 82). Interestingly and ironically, Blunt and Jones do not seem to question the fact that this 'typical' African management style is still the predominant management style in the West. Even many so-called 'progressive companies' are struggling to have notions such as autonomous work teams and 'the learning organization' (Senge, 1990 and others) accepted into organizations that are still largely influenced, if not driven by, Frederick Taylor's scientific management theory (Taylor, 1911) and Max Weber's bureaucratic theory.⁴⁷

9.4.3 Decision-Making

Blunt and Jones suggest that a 'one best way' view regarding decision-making is prevalent in Africa and that this one way is the bureaucratic model (p. 99). They contend that, from their perspective, "only those organisations which become learning communities

⁴⁷ See Pugh (Pugh & Hickson, 1996) for a brief summary of these theories.

[authors' emphasis] have a chance of surviving and performing in an era of accelerating and complex change" (p. 105). Again, whether they are proven to be correct or not in their assertion, they are proffering a solution that reflects 'progressive' Western management notions that have had difficulty taking root even in a North American context with its vast resources. In a way, the authors seem to be holding Africa up to an even higher "standard" of "progressiveness" (in their view) than most Western organizations have achieved to date— all this on a continent where in most cases the countries have been politically independent for fewer than forty years.

9.4.4 Culture and Its Impact on Organizations

Blunt and Jones (1992) see culture (both societal and organizational) as being extremely important to organizational effectiveness. In this, I am in agreement with the authors. In their work, they make inferences about what they see as being the dominant features of culture in Africa and present models linking organizational culture with other aspects of organization, national culture, and various stages of economic development (p. 189). They hypothesize, based on Hofstede's (1980, 1991) four dimensions of culture, that many African countries and their organisations would be "characterised by high power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, low individualism, and medium masculinity" (p. 192). However, this section of the book may also be a good example of the possible dangers of applying Western theory to regions such as Africa. Their resultant table on "Organisational Outcomes of Work-related Values in Africa" is, I would suggest, highly contentious and may serve to perpetuate negative stereotypes about Africa and African workers. For example, the profile that results, using Hofstede's theory, has the following "associated organisational outcomes": low commitment to, and involvement in, change; disowning of problems and an abdication of responsibility for the search for solutions; lack of openness in confronting and dealing jointly with issues; avoidance of data gathering on the causes of

problems; overcaution and lack of decisiveness and creativity in problem solving; erection of barriers to change; and taking adversarial positions on all issues regardless of whether any potential measure of agreement between the parties exists (p. 195).

While there may be some validity to Hofstede's cultural model (which is a 'Western' model as opposed to being an Afrocentric one), it is a large and perhaps dangerous leap to reach such negative conclusions involving generalizations about a whole continent of people. What would be interesting in this regard is to interrogate the Western (Eurocentric) assumption underpinning both Hofstede's model and the analysis provided by Blunt and Jones. This would seem to be yet another example of the need to look at these issues carefully and from an Afrocentric perspective.⁴⁸

9.4.5 Organizational Development and Change

Blunt and Jones (1992) note that "there seems to be a general consensus among managers and scholars that African formal organisations, particularly in the public sector, are powerfully change resistant" (p. 227) and, citing Montgomery, that Africa is probably "one of the most difficult administrative settings...anywhere in the world" (Montgomery, 1987, p. 913). Citing Jones, the authors state: "newly independent African nations...inherited from their colonial masters the bureaucratic forms which were designed primarily for the maintenance of law and order" and which have "proved extraordinarily resistant to change" (Jones, 1990, p. 59). To further support their view, they also cite Kiggundu (1988, p. 226) who makes similar comment.

⁴⁸ A related point worth noting, perhaps, is the research dilemma one is often faced with when doing research regarding Africa. The lack of research on issues such as organization development in Africa that has been done by Africans, or non-Africans who succeed in presenting their research from a reasonably 'Afrocentric' perspective, makes researchers such as myself both reliant on, and (in my case) wary of, Western researchers who write about Africa. Hopefully, as more Africans conduct their own research on Africa and have their results published, this 'dependence' on Western research and Western researchers will diminish.

In cases where there is resistance to change, it would be helpful to know what kind of change had been envisioned and by whom; who, and what, was driving the change; whether the change was likely to be "in the best interest of Africans" from the perspective of Africans; and if there was resistance, what forms it took and why it existed.

9.4.6 Role Conflict and Stress

Blunt and Jones (1992) provide examples of studies on employee role conflict and stress from a number of African countries and regions such as Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria, Northern Nigeria, Ghana, and Malawi. The authors conclude that "the social contexts in which many African workers find themselves are conducive to levels of role conflict in excess of those experienced by their counterparts in the West" and that "the incidence of stress among managers in developing countries may be higher already than...among similar groups in industrialised nations" (p. 271).

According to the authors, it is a common expectation in Africa that one's first priority is the care of one's family, even at the expense of meeting organizational goals (pp. 245-246). That there is this type of expectation should not come as a surprise, given the importance in African culture of taking care of one's immediate and extended family. Nevertheless, the authors note that achieving the twin aims of organizational effectiveness and a desirable quality of working life are thus a challenge in Africa (p. 51).

In one study they cite (Price, 1975), a majority of University of Ghana students in the study believed that having a "particularistic connection with [a government] official" was "the most effective method of getting things done" and that the giving of 'dash' (a gift) in West Africa to civil servants in exchange for service, was common and expected (p. 246).

As noted previously, this issue of giving 'gifts' to public officials (as well as the issue of patronage appointments) provides a good example of the need for Africans themselves to determine where to 'draw the line' (if there is a line to be drawn) between what is important as a custom and what is detrimental to their organizations and to the African public interest at large. It is also a good example of how complex many of these issues are and how inappropriate it is for Westerners to impose or seek to impose their values, morals, customs, standards and technical and managerial approaches on Africa. If Africans wish to review Western approaches and then determine on their own that they wish to adopt some and adapt them as necessary and as appropriate, that should, in my view, be solely their decision to make.

9.4.7 Management Development

Blunt and Jones discuss the need for continual upgrading of managerial capabilities and indicate, citing Kiggundu, that "...management development in Africa belongs to the public sector" (Kiggundu, 1991, p. 35) They note that Africa's institutes of public administration and management have, in their words, "performed...badly" (p. 315) and, citing other writers as well, discuss some of the reasons for this. Some of the reasons they give include: (1) little systematic attempt to ascertain and analyze clients' learning styles; (2) heavy emphasis on formal, classroom-based courses; (3) evaluation of training based on number of attendees; (4) courses and course materials that are irrelevant to local needs and that have been imported 'as is' from the West; (5) an over-reliance on lectures; (6) trainers being of "varying quality"; (7) lack of contact [presumably by trainers] with the real-life situations of working managers; (8) bureaucratic organizations; (9) little involvement of bosses and colleagues of the training participants, before or after the course; (10) little opportunity to apply skills learned; (11) inadequate evaluation of courses; (12) the viewing of training as a "maintenance function" rather than as a vehicle for change;

and (13) the use of management training as a "ritual" for promotional purposes rather than to enhance performance (pp. 315-316). In addition, the link between problems with the educational system in Africa and the development of requisite skills for positions such as managers, has been previously mentioned.

In this context, it is worth noting that a review of African cultural values may be helpful in terms of determining appropriate teaching-learning approaches and methods for use in Africa. Briefly, the emphasis on using experience and/or observation seems to accord with traditional African values. This might translate into more experiential learning activities (as opposed to, for example, lectures); experiential learning is already an important feature in OD teaching and learning approaches. In addition, as Laiken has pointed out, the 'communities of practice' approach to learning (Brown & Duguid, 1996; Wenger, 1998) may provide good opportunities for on-the-job learning (Laiken, 1999).

Similarly, ensuring that any theoretical 'wisdom' is also very obviously of practical value would likely be helpful, particularly given the emphasis on, and value afforded to, knowledge that is of "immediate practical application or relevance" (Gyekye, 1996, pp. 139-140).

These then are some of the important organizational effectiveness and human resource management challenges identified and discussed by several authors in the literature. In this context, it is worth reiterating that Africans should, ideally, be doing the majority of the research on issues such as this. In that way, they can frame the research questions and suggest, where appropriate, solutions to identified problems — all from an Afrocentric perspective.

CHAPTER TEN — TOWARDS A SOLUTION TO AFRICA'S ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

10.1 Are Western Organizational Effectiveness Techniques such as OD 'The Solution'?

It is now time to deal with Leonard's (1987) second comment, regarding what he calls "management"⁴⁹ techniques that are imported from the West. In his view, they will need to be revised quite fundamentally or they will fail. This view, prevalent in the work of writers such as Blunt and Jones and others such as Damachi and Seibel (1986), and Kiggundu, appears, at least on its face, to have both validity and appeal. Kiggundu (1988), as cited in Blunt and Jones (1992), in fact has made similar comments: "whereas African organisations...can apply Western management concepts to their technical core with few modifications...imported ideas and practices are generally...inadequate and/or inappropriate for the organisations' relationships with their environments" (p. 1). The question that needs to be asked in this regard is whether the values of OD make it sufficiently different from the types of organizational effectiveness techniques referred to as "inadequate" or "inappropriate."

In this regard, I would hypothesize that the congruence between most OD values and African values would suggest, on its face at least, that OD may be more transferable to African contexts, and with fewer modifications, than many other Western technologies aimed at improving organizations and human resources management. However, as

⁴⁹ I have previously noted, for my purposes here, I am interpreting Leonard's term broadly, so as to include both organizational effectiveness and more traditional human resources management. I do not think this use of the term alters in a substantial way his general argument, although he was not directing his comments at OD practice in particular and might well have excluded OD had he addressed it as part of his discussion.

previously noted, there are still some important differences such as the views that OD and African culture hold regarding paternalism, hierarchy and democracy. I would suggest that these issues would need to be addressed in a culturally-sensitive manner, in order for a Western OD intervention to succeed in Africa.

Also, one needs to always keep the larger question in mind in determining what constitutes 'success,' vis-a-vis Africa, namely, is what is being done in the best interest of Africans?-- as opposed to the interests of multinational companies, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund or others, who may be 'sponsoring' organizational effectiveness interventions (although I have no specific knowledge of OD interventions being paid for in this manner).

With respect to the issue of adapting Western approaches, in general, Blunt and Jones (p. 11) provide their views on the topic, citing Murrell: "Western management models cannot be merely adopted or copied in [Africa]; they have to be adapted in the 'most culturally appropriate manner'" (Murrell, 1986). This approach, while on the right track, does not, in my view, suggest that some even more fundamental questions should be asked. This includes who should determine whether a challenge or a problem exists in the first place and if a problem does exist, whether Africa is not in the best position to determine its own solutions. In other words, it seems to fall into what I will call the 'cross-cultural' trap, in which believing that paying attention to 'cross-cultural' considerations is seen as sufficient, while not asking more fundamental, underlying questions. However, in a later work, Blunt and co-author, Warren, do provide examples of the utilization of indigenous knowledge (Blunt & Warren, 1996), which in my view, is on the right track.

Organization development in the West has both its strong advocates and some detractors. Some of the time, at least, it is simply not well understood (Laiken, 1984).

However, it has been in existence in the United States since the 1940s and in Canada since the 1970s (Laiken, 1984; Laiken, 1999) so the assumption is that it must be meeting with some success or it would not have lasted.

A whole industry of management literature keeps track of the latest organizational effectiveness and human resource management trends and 'fads' in support of Western organizations' ongoing goal to increase productivity while decreasing costs. Much of the literature focuses on how organizations can best manage their 'most valuable resource—their people'. While various 'theories' have come and gone over the years, OD has provided an ongoing 'foundational' approach to improving organizations that focuses more on the 'process' of implementing various theories than on the 'content' of the theories themselves. This flexibility is perhaps part of the reason for OD's staying power over the years, notwithstanding the skepticism of some for this and other organizational effectiveness approaches.

If the overall success of OD in Western contexts is still a topic that requires more research (French & Bell, 1995), the same is doubly true in places such as Africa. The research of Blunt and Jones is a notable exception in this regard. However, while the 'jury is still out' on whether OD has something to offer Africa, there is, in the literature, as noted in the previous commentary, some concern, nevertheless, about Western organizational development approaches being utilized in non-Western contexts.

10.2 Problems, Challenges and Possible Limitations of OD

Increasingly, critics have started to identify and describe some of the problems and challenges associated with OD, especially as national boundaries become more fluid, economic globalization takes hold (including the movement of international capital in,

frequently, an unregulated way (Jones, 1998)), the world's population becomes more mobile and individual locations more heterogeneous in terms of the composition of their population. At the same time, in this 'post-modern' world (Hassard & Parker, 1993; Holvino, 1993; Mills & Simmons, 1995; Reed & Hughes, 1992), formerly marginalized and largely silenced people such as women, people of colour, first nations, aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, gay men and lesbians, and linguistic, ethnic and religious minorities are demanding (Holvino, 1993) and, in some cases, obtaining (through struggle) a place at the table, alongside the dominant group(s) of that society.

Holvino is notable in offering her critique of the field of, and discourse associated with, OD at this point in OD's history. She argues, among other things, that in the "late 80s, OD solidifie[d] its position as managerial practice by becoming part of the 'management-organizational' discourse [and that while still] celebrating...to be about social change, democracy and community, [it] continue[d] to align itself with the dominant [power, i.e., capital]" (p. 15). She contends that "it functions as a technology to manage conflict on behalf of capital and to exclude 'others' from the organizational agenda of 'social change'" (p. 15). Holvino's position would, no doubt, be contested by many others in the OD field. In addition, while some of this argument may not be new (the concern among some about OD supporting capitalism is not a new one), a full discussion and debate in the OD literature (and at OD meetings) are perhaps even more important to have at this time. Given the changes taking place in the world economic structure and politics, and the increased presence of diverse groups of peoples in any given location around the world, OD practitioners would, no doubt, want to ensure that they are not creating any negative impacts for those whose worklives they seek to improve.

In addition, while the 'humanistic' values of Western OD theory and practice may appear to many or most Western OD practitioners as something to be 'universally'

applauded, this view is, in fact, not universally shared. As Bailey Jackson points out, “most OD-HSD (Human Systems Development) practitioners fail to recognize that the profession is heavily influenced by a white male view of the world...We do not seem to recognize that [the authors of many OD books, models and research studies] are predominantly white and male [and that they] view the world through a set of glasses...influenced by their race and gender...[and, that that] view influences what we see when we diagnose organizations, what we prescribe⁵⁰...and [what] strategies we use...” (Gellerman et al., 1990, p. 285).

Ophie Franklin⁵¹ is even more pointed in her comments when she speaks of “white supremacy.” She makes her view clear that this doctrine of supremacy based on one’s skin colour is a powerful one. She states that “domination pervades all human activity despite [emphasis mine] personal motivation, competencies and interests” (Gellerman et al., 1990, p. 284). I have already indicated my general agreement with this view. Unless a white Western OD practitioner in essence ‘decolonizes’ her/his mind, this doctrine has the potential to come into play whenever these practitioners and people of colour interact, notwithstanding good intentions on the part of these practitioners. The situation is even more problematic in ‘post-colonial’ countries where there may still be a situation of learned dependency — an important residual effect of a colonial past and, in a number of cases, of a continuing ‘colonial’ presence.⁵²

⁵⁰ Many OD practitioners would disagree with the view that OD is about ‘prescribing.’ Rather, much OD work involves facilitating processes that allow the client to identify both what the organizational problem is, and to come up with their own solutions.

⁵¹ Executive Director, International Center for Integrative Studies/The Door—A Center for Alternatives, New York (Gellerman et al., p. 276).

⁵² in addition, most of the technology of OD was designed for capitalist, industrialized contexts and economies. However, that topic is a separate (although not unrelated) discussion.

CHAPTER ELEVEN — AN AFRICAN-CENTRED ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT APPROACH TO AFRICAN CHALLENGES — A PROPOSAL

11.1 Introduction

Based on the previous discussion, it would appear that if there is to be an OD approach that can be successfully and ethically utilized in non-Western contexts like Africa, it needs to be one that takes into account the diverse cultures and regions of the world, the possible cultural limitations of Western (and particularly white) OD practitioners and at least some of their espoused values.

The following represents my attempt at such an approach. This approach to OD is, in my opinion, culturally appropriate, ethical and has the potential to assist Africans in their goal of successfully meeting the many organizational effectiveness and human resource management and development challenges in African organizations.

This proposed approach deals with both what a Western OD practitioner might do to better equip her/himself to provide culturally-sensitive, appropriate and useful OD consulting services to non-Western, less industrialized regions such as Africa, and how the practice and techniques of OD may also be improved.

The approach draws upon **African values** (such as 'Ubuntu'), as understood and articulated by Africans, rather than only on Western OD values,⁵³ as the foundation upon which any OD approach or strategy should be based. These values are largely mirrored in **Afrocentricity** (Asante, 1987; Asante, 1980a; Asante, 1990). Afrocentricity, which reflects

⁵³ Although as pointed out, there are many areas of congruence in the values.

the idea of 'Ubuntu,' is thus the suggested 'starting point' and the underlying philosophy and values base for any OD approach that is to be utilized within or on behalf of Africa and Africans. I also suggest that this approach may be applicable anywhere⁵⁴ (this would need to be tested).

This approach represents a paradigmatic shift in OD that could be described as 'transcendental' (Asante, 1980a) or "revolutionary" (Kuhn, 1996) rather than 'evolutionary' (French & Bell, 1995). It is more than simply adapting existing Western values, techniques and tools to a new cultural environment. A key, fundamental and ongoing part of the process is a continual questioning and re-questioning of the appropriateness of whatever OD approach or technique is being proposed utilizing the basic, guiding question: **"Is this in the best interests of African peoples?"** (Asante, 1980a; Dei, 1998a; Madhubuti, 1978).

Further, since Africans are, themselves, in the best (and many would argue only) position to adequately answer this question, white, Western OD practitioners doing OD work in Africa should rely heavily on local, indigenous knowledge and cultural expertise. Many, perhaps even the majority, already do so, in accordance with their espoused OD values. In addition, in order not to replicate a 'plantation' or neo-colonial scenario, in which the white, Western OD practitioner is, however inadvertently, in the role of 'leader' (i.e., 'master') vis a vis Africans, the relationship, both formal and informal between the Western practitioner and African practitioners, should be, at minimum, one of 'equals'. In many cases, it may be more appropriate for African practitioners to take the lead role and Western practitioners to play the 'support' role.

⁵⁴This seems even more likely given the relative congruence between a number of African values and many OD values.

To reiterate, the approach being proposed here starts with the fundamental guiding principle that whatever OD approaches and strategies are proposed or implemented within Africa or on behalf of Africans and African development, they should be demonstrably or at least clearly potentially be, **in the best interest of Africans,**⁵⁵ as defined by Africans, themselves.

11.2 Components of the Proposed OD Approach

While the following approach may not in the end be 'sufficient,' it will perhaps provide a useful starting point for the OD practitioner who wishes to provide culturally-sensitive, appropriate and effective OD services, with a minimum of values conflicts.

The approach comprises five discrete but in some cases related components. None of these components is in itself new. What is new is this particular combination of these components. This approach involves a process of change that can be characterized by the approach familiar to OD practitioners of 'unfreezing, changing and refreezing' (Lewin, 1951), although it is more dynamic and ongoing than the notion of 'refreezing' might suggest. This process is focused both at the personal level — for each Western OD practitioner (and whites in particular), and at the 'systemic' or OD approach and techniques level. While the first two components are generally related to the personal level, and the latter three to the systemic, or OD approach level, there is some interplay among the elements (e.g., cross-cultural communications techniques apply at both the personal and systemic level). It is suggested that all elements be included in order for the approach to be comprehensive.

⁵⁵With respect to providing OD services to other regions and peoples, the question can be re-phrased accordingly.

These five components are:

- 1) **Personal 'de-colonization'** (identity: self and others; identification of core values; issues of racism, White Supremacy, colonization) and including **cross-cultural awareness** (knowledge of own cultural values, culture & others') and **personal paradigms or worldviews**
- 2) **Cross-cultural communications** (skills related to learning how to communicate effectively in a pluralistic cultural context)
- 3) **African cultural values and Afrocentric perspective** (knowledge and perspective)
- 4) **De-colonizing OD approaches: critical questioning of OD values; inclusion of anti-racism and diversity theories and strategies** (frameworks for applying cultural knowledge on a systemic level re: OD approach)
- 5) **Indigenous knowledge and indigenous approaches** (general guidelines & specific strategies, based on African values).

11.2.1 Personal 'De-colonization,' Cross-cultural Awareness, and Personal Paradigm or Worldview

Bailey Jackson's advice for white OD practitioners focuses on increasing one's 'consciousness [about] the impact that race and racism, as well as other forms of social oppression, have on organizations' (and I would add, employees, both people of colour and whites). He also suggests that OD practitioners be 'honest about the limitations' that result from one's biases and that they work alongside non-white consultants and with diverse advisory groups (Gellerman et al., 1990, pp. 286-287).

Taking a cue from Jackson, and based on my own experiences as a white person, I determined that the first component of this approach should be a process of what I would call **personal de-colonization**, or what some authors refer to as 'decolonizing the mind' (Ngugi, 1986) or "undoing...mental conditioning" (Owomoyela, 1996, p. xi). This is similar to the process Asante outlines in his discussion of Afrocentricity. However, in this case, the white OD practitioner is not part of the oppressed group; hence, the issues raised and the questions asked would be different from those of people of colour.

In this 'consciousness-raising' process, the OD practitioner becomes acutely aware of 'who' s/he is, that is to say, her/his overall identity and view of her/himself as an OD practitioner and her/his 'social location' (or position within society).

In this process of self-reflection⁵⁶ the OD practitioner critically examines her/himself and asks questions such as:

- 1) What are the elements in my make-up and background that have come together to create me? (e.g., gender, race, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic background/class, cultural origin and upbringing, level and type of education (e.g., Eurocentric, feminist, etc.), place of birth and schooling, amount and type of exposure to diverse cultures, etc.).
- 2) What are my core values, beliefs, principles? (In this regard, the use of values surveys may prove helpful). Which of my principles are 'non-negotiable'?
- 3) What is my preferred approach to working with clients? (e.g., expert mode vs.

⁵⁶ OD practitioners typically undertake some form of self-reflection as part of their professional preparation. However, asking themselves questions about race, and in the case of Westerners, their possible Eurocentrism, seems to be a relatively new addition to this process.

process consultant/facilitator?) What is my preferred 'stance'? (e.g., doctor-patient model, equal colleagues?) While many OD practitioners may prefer to function as process consultants, there may also be cases where an 'expert mode' is more appropriate.

- 4) Why do I want to do OD work? (i.e., what about OD is appealing?) In the context of providing OD services to non-Western regions, the question should also be asked: Why do I want to do OD work there?

- 5) What value do I think I bring to the consulting situation? In what ways am I benefitting the client?

With respect to reflecting specifically upon issues of race, the OD practitioner needs to become aware of her/his 'group's' role, historically and currently in the perpetuation of White Supremacy, white privilege and racism. This entails having 'details' regarding what has been the nature and extent of oppression of people of colour. The purpose of this process is not to make white, Western OD practitioners feel guilty, but rather to make them 'aware' of the situation in very specific, concrete terms. Once one has come into this kind of awareness, there is a choice to be made regarding one's future behaviour. One can 'deny' the evidence (victim blaming is part of this scenario), one can try to set oneself apart from 'people who would do those sorts of things,' i.e., be racist or discriminatory (this form of passive support helps to maintain White Supremacy), or one can become an agent for equity change and actively combat racism. Once one enters this paradigm, the Afrocentric approach to OD is, I would argue, the 'only one' that now makes sense. So-called 'White Awareness' training and literature can help facilitate this process

toward racial 'consciousness' (Bowser & Hunt, 1996; Findlay, 1992; Katz, 1978; McIntosh, 1990a; McIntosh, 1990b) and "giving up the ghost" of white privilege (Mawhinney, 1998).

In addition to raising one's consciousness generally about one's identity, including one's racial identity, the **cross-cultural awareness process** speaks especially to who one is, with respect to one's cultural identity (i.e., what are one's cultural background and core cultural values and beliefs?). In this context, it is important to critically examine one's cultural background and cultural identity. The OD practitioner could undertake a values clarification exercise to make her/himself explicitly aware of her/his own values, values orientation and 'mental models.' This is also an attempt to examine 'taken for granted' assumptions. This would include both personal values and cultural (or group) values, which may or may not match one's own personal values.

As well as learning about self, it is important to be well informed about the culture(s) of the country one will be living and working in (Hall, 1959; Hall, 1976; Hall, 1983; Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 1991). This includes 'culture' in the broadest sense, i.e., the values, culture, history, religion(s) and socio-political, economic and environmental context of the client (or potential client) organization's country or region. If possible, it is desirable that the practitioner be literally able to 'speak the language' of the client and his/her employees, or at least work with (as an equal on the project) an OD practitioner from that culture who can.

In addition, Chasnoff and Muniz have created a cultural awareness "model for OD interventions in cross-cultural settings"(Chasnoff & Muniz, 1989), which appears to be potentially very helpful. My approach builds on this work and (among other things) takes issues of 'race' further than is apparent in their model.

As discussed previously, each of us carries around in her/his head a framework within which and from which we observe and interpret the world. This **personal paradigm** or **worldview** largely determines how we interpret the world and within it, the world's diverse peoples and cultures, whether we are aware of its power or not. In order to minimize any unconscious biases that a worldview may produce, it is necessary to become aware of one's worldview and its possible ramifications on a conscious level.

Senge suggests some useful exercises for "surfacing, testing, and improving our internal pictures of how the world works" (Senge, 1990, p. 174). Such exercises might also be helpful for 'surfacing' values. In addition, engaging in 'dialogue,' as articulated by physicist, David Bohm (Senge, 1990, pp. 238-249), with others from both similar and different cultures and value orientations, could also help to increase one's awareness of one's own values and assumptions (as well as possible stereotypes about others).

11.2.2 Cross-cultural Communications

It is not my intention in this paper to provide a 'blueprint' of what effective cross-cultural communications would entail. An entire body of literature on this topic exists (Gudykunst, 1998; Gudykunst & Kim, 1984; Hall, 1959; Hall, 1976; Hall, 1983; Kim, 1986; Kim, 1988; Koole & ten Thije, 1994; Wiseman & Koester, 1993) and the reader is referred to these authors as a starting point.

I do, however, want to point out that this aspect of the approach deals with a set of learnable skills, as opposed to the knowledge of self, one's own racial identity and culture, as well as the culture of others.

While I acknowledge that miscommunication, based on an 'innocent' mis-interpretation of both verbal and non-verbal language can and frequently does occur, I do not agree with the notion that all 'cross-cultural problems' are a result of simple miscommunication or, cultural 'misunderstandings.' This is a complex matter, especially where issues of 'race' may also be a factor. For example, a white person, having difficulty understanding another white person who has a Scottish accent, may give that person 'the benefit of the doubt.' The same degree of tolerance and patience may or may not be shown for someone with, for example, an 'African' or Caribbean accent.

11.2.3 African Cultural Values and Afrocentric Perspective

As indicated in the foregoing, African values provide the basis for the Afrocentric paradigm, about which Asante has written extensively (1980a; 1987; 1990).

Other authors have also written about this approach. The main tenets of the Afrocentric 'model,' as described by Schiele (1990) are: (1) human beings are conceived of as a collective; (2) they are spiritual beings; (3) they are good; (4) knowledge gained through emotions or 'affectively' is valid; (5) human behaviour is often non-rational; and, (6) interpersonal relations are of the greatest value (p. 147). As previously discussed, and as Laiken has also pointed out (Laiken, 1999), a number of these tenets are also espoused OD values.

Utilizing this framework, Schiele envisions an 'Afrocentric' organization as having the following characteristics: (1) a unified, collective membership focused on organizational survival (i.e., "maintenance of common objectives, concerns and sentiments" among members of the organization) (p.150); (2) a close relationship between

the external community and the organization (especially with respect to human services organizations); (3) a lack of emphasis on productivity and efficiency goals;⁵⁷ (4) little separation of work tasks into sub-units (to encourage organizational unity); (5) an emphasis on decision-making by consensus;⁵⁸ (6) a positive image of workers; (7) a stress on strengthening the spirituality of organizational members; (8) performance evaluations that balance qualitative and quantitative achievements; and, (9) a focus on interpersonal relationships as being of the greatest importance to the organization (pp.150 and 159).

More work on how this 'Afrocentric' approach could be used to 're-frame' OD approaches would need to be done before this approach could be 'refined' for use. I will not be attempting this task in this paper, but am proffering it as a general strategy that is likely worth pursuing.

A close analysis of these elements, will, I think, reveal that there are some commonalities between the Afrocentric approach and espoused (and enacted) OD values (just as there were some commonalities between African values and OD values). These common elements can provide the foundation for this paradigmatic shift to an Afrocentric approach to OD.

⁵⁷This differs from OD, which emphasizes both humanistic values and organizational effectiveness goals

⁵⁸Schiele also notes that the human relations model seems to most closely fit with Afrocentric tenets regarding hierarchy in that this model argues "against a strict hierarchical power structure and extensive division of labor..." However, he feels that the "Afrocentric paradigm would carry the argument against a rigid hierarchical power structure even further" (p. 152). This discussion perhaps illustrates what may appear (at least to some Westerner eyes) as a contradiction in how Africans view hierarchy 'vs.' participatory decision-making. While in the West, we may tend to see these notions as mutually exclusive, I believe, based on my readings, that Africans have developed a way of incorporating consensus decision-making into their hierarchical power structures -- at least in their social and tribal arrangements. What is less clear to me is the extent to which this may also be the case in African corporations.

11.2.4 De-colonizing OD: Critical Questioning of OD Values;

Inclusion of Anti-racism and Diversity Theories and Strategies

(Frameworks for applying cultural knowledge on a systemic level re: OD approach)

This component of the OD approach utilizes the same kind of 'de-colonizing' process--this time at the systems level — as was suggested for 'de-colonization' at the personal level, and with respect to 'decolonizing' research. Instead of asking the types of questions that are suitable to ask oneself as an OD practitioner, however, one would interrogate OD itself, i.e., OD theory, practice, discourse, and (power) relationship with clients. Some of the previous commentary would, hopefully, provide a basis for such an interrogation. This process should be ongoing and at every turn ask Madhubuti's fundamental "Is this [proposed approach, technique, tool, teaching-learning method] in the best interest of Africans?" (Madhubuti, 1978) (or, in the best interests of whichever culture is the client and therefore 'at the centre'). Since a Western OD practitioner may not know this answer, s/he should seek the knowledge from members of the culture who possess it — which should be standard OD practice in any case. In this regard, it is particularly important to utilize African values and local knowledge, the latter of which is discussed further in the next section. And, as was previously mentioned, any working relationship with African people should be one of equals, so as to avoid any possibility of replicating a neo-colonial or 'plantation' scenario. Similarly, with respect to OD theory, practice and discourse, one could ask the types of questions raised by Holvino (1993) in her thesis.

Additionally, as appropriate, the fields of diversity studies and anti-racism, in particular, may provide suitable models or approaches that can be incorporated into an overall OD approach. While I will not be covering this issue in any detail, the reader is referred to a number of authors (Jackson & Holvino, 1986; Katz & Miller, 1986; Katz, 1978; Mawhinney, 1998; McIntosh, 1990a; McIntosh, 1990b).

11.2.5 Indigenous Knowledge And Indigenous Approaches

George Dei has argued for African-centred development (Dei, 1992/3; Dei, 1998a) i.e., development that is “rooted in indigenous peoples’ sense of moral and spiritual values” (Dei, 1998a, p. 143) and one in which “local communities...own and control the solutions to their own problems” (Dei, 1998a, p. 143).

McIsaac has also argued for the valuing and use of indigenous knowledge (McIsaac, 1995). McClure defines local and traditional knowledge as “accumulated wisdom” that has “evolved from years of experience and trial and error problem solving by groups of people working to meet the challenges they face in their local environments, drawing upon the resources they have at hand” (McClure, 1989, cited in Green & Zokwe, 1996, p. 97). Dei (1998b, p. 3), citing Fals Borda, notes that “‘indigenous’ refers to knowledge resulting from long-term residence in a place” (Fals Borda, 1980). Dei also points out that “[i]ndigenouness signals the power relations and dynamics embedded in the production, interrogation and validation of such knowledges” (p. 3). Dei also cites (p. 3) Castellano, who has identified “three broad aspects of Aboriginal knowledge” relevant to discourse on this topic. These are: traditional knowledge, which is intergenerational knowledge passed on by community elders; empirical knowledge, which is based on careful observation of the surrounding environment...; and...revealed knowledge, which is provided through dreams, visions and intuition” (Castellano, 1998) [emphasis in original]. Worth noting, too, is the fact that “indigenous knowledges are appropriately discussed within an anti-colonial discursive framework” and comprise “an important entry point” for this work (Dei, 1998b, p. 7).

This local knowledge is clearly preferable, in my view, to the (many) white, hegemonic, re-colonializing (and I would add, body and soul corrupting) Western

technologies and approaches that have frequently been imposed on continents like Africa by the likes of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and some “aid” agencies, Western corporations, and consultants and trainers. The utilization of indigenous knowledge in development activities generally, and I would suggest in Organization Development interventions as well, appears to fit “hand-in-glove” with the utilization of an Afrocentric perspective and approach, as proposed by Asante, Dei and others.

A number of other writers have also advocated and/or developed indigenous approaches. For example, Eze describes a number of what he calls “indigenous models” to deal with organizational effectiveness and human resource management problems in Africa (Eze, 1995). While some of these “indigenous” models appear, from my superficial knowledge of them, to utilize some Western theories and concepts, and may not always provide the ‘anti-colonial’ stance referred to in the above, they seem, nonetheless, to represent both indigenous research and the application of an African-centred approach and indigenous knowledge. These include: Ocho's “Incompatible Works Ethics Model”(Ocho, 1984); Ugwuegbu's “Cultural Ethnic Predisposing Model”(Ugwuegbu, 1981); Eze's “Historical Factors Model” on motivation and personality (Eze, 1981a; Eze, 1981b); and the “Black African Poverty Theory” (Eze, 1981a; Eze, 1981b); Egwu's “Intrinsic-Utilitarian Motivation Model” (Egwu, 1983); Oloko's “Management Nationality Model” (Oloko, 1972); Anikpo's “Immediate-Ultimate Needs Model” (Anikpo, 1984); Okpara's conceptual paper on “‘the Nigerian way’ of motivating Nigerian workers” (Okpara, 1981); and “The Money Model,” which utilized data from a number of researchers (Anikpo, 1984; Ejionye, 1981; Eze, 1984; Obi-Keguna, 1994).

Blunt and Jones (1992, p. 321) also note, citing Kiggundu that “we must learn from Africa's past [and that before] the colonial irruption [sic] into Africa many rich, complex civilisations had existed for centuries, employing various forms of social and work

organisations" (Kiggundu, 1991). Chileshe, citing another author (Balogun, 1986), makes a similar statement: "Africa is a continent with a long history of ancient and glorious empires which by any standards, possessed very well organized systems of government and administration ante-dating colonial rule" (Chileshe, 1988, pp. 13-14).

Muriithi also provides an African-centred perspective (Muriithi, 1996), although his short chapter on African managers deals only with a few of the types of challenges outlined by Blunt and Jones and others.

Importantly, regarding organizational effectiveness and human resources management solutions, Muriithi states that, the "quality of African management lies with the Africans--failure or success." He also issues a plea to fellow Africans to "be responsible, accountable, self-giving, committed and loving, both to mankind [sic] and the environment" and states his belief that this can be achieved through "proper management of our resources" (p. 92).

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

In this paper, I have argued that OD is 'value-driven' and that while many Western OD values are congruent with traditional African cultural values, several are not. These incongruencies can lead to 'cultural clashes' and the importation and utilization of OD values and strategies that may not be culturally appropriate and which may not be 'in the best interest of Africans' (Madhubuti, 1978). This, in turn, may have negative consequences for Africa and its people in their efforts to 'develop.' In a 'worst-case' scenario, this may lead to an affirmation of the status quo of Western hegemony rather than a disruption of it, which is a key aspect of anti-colonialism approaches.

In the course of this paper, I have compared OD values with African cultural values and described areas of congruence and incongruence. I have also noted values held in common upon which a foundation for OD work in Africa can be built. In addition, I have suggested that issues such as White Supremacy and racism need to be acknowledged as being a factor in OD work. I have pointed out the 'power of cultural paradigms' to distort what one can 'see' (and value), and have tried to provide a cautionary note to OD practitioners in this regard. I have talked about the need to shift from a Western approach to OD to one that is more precisely focused on African values (i.e., the Afrocentric approach) and have indicated that the espoused values of OD position it well to make this shift. I have also outlined some of the organizational effectiveness and human resource development and management challenges Africa faces and discussed the nature of the discourse in the literature on this topic. I have also proposed and outlined what I believe has the potential to be a fairly comprehensive approach to OD— one which will shift OD in the direction of Afrocentricity, as articulated by Asante and others. I have freely admitted that this approach is still in its 'embryonic' stages. In this regard, I recognize this as a weakness in what is proffered here. Much more work on this approach will need to be

done if it is to become both theoretically sound and operationally functional.

In closing, I note that I have raised a number of questions which I think are important to both the fields of Organization Development and Adult Education.⁵⁹ With respect to the OD field, issues remain, such as a continuing concern about possible 'gaps' between espoused values and values in use (Argyris, 1982). I have also raised questions regarding the ability of white, Western OD practitioners to really 'get into' another cultural 'space,' such as African culture and its values. I have wondered about and questioned the extent to which these practitioners can remove themselves (I include myself in this) from individualistic cultural backgrounds (especially in the United States) and overcome their white privilege and any possible tendencies to stereotype people of colour. On several of these matters, 'the jury is still out,' in my view, and much dialogue and research remain to be conducted.

With respect to the field of Adult Education, some of the teaching-learning implications of my research for this paper are as follows. The OD practitioner's/adult educator's role in the creation and transmission of knowledge is clearly both political and educational. Knowledge, like its creator, is not neutral and the perspective(s) used in its creation has/have the potential to both assist or harm a client/learner. This can clearly be seen in the case of Africa, where many of the achievements of African societies have been erased from written history (as written by Europeans).

Regarding OD 'knowledge,' including theories, curriculum, teaching-learning and communication styles, these can be conceived of and produced utilizing either a Eurocentric or an Afrocentric perspective. The choice remains with each individual

⁵⁹While I am making a distinction for the purposes of this paper, I am also reiterating the fact that there is substantial overlap and interplay between the two fields, especially with respect to teaching-learning issues. Hence this distinction is, in many ways, an artificial one.

practitioner/educator. Similarly, the practitioner/educator can either create a truly egalitarian relationship with African clients or simply replicate the all too familiar Western hegemonic power structures and relationships, depending on whether s/he adopts a Eurocentric or an Afrocentric 'stance' vis-a-vis African clients. In this regard, the self-reflection exercise on one's racial identity, attitudes toward race, and possible implication in supporting White Supremacy and re-colonialism is important indeed.

With respect to the transmission of information/knowledge, the teaching-learning techniques, and styles and methods of communication employed also need to take into account both the learners' individual and (cultural) group learning styles (e.g., a preference for oral rather than written transmission of knowledge) and the diverse challenges of the political, economic, socio-cultural, and educational context of Africa.

Finally, with respect to research and the production of academic knowledge on all of these topics vis-a-vis Africa, several outcomes are desirable. African researchers should, as Dei has pointed out, play a greater role in academic research and writing about Africa (Dei, 1998a) and ask new 'de-colonizing' questions in the process (Dei, 1998b). Western OD practitioners and adult educators, in asking similar questions, can play a supportive role in their work with African academics and educators. They also need to ensure that equal power relationships with African colleagues exist. Western researchers and funding organizations can similarly assist by playing a facilitative and supportive role to ensure that African voices are both heard and listened to, and that their indigenous knowledge is fully valued and acted upon.

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