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THE IMPACT OF SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

Strategic human resource management requires that human resource systems be aligned to meet the demands of the strategic direction adopted by the organisation. This requires an understanding of the environmental and organisational issues which impact on the management of people. One of these issues is the nature and impact of the environmental culture which people bring with them to the workplace.

This research sought to answer three questions:

1) Arising out of the perceptions and experience of the respondents are there features of South African culture that they perceive as differentiating it from other cultures? If so, how do they define those features and the core values which govern them?

2) Given the underlying assumptions that govern the culture of people in organisations, what influence does this culture have on the way people behave in organisations?

3) Should the systems, structures and processes in operation in organisations be altered to take advantage of the cultural features identified and, if so, how?

The only previous research on the subject of national culture was undertaken by Hofstede (1980) who, between 1967 and 1978, examined national culture in 53 countries. It was the contention of this research that the South African environment has changed significantly since Hofstede's (1980) study. A current evaluation was required to determine the features of national culture which impact

on organisational effectiveness. This research, therefore, was in the nature of theory development rather than theory testing.

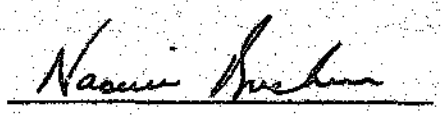
This research used a new methodology to develop a grounded theory for strategic human resource management in South Africa derived directly from the world experiences of the sample. Convenience sampling - a non-probability sampling technique - was applied in selecting a sample of fifteen interview respondents. The data was collected via unstructured depth interviews. These interviews were analysed by applying a data mapping technique which proved highly effective in allowing the researcher to elicit constructs from the perspective of the research respondents.

The results of this research indicate that there are two dominant cultures within the South African environment which this research labelled a Colonial culture and an African culture. The Colonial culture has its basis in the experience and values of the colonisers who brought to South Africa a western orientation. The African culture is grounded in the values and experiences of the indigenous population. There is a perception that the Colonial culture has achieved a dominating status within the South African environment and organisations while the African culture has been under-valued and people within this cultural paradigm feel alienated within traditional organisational structures.

The research findings further indicate that African culture emphasises the value of the humanity of the individual. However, the individual cannot be separated from the his community. These features of African culture which are evidenced in the concept of ubuntu as well as the inclusive nature of this culture create a need to integrate the concept of community into organisational management. The research results indicate the necessity for a shift of emphasis within the human resource management cycle to a humanist approach which enables performance through the development of people and which recognises the organisation as being both a community in itself and of the greater community.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this or any other University.



Naomi Linda Brehm

On this 23rd day of May 1994.

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SOUNDS OF A COWHIDE DRUM
by Oswald Joseph Mtshali (1971, p.68)

Boom! Boom! Boom!
I hear it in the northern sky -
a rumble and a roar of thunder.

I prick my ears
like a buck ready to flee from an imminent storm.

Boom! Boom! Boom!
As it rolls nearer
and nearer to the southern sky
it holds my heart,
my hopes soaring into the eagle's throne.

Boom! Boom! Boom!
I am the drum on your dormant soul,
Cut from the black hide of a sacrificial cow.

I am the spirit of your ancestors,
habitant in hallowed huts,
eager to protect,
forever vigilant

Let me tell you of your precious heritage,
of your glorious past trampled by the conqueror,
destroyed by the zeal of a missionary.

I lay bare facts for scrutiny
by your searching mind,
all declarations and dogmas.

O! Hear me, Child!
in the Zulu dance
shaking their hearts into a frenzy.

O! Hear me, child!
in the night vigils of black Zionists
lifting their spirits into ecstasy.

Boom! Boom! Boom!
That is the sound of the cowhide drum -
the Voice of Mother Africa

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Strategic human resource management is concerned with providing the systems, structures and processes which will support the organisation as it struggles to come to terms with the environmental forces which surround it (Fombrun, 1984b). Just as the strategy of the organisation is designed to "fit" the environment so strategic human resource management should be taking cognisance of the factors within the environment which impact on the human capital requirements of the organisation. A number of authors (for example, Cooke and Armstrong, 1990; Baird and Meshoulam, 1988; Buller, 1988; Sparrow and Pettigrew, 1988; Walker, 1992) state that organisational systems, structures and processes, particularly those relating to people, must be congruent with the strategy adopted by the organisation.

1.2 CHALLENGES

1.2.1 Challenges to Human Resource Management

In achieving the objectives of strategic human resource management organisations are faced with a number of fundamental changes which challenge human resource management. The literature (for example, Schuler and Walker, 1990; Arthur, 1987; Sherwood, 1988) outlines the concerns faced by western societies, particularly (but not limited to) the United States.

The pool of skilled labour is diminishing and technological advancements ensure that skills acquired today will be obsolete within a few years. There is, therefore, a need to upgrade skills continually and invest heavily in the training of people. In addition, new work processes and organisational structures are placing demands on employees, especially managers, which they have not necessarily been trained to meet. The areas in which managers lack the necessary skills and training include the empowerment of employees at all levels of the organisation and the development and management of self-directed work teams. Increased global competition has required organisations to be more effective and to compete more vigorously in their own and international markets. The trend to downsize/rightsize organisations has led to a significant loss of jobs in large conglomerates and more people are entering the workforce as contract/self-employed labour.

The change in organisational structure has required employees to be multi-skilled and to be able to assume a wider variety of tasks within a broader spectrum of job categories. Simultaneously, the emphasis has moved from manufacturing type work to service oriented organisations and work. All these factors create new challenges for the human resource practitioner and for those involved in human resource strategy and planning.

1.2.2 Human Resource Challenges facing South African Organisations

Similar challenges face the South African organisation. Years of sanctions have, to some extent, isolated us from world competition and world trends. However, this in itself has created the need for organisations to operate more effectively and to cut costs. As a result, virtually all South African organisations have undergone a process of

downsizing/rightsizing. In an economy which, as Binedell (1993) highlights, is dominated by a few large conglomerates this process of downsizing has had a devastating effect, particularly on the process of formal job creation. The Institute of Personnel Management (1992) states that since 1988 the private sector has only created an average of 13 250 new jobs per year.

South Africa is also faced with a diminishing pool of skilled labour (Owens and Nema, 1988). Violence and political unrest have made South Africa an unattractive option for those with skills to sell. Large numbers of South Africans have taken their skills abroad and the country has been hard put to attract new skills from abroad. However, unlike Europe and the USA where the diminishing skilled labour pool is a result of an aging population, South Africa's problem arises from the combined effects of socio-political and economic upheaval and insufficient investment in education and training in the past.

In contrast with the rising economies of the East, South Africa has not invested in its human capital either through its government agencies or through its business/commercial organisations. The Institute of Personnel Management (1992, p.85) cites that South African organisations are *"de facto disinvesting in human capital"* in terms of the percentage of payroll spent on training. At the same time, the bulk of our population is not aging but is, rather, a young population. Over half the South African population is under the age of 18 and this population is under-educated and hyper-politicised.

As a result of sanctions and South Africa's isolation from the world community, our markets have been protected from international competition. Foreign investors have been loathe to bring their money into the country and while they are beginning to come back, it is

unlikely that any significant investment will take place until South Africa has proved itself a viable economic entity. Where South African organisations have entered foreign markets they have been cushioned by the low Rand exchange rate which has offset the low levels of productivity which exist in this country. Future investors will also be deterred by the virulent unionism which exists in South African organisations.

1.3 CULTURE AND SOUTH AFRICAN ORGANISATIONS

1.3.1 Dominant Organisational Cultures

The mould in which South African organisations are conceptualised and structured is Eurocentric in origin (Khoza, 1993). In addition, American models of change and management influence organisations and are followed wherever possible. The cultures of organisations are dominated by the values and culture of the predominantly white, male management structures. Yet these management practices ignore the fact that the largest proportion of our population is neither European nor American but African; that the African culture may be very different from those which exist in other nations of the world; and that, by trying to impose these Eurocentric and American notions of how organisations should be structured and run, we are in fact creating a culture of failure.

As a result the systems, structures and processes of organisations alienate the majority of the workforce. They create cultures with which few of the employees can identify. Values are top driven and reflect the Eurocentric vision and culture of the management hierarchy. Employees are unable, by and large, to identify with these and there is no congruence between organisational goals and those of the general

workforce. As du Preez (1992, p.92) states, *"patterns of learned helplessness may appear."* The resultant climate is one of confrontation as management seeks to gain commitment to values which have no relevance to the lives and aspirations of the workforce. Koopman (1991b, p.19) states that the disparities between the needs and demands of the organisation and those of the individual preclude *"meaningful participation in the business"*. Unless these disparities are addressed the organisation as a whole is threatened. Khoza (1993, p.119) adds that little cognisance has been taken of Afrocentricity. Neither has there been any attempt to use the *"indigenous world views"* in framing more eff e work environments.

Schein (1990) indicates that external realities can result in cultures which were once effective becoming ineffective. The external realities which face South African organisations at this time reinforce the necessity of identifying the cultural gap, that is, the gap between actual cultural norms and desired cultural norms, and addressing this to make organisations more effective.

1.4 OBTAINING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Porter (1990) found that those countries which had achieved international competitive advantage had done so by building on those features of the national culture which were unique to that nation. If South Africa is to become the 'powerhouse of Africa' and a force in international markets it will have to find a way of capitalising on the those features of its culture which are specific to Africa/South Africa and build these into its organisational systems and processes.

The problem, therefore, is to determine whether there are any features of

out national culture specific to South Africa and what these are. Once these have been identified, it then becomes important to determine how these can be employed within organisations and what adjustments have to be made in order to maximise the potential of these characteristics.

1.5 THE ORGANISATION OF THIS REPORT

The objectives of this research are twofold. Firstly, the research seeks to identify the features of South African culture as perceived by interview respondents. These respondents have been selected because of their interaction with a wide spectrum of people within communities. Secondly, the research seeks to establish how the fundamental aspects of South African culture can be effectively utilised in the management of people within organisations.

This report is structured into an additional five chapters. Chapter Two deals with the literature as it relates to culture and strategic human resource management. Here the nature of culture and its impact on the organisation are examined. The notion of national culture is reviewed and South African national culture, particularly, is evaluated. The framework for strategic human resource management is reviewed as well as its relationship to the environment and environmental culture.

The chapter continues with a review of current African management thinking and the paradigms within which this exists. Finally the cross-cultural issues in the management of people are evaluated.

Chapter Three deals with the questions which this research seeks to answer as well as the methodology used in this research. It includes an evaluation of quantitative research as it relates to this research and of the depth

interviewing process. Sample selection criteria are discussed as well as the methodology of data mapping and content analysis used for the analysis of the data.

Chapter Four deals with the actual research results. The constructs and themes which were elicited from the depth interviews are highlighted and discussed.

In Chapter Five the results of the research are evaluated in terms of determining the basic assumptions which underpin South African culture. It also examines the implications of these for strategic human resource management. In doing so a framework for strategic human resource management within the South African context is developed and discussed.

The final chapter, Chapter Six outlines the significance of this research and its limitations and develops possible areas of future research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Strategic human resource management does not exist in a vacuum. Human resource systems must be changed to meet the demands of the strategic direction adopted by the organisation. This requires an understanding of the environmental and organisational issues which impact on the management of people. One of these issues is the nature and impact of the culture which exists in the environment and which the people who work in the organisation bring with them to the workplace.

Simultaneously, human resource professionals must be alert to the emerging paradigms of the African world-view which impact on both current and future people-management practices within our organisations. This gives rise to the need to understand the cross-cultural issues involved in managing a diverse workforce.

These issues are examined in the discussion which follows.

2.2 CULTURE

According to Beyer and Trice (1990), there are two popular views about culture. The first is that culture is so obvious that an outsider can immediately sense it. The second, and opposing view, is that culture is so deep-seated and hidden that it is elusive and can only by analysed by detailed

and extensive study. They suggest, however, that it is useful to study the outward manifestations of culture, the *"observable outcroppings"* (Beyer and Trice, 1990, p.4), in order to gain insight.

But culture is a dynamic process. It is, as Lewin (1989) points out, a process which, while keeping a recognisable form, changes over time. It is a group of forces which may remain the same for a period of time or until *"they find their state of equilibrium at a constant level during that period."* (Lewin, 1989, p.85).

Schein (1992) states that culture is a result of a complex group learning process. Schein (1990 and 1992) observes that culture serves the purpose of providing the group with the capacity to survive and to adapt by solving the fundamental problems of survival in the environment. In addition, culture allows the integration and consolidation of the group's internal processes as well as facilitating the group's adaptation to the environment.

2.2.1 Definitions

Schein (1992, p.12) defines culture as:

> *"A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems."*

The process of culture development implies that there has been an accumulation of shared learning which gives meaning to the group's functioning and develops into patterns. These patterns cover the

"behavioral, emotional, and cognitive elements of the group members' total psychological functioning." (Schein, 1992, p.10). The assumptions are all the more powerful because they begin to operate outside the awareness of any of the individual members of the group or the group itself.

Beyer and Trice (1990) provide a similar definition of culture which states that:

> culture is *"a network of shared understandings, norms and values that are taken for granted and that lie beneath the surface of organizational life."* (Beyer and Trice, 1990, p.4)

In order for a culture to be created and maintained these shared understandings, norms and values must be asserted and communicated in some tangible way. Beyer and Trice (1990) add that human actions have consequences which are both practical and expressive or symbolic. Both these elements have an evident and a hidden element. However, people's awareness of these consequences differ, with some being more obvious than others.

2.2.1.1 Element of culture

Dyer and Dyer (1989) identify four elements of culture. These are artifacts, perspectives, values and basic assumptions.

Artifacts are the tangible aspects of culture, *"surface manifestations of shared perspectives, values and assumptions that form the belief system"* (Dyer and Dyer, 1989, p.645). There are two types of artifact. Behavioural artifacts which are made up of ritual and ceremonies, and verbal artifacts which include language, stories and myths.

The second element of culture, perspectives, consists of the actions and ideas which are shared by the group and which assist the members to act in a suitable manner in a given situation.

The third element, values, consist of the broader principles which cut across a variety of situations. Values include the *"general ideas, standards and sins"* (Dyer and Dyer, 1989, p.645) of the group or organisation.

The final element is the basic assumptions which are the unquestioned beliefs which the group holds about itself, its members as well as others and the world around the group.

For culture to change requires a change in these basic assumptions. Dyer and Dyer (1989) assert that change in even one of these core beliefs may result in a complete culture change.

Dyer and Dyer's (1989) four elements of culture correlate closely with the three levels of culture identified by Schein (1990 and 1992).

2.2.1.2 Levels of culture

Schein (1992) identifies three levels of culture. These levels refer to the extent to which the cultural phenomenon is visible to the observer.

The most superficial level of culture is the level of artifacts. This includes all that is visible when one encounters a new or unfamiliar group. It includes the visible structures and behaviours such as the layout of the physical environment, the language used by the group, its artistic creations, emotions displayed, and observable

rituals and ceremonies.

Schein (1992) highlights that while this level of culture is the most visible it is extremely difficult to decipher as the external symbols can be ambiguous. In order to understand them, the observer requires experience of the actual culture which created them. In addition, the observer brings with him his own feelings and reactions which may colour his interpretation of these symbols.

Values form the second level of culture and arise out of the joint actions of the group members. They consist of the strategies, goals and philosophies of the group which underpin the group's belief that certain solutions will lead to successful outcomes. A great deal of the behaviour which can be observed at the artifact level can be predicted by values.

Values may only be espoused, that is, they are values that people will say in a range of situations but which may not be congruent with what they will actually do in those same situations. Only once espoused values have been validated by shared experience will they be articulated into a *"philosophy of operating"* (Schein, 1992, p.21).

In analysing values, the observer needs to distinguish between those which are congruent with basic assumptions and those which are values to which the group aspires or which serve as rationalisations.

The final and deepest level of culture is the level of basic assumptions. Basic assumptions are held with little variation among group members. These are unquestioned. It would be inconceivable

for any other premise to guide members behaviour. Additionally, because they are shared they are mutually reinforced.

As a result, basic assumptions are neither debated nor confronted. Any change taking place within this realm requires the group to revive and reexamine the assumptions. This is a difficult process as it destabilises the group and creates anxiety. To avoid this destabilisation and its attendant anxiety, there is a tendency for the group and the individuals within it to distort or rationalise what is happening, thereby directing that to which they attend and the meaning they attribute to events and people.

In any analysis of culture Schein (1992, p.26) says *"if one does not decipher the pattern of basic assumptions that may be operating, one will not know how to interpret the artifacts correctly or how much credence to give to the articulated values."*

The implication is, therefore, that a superficial examination of culture will not lead to insight into the culture being studied. It will rather be a reflection of the examiner's culture, his values and assumptions.

From a management point of view, culture change will be resisted and can create severe discomfort for the organisation which attempts this. However, from Dyer and Dyer's (1989) point of view, if management is able to change a single core assumption, this can result in significant shifts in organisational culture.

2.2.1.3 Common features

The definitions of culture outlined above contain common features. These are:

- the notion that culture is deep-seated
- that it is made up of a set of unquestioned, taken-for-granted assumptions or beliefs regarding the group and its members as well as the surrounding world and "others"
- that these assumptions are a result of shared learning
- that questioning the assumptions will created discomfort for the group and will thus be avoided. However, if reexamined and changed this could change the entire culture.

As a consequence, people are a product of their own culture (Potloane, 1991). They will, thus, interpret the messages that pass between them differently. It is, therefore, important to be aware of those things which our own cultures have taught us with regard to how we think and behave. Not only will our actions differentiate us from others, but each person will be acting out according to her cultural learning.

Potloane (1991, p.19) states that because cultures no longer exist in isolation from each other, we *"need to develop an appreciation and respect for differences in language, attitudes, value systems and how we perceive and interpret the world around us."*

2.2.2 The Impact of Organisational Culture

Culture, according to Kilmann (1990, p.17), provides *"meaning, direction and mobilization, a social energy that moves the corporation into either productive action or destruction."* Organisations, he says,

may expend considerable energy to drive employees in one direction while the social energy pressures employees to persist in types of behaviour which have worked well in the past, even though these may be dysfunctional in the new circumstances.

Schein (1990) points out that companies may devise new strategies which make serse from a financial, marketing or product point of view but which ultimately fail because they require new values and assumptions. Strategy is determined and limited by culture.

2.2.2.1 Culture gap

Kilmann (1990) indicates that where there is a gap between actual norms and desired norms a culture gap arises. He identifies four types of culture gap.

- task support norms which have to do with sharing of information, helping other groups and a concern for efficiency;
- task innovation norms which stress creativity;
- social relationship norms which are concerned with socialising with one's work group and mixing business and friendships; and
- personal freedom norms which have to do with self expression, exercising discretion and pleasing oneself.

Kilmann (1990) highlights that the greater the gap between actual and desired norms the greater the impact on productivity and morale. He found that in mature groups the greatest gap usually

occurred in task innovation norms leading to over-conformity and lack of innovation. He also found that the greatest culture gap usually occurred at the lower levels of the organisational hierarchy leading to distrust and alienation. Finally, he asserts that without a supportive culture all action taken by top management is likely to be viewed with distrust by the groups below.

2.2.2.2 Conflicts and failure

Schein (1990) states that [illegible] and culture change can create a number of problems.

Groups, according to Schein (1990), form on the basis of proximity, their shared fate, commonalities of occupation, work experience and organisational rank as well as similarity in ethnic background. Consequently, those groups are likely to acquire their own culture once they have a shared history. Once formed, competition and/or conflict with other groups tends to reinforce the intra-group culture.

Schein (1990) adds that every organisation is concerned with ensuring that members at all levels "fit" into the structure. Socialisation is the process which ensures that this takes place. However, when the socialisation process does not operate efficiently or optimally there may be a variety of unsatisfactory results. These may range from alienation and discomfort where the member feels unproductive and moves out of the group and/organisation to a situation where there is total conformity. The latter can lead to a lack of innovation and creativity and the organisation is unable to respond to the demands of the environment.

> The effects of culture change can, as Schein (1990) reports, also be felt on productivity. Because of the strong cultures which groups form, they often develop assumptions that work should be limited by what it is appropriate to do rather than what should be done.

The consequences of dysfunctional organisational cultures are profound. What is now required is a realisation that *"managerial reality is not an absolute; rather it is socially and culturally determined"* (Khoza, 1993, p.124). Inter-cultural interfaces are the norm within organisations which results in culture shock (Potloane, 1991) as different cultures encounter what is conceived of as unthinkable and unacceptable. It is this process of inter-cultural interface which requires management and a management philosophy and approach which can, as Khoza (1993) says, only arise out of a fuller understanding of the cultures concerned.

2.2.3 Four Dimensions of National Culture

There are at least three reasons, according to Hofstede (1983) why nationality is important to management. Firstly, nations are rooted in a history with their own systems of government and both formal and informal systems and institutions, all of which are resistant to change. Secondly, nationality has symbolic importance for people and differences between people are felt as a reality. Finally, nationality colours our thinking in the way thinking is moulded by cultural factors.

Therefore, culture is *"collective mental programming"* (Hofstede, 1983, p.76) through which we interpret our experience. However, while national culture identifies the common elements within a nation it cannot be generalised to every individual within that nation.

During the period 1967 to 1973 Hofstede (1980) carried out research which provided insight into national culture. This research involved international survey projects in IBM companies in 53 countries including South Africa. The underlying objective of the research was not to survey national culture specifically. Rather, the survey projects were designed to determine employee morale through attitude surveys.

Hofstede (1980) identifies four categories into which the survey questions can be divided according to their content. These categories are:

- Questions regarding a personal evaluation of an aspect of the work situation - *satisfactions*.

- Questions regarding *perceptions* - subjective descriptions of an aspect or problem of the work situation.

- Questions relating to an ideal job or general issues in the industry - *personal goals and beliefs*.

- *Demographics* - questions dealing with age, sex, education levels and length of service.

In the period 1967 to 1969 a total of 60 000 respondents were surveyed using a common base of 160 questionnaire items. A second round of surveys was undertaken between 1971 and 1973. Again, the project included a total of 60 000 respondents of which 30 000 had participated in the earlier round of surveys.

Hofstede (1980) indicates that the people employed in the marketing, service and product development departments of IBM at the time the

surveys were undertaken were essentially middle-class. From a South African perspective this would imply that the sample selected in this country was predominantly white.

As a result of this international research Hofstede (1980) identified four dimensions along which all cultures can be described. These four dimensions are:

- **Individualism - Collectivism:** this refers to how loose or tight the bond or relationship between individuals and societal groups is. The spectrum ranges, on the one hand, from societies where individuals are concerned with their own self-interest and perhaps that of their immediate families - highly individualist societies, to societies which are made up of collectivities around extended families, tribes or villages. Hofstede (1980) found that the greater the wealth within a country the higher the levels of individualism which were found within that country.

- **Power Distance:** this refers to the extent to which people expect and deal with inequality in social institutions, such as the family, work organisation and government. Globally there is a relationship between Power Distance and collectivism. While Individualist countries do not always evince small Power Distance, collectivist countries always show large Power Distance.

- **Uncertainty Avoidance:** this refers to the extent to which people seek to avoid unstructured situations through the establishment of laws, rules and procedures. In weak Uncertainty Avoidance countries, people tend to take risks

relatively easily and are more tolerant of dissent as they do not feel threatened by this. In societies which manifest strong Uncertainty Avoidance people tend to feel insecure and anxious about the future and, thus, develop institutions to create security and minimise risk.

- Masculinity - Feminism: this refers to the extent to which people embrace competitive "masculine" traits or nurturing "feminine" traits. Masculine societies tend to exhibit traditional masculine social values such as performing, achievement and the importance of making money. The dominant values of feminine societies tend to be associated with helping others and putting relationships before money.

Jaeger (1989, p.662) describes Hofstede's view of culture as ideational, that is, that all members of society carry *"mental programs that guide their behaviour. He feels that these programs are conditioned into members of a given cultural group or society by their common socialization and life experience."*

2.2.3.1 Hofstede's four dimensions applied

In his analysis Hofstede (1980) found that the South African culture could be described as falling in the large power distance/high individualism quadrant. This implies that South Africans are willing to accept large differentials in power within organisations. They are, however, not closely linked within groups. The spirit is far more one of entrepreneurship and the ability to control one's own destiny. High power distance is generally found in countries which score relatively high on collectivism, which is not the case for South Africa. South Africa scores relatively low on the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension

indicating a willingness to accept rules and regulations which determine how behaviour should be regulated. South Africans also indicate a prevalence for masculine traits as opposed to feminine traits. This would indicate competitiveness and a clear delineation of male and female roles.

Hofstede and Bond (1988, p.19) found that *"there is a philosophical dividing line in our world that separates Western and Eastern thinking."* They came to realise that Hofstede's original work, in being designed by Western academics, was unable to tap certain characteristics of Eastern culture simply because the western mind was unable to encompass these concepts. It is possible that the same flaw exists with respect to Southern culture and that there is a similar dividing line which separates Western and Southern thinking. As a result measuring instruments, as used by Hofstede, are unable to tap those qualities and traits which are of significant importance in South Africa.

The significant features of Southern thinking and culture need to be identified so that organisations can adapt proactively to these and utilise them in attaining competitive advantage.

2.2.3.2 The African world-view

Koopman (1991b) constantly refers to the communal nature of African society and its values. This is supported by Lessem (1993a) whose experiences in Southern Africa lead him to believe that the communal nature of society is a strong feature of the national culture.

Koopman (1991a, p.34-35) bases his thinking regarding African culture on a number of premises regarding African roots and

thinking. He describes these premises as follows:

- *Africa is inclusionary, not exclusionary,*
- *Africa shows a bias for morals and emotions with regard to decisions, rather than role and function,*
- *Africa rewards teams, not the individual,*
- *Africa debates outwardly, not internally; thinks aurally, not through the written word,*
- *Africa works at removing dissent, not at gaining consent,*
- *Africa is steeped in the folklore of one's predetermined destiny."*

According to Hofstede (1983) leadership in collectivist societies tends to be a group phenomenon. In organisations, provided the leadership and/or the employer provides loyalty for the employee in the form of protection, the employee will bring considerable loyalty to the job.

An underlying feature of the African world-view is ubuntu - "I am through other people". Ubuntu is a philosophy of humanism (Vilakazi, 1991) in which the human being is central and the foremost priority. As such it provides the fundamental basis for reaching out and interacting with others (Potloane, 1991). Vilakazi (1991) states that, because it values human beings, their dignity, safety, welfare and development are the basis on which all action is predicated.

Hofstede's (1980) findings with regard to South African national culture are at odds with later interpretations of our national culture outlined by writers such as Lessem (1993a), Koopman (1991b), Vilakazi (1991) and Potloane (1991). South African society has

undergone much change - structural, economic and political over the twenty year period since Hofstede's (1980) research was undertaken. These changes all have the potential to impact, and therefore change, societal culture. It is, thus, necessary to re-examine the nature of our national culture to determine the extent to which both current theories and the concepts elucidated by Hofstede (1980) are applicable and relevant to the effective management of people within South African organisations.

2.2.3.3 Concerns in defining a national culture

A further problem which must be faced when using Hofstede's work as a basis for determining appropriate management styles and organisational systems, structures and processes is that Hofstede's work was undertaken during the apartheid era and during a period when South Africa was relatively prosperous. Also of significance in evaluating Hofstede's work is that at the time it was undertaken South African organisations were more dominated by a white, male power structure than is the case today. South Africa is now, as Douwes Dekker (1993) says, a society in transition. Cultures and values change over time and within South Africa this is particularly true at the present time.

However, Godsell (1992) and others warn about the effects of generalising about an entire society. In doing so there is the danger of stressing dominant values and ignoring variant ones. Jaeger (1989) also referred to the difficulty of generalising about multi-cultural countries. Motshabi (1993) warns that generalising about all people within a culture leads to ethnocentricity. People internalise culture differently and to treat people from the same culture as being identical is to stereotype them.

2.2.4 The Relationship between Organisational Culture and National Culture

When considering organisational culture, Lewin (1989, p.85) points out, one should be evaluating the forces both within and those surrounding the organisation - its *"life space"*.

Godsell (1992) observes that it is not only individuals who are subject to a variety of social influences. These same social and cultural influences impact on organisations. Organisations are bound by the constraints placed on them by the cultures and sub-cultures within a society. This impacts on the dominant elites who design organisations according to culturally acceptable models. The external cultures also set cultural constraints while members within the organisation organise themselves in terms of their own sub-cultures.

Goodstein and Burke (1991) state that organisations must monitor the external environment and take account of the changes in that external environment. Organisations must align themselves with these changes and undergo a process of metamorphosis to align themselves with their environment. The *"competent organisation will be ...t to early warning signs of external change so that it can move promptly to make internal changes designed to keep it viable with the changing external world"* (Goodstein and Burke, 1991, p.6).

Fonbrum (1984a, p.204) asserts that organisational culture must be *"at least minimally consistent with the societal culture form which it is derived"*. Organisational culture should strive for coherence with the culture of the society in which it exists. This is supported by Godsell (1992, p.107) who states that *"the employee does not enter the organisation a tabula rasa"*. The employee enters with a frame of

reference and a set of values acquired through socialisation. If the employee's framework differs substantially from that of the organisation, the employee is unable to make sense of the behaviours observed nor is that employee able to produce, what is considered, the appropriate behaviours. Thus the employee is disadvantaged within the organisational setting.

Khoza (1993, p.121) believes that without a profound understanding of the culture(s) of the people whom we seek to manage, we cannot devise and effective approach to management. This is predicated on the acceptance of the dynamic structure of culture which imbues people *"with general designs for living and patterns for interpreting reality."*

If this is so, it becomes necessary to identify those features of the national culture which will impact on organisations and the systems, structures and strategies which they put in place in order to ensure congruity between the human resource strategy adopted by the organisation and the culture of the people who enter the organisation.

2.3 PERCEPTION

In our interaction with the world around us there are a myriad of stimuli which are detected by our senses. The process of perception is one where we give meaning to these stimuli by the way we receive, organise and assign meaning to them (Stanton, Etzel, Walker, Abratt, Pitt & Staude, 1992).

Vernon (1971) indicates that perception is subject to variations and interruptions. One of the causes is that there are too many stimuli impinging on our senses at one time for us to attend to them all. As a result the individual can only attend to a small portion of his perceptual field at any

given time and, even then, may overlook or perceive incompletely or inaccurately. Knowledge and experience teach us to perceive larger portions of our environment. At the same time, people who have had similar learning experiences are likely to display an element of homogeneity in the way they perceive and interpret their environment. Learning may also lead to selectivity in what is attended to.

Stanton, *et al.*, (1992) state that our perceptions may be coloured by our beliefs and attitudes. Thus, we interpret the world in terms consistent with these beliefs and attitudes. Nonetheless, we are able to attend to and respond to stimuli which are significant or which grab our attention (Stanton, *et al.*, 1992; Vernon, 1971). Therefore, significant changes in our environment are likely to impact on our perceptual field. Vernon (1971) maintains, however, that the comparatively peaceful and undemanding nature of our daily existence can lull us into a sense of apathy and carelessness where we fail to recognise changes in the environmental stimuli.

2.3.1 Perception and Culture

With respect to culture, the experience and knowledge that people have gained will impact on the environmental stimuli that they perceive and the manner in which they interpret these. Thus, in the business environment which is dominated by European and Western values, the power-group is likely to ignore those stimuli which do not conform to its "view of the world". Those groups whose experience of the world is different may find their perceptions of the business environment at odds with that of the power-group. This experience of conflicting perceptions can, in itself, create a learning environment which reinforces each group's perception of the other.

Vernon (1971) states that the perception which is seen daily and regularly is likely to be more accurate and efficient than that which is perceived less often. Therefore, in attempting to identify features of South African culture it is important to tap into the perceptions of those who will have had the greatest contact, and thus past experience, of the culture which this research is attempting to define.

2.4 STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The increasingly turbulent and changing environment in which business must operate necessitates that all the structures and processes of the organisation are integrated with its strategy if the organisation is to survive (Buller, 1988). Strategic human resource management encompasses those processes and structures which relate to people. These must be congruent with the strategy adopted by the organisation in order to support and bolster the process of implementation. For Walker (1992, p.59) the key purpose of strategic human resource management is to *"guide development of a more flexible, adaptive organization."*

In the past the emphasis has been on strategic planning or strategy formulation. According to Tichy, Fombrun and Devanna (1984) and Buller (1988) the emphasis has now shifted to that of implementation or the process of strategic change.

2.4.1 Congruency

The concept of congruency, the fit between the organisational strategy and the strategic human resource processes, is often mentioned in the literature (Cooke and Armstrong, 1990; Walker, 1992; Miles and Snow,

1984; Sparrow and Pettigrew, 1988; Buller, 1988).

Devanna, Fombrun and Tichy (1984) speak about the alignment which must take place between the formal organisational structure and the human resource systems so that these become the driving force behind the strategic goal of the organisation. For Buller (1988) this implies an integration between the structures and processes of the organisation and its strategy.

Human resource strategy, therefore, flows from organisational strategy and all the activities of the human resource function should be designed with this in mind.

2.4.2 Definitions

Strategy, according to Henn (1988, p.59) is concerned with competition and the *"concentration of resources on selected opportunities for competitive advantage."* The ramification for human resource management are, according to Baird and Meshoulam (1984), that in becoming strategic in its approach human resource management must identify the strategic goals of the organisation and use them as a basis for the design of human resource practices, procedures and programmes. This further implies that the human resource practitioner must identify the needs of the organisation and the nature of the opportunities and constraints with which the organisation is faced. There is the additional requirement that the human resource practitioner understands the culture of the organisation and the environment which it faces.

Schuler and Walker (1990) state that the human resource strategy is the

process through which the human resource function seeks to add value to the organisation. This is done through the identification, assessment, evaluation and resolution of those issues most critical to the success of the organisation and its achievement of competitive advantage. Therefore, strategic human resource management is action oriented.

For Tichy, *et al.*, (1984, p. 26) ensuring that organisational strategies are implemented requires getting people to do the right things. The human resource tools which become central to this process are those which focus on *"selecting the right people to run the business, rewarding them for strategic activities and designing staffing patterns that match the strategic plans, as well as creating more strategically motivated development and labor relations policies."*

Cooke and Armstrong (1990) support this view. They state that the process of human resource strategy is one which builds on the good to make it better. Human resource strategy is, therefore, concerned with assessing the critical success factors and the competencies required by the business; and determining how to attract and retain high calibre staff required by the business. Human resource strategy development will, thus, address the critical issues associated with:

- the management of performance,
- gaining commitment, and
- developing harmonious relationships with labour organisations and employees.

2.4.3 Framework for Strategic Human Resource Management

In determining overall strategy, organisations must, according to Henn (1988), select from a range of opportunities so that the available

resources are sufficiently concentrated to ensure competitive advantage. However, the development of organisational strategy is not simply the choice of opportunities.

Devanna, *et al.*, (1984) state that the strategy of an organisation is moulded by the environmental forces which it faces - political, economic and cultural - which will impact on the range of opportunities from which the organisation is able to choose. At the same time the organisation has a mission or objective which it seeks to accomplish. The mission will determine how resources, including people, will be utilised in the accomplishment of the strategy. This mission will also determine the optimal structure required to carry out the organisational objectives. Thereafter the organisation will need to determine the number and types of people it requires and how to attract and retain these people within the organisation - the human resource process. Figure 2.1 outlines the basic elements of the framework which impact on the strategy formulation and implementation process.

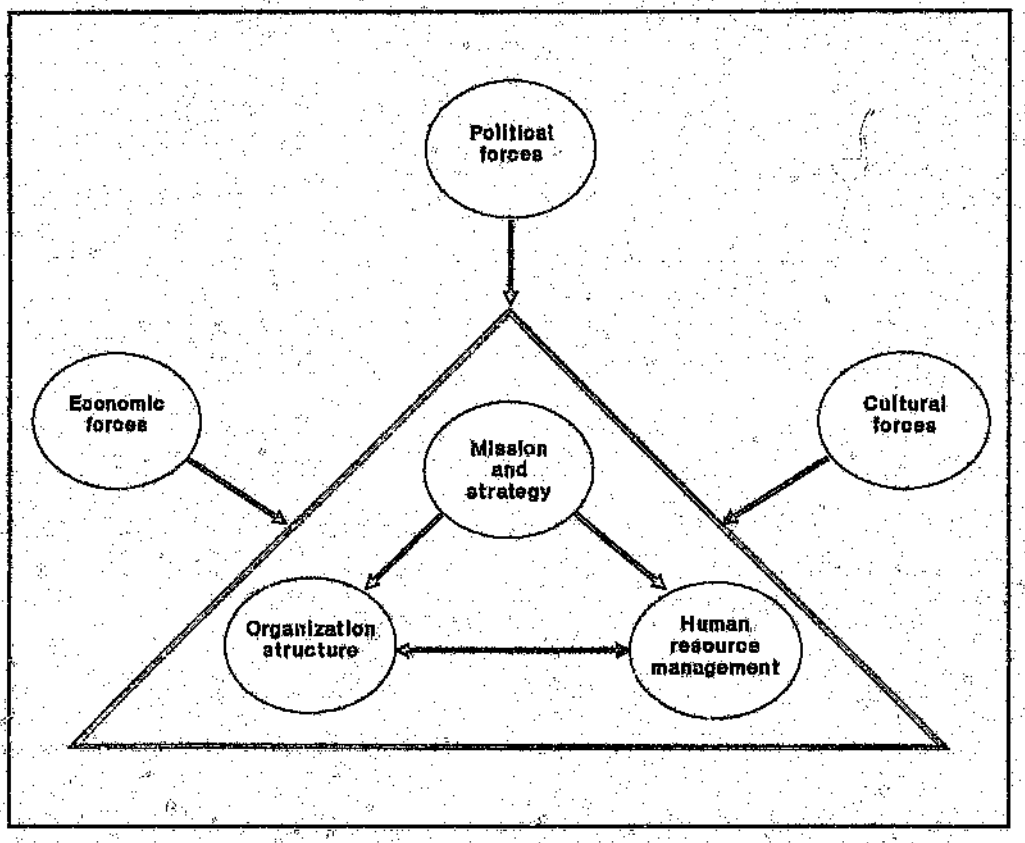

Figure 2.1 Strategic Management and Environmental Pressures

Source: Devanna, M.A., Fombrun, C.J., & Tichy, N.M. 1984. "A framework for strategic human resource management", in *Strategic Human Resource Management*, Charles Fombrun, Noel M. Tichy, & Mary Anne Devanna (editors). New York: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 35.

For Walker (1992) the process of aligning human resource management with strategic management is three phased (see Figure 2.2). The first phase is that of determining business strategy through an evaluation of both the external and internal environment; an analysis of the changes and issues which relate to the business; and the identification of the

mission, vision, values, objectives and strategies of the organisation.

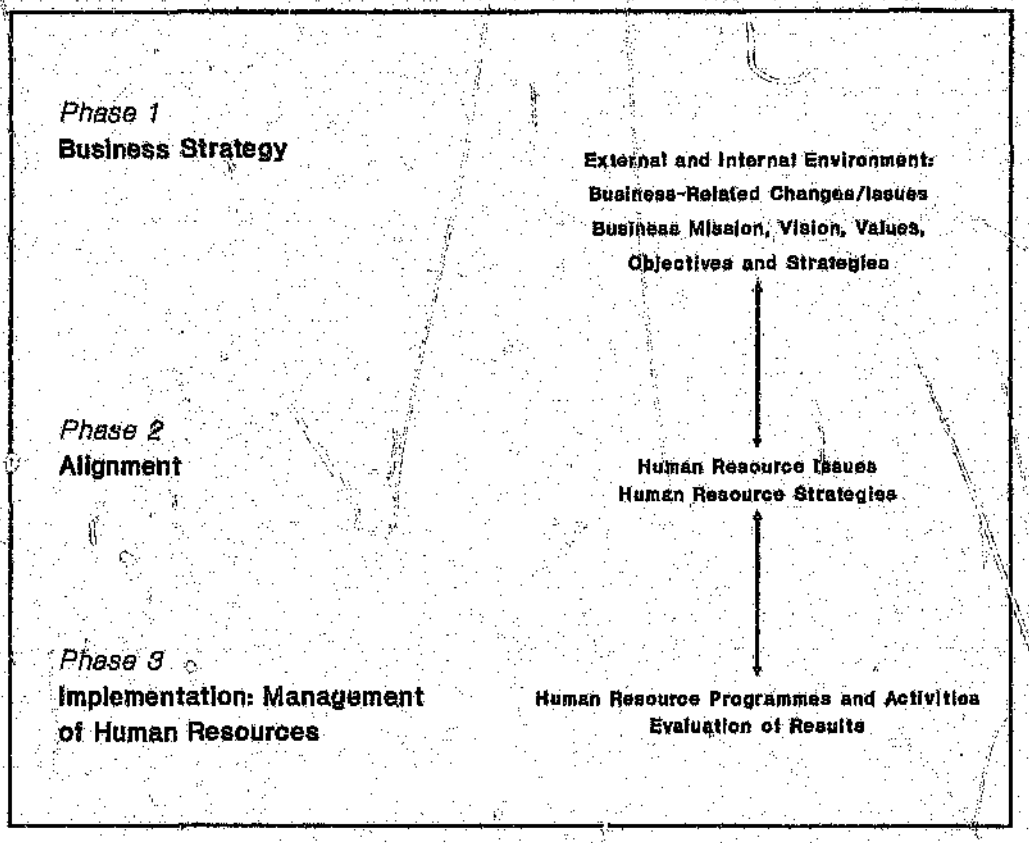

Figure 2.2 Strategic Alignment Process

Source: Adapted from Walker, J.W. 1992. *Human Resource Strategy*. New York: McGraw-Hill, pp. 11.

The second phase is that of alignment where the human resource issues are identified and the human resource strategies formulated. The final phase of implementation takes place when human resource activities and programmes are put in place and evaluated.

From the human resource practitioner's point of view the process of alignment is an important one as it determines the human resource

activities and how these will be structured. Walker sees this as a cyclical process (see Figure 2.3) where the human resource issues are defined and the strategies determined.

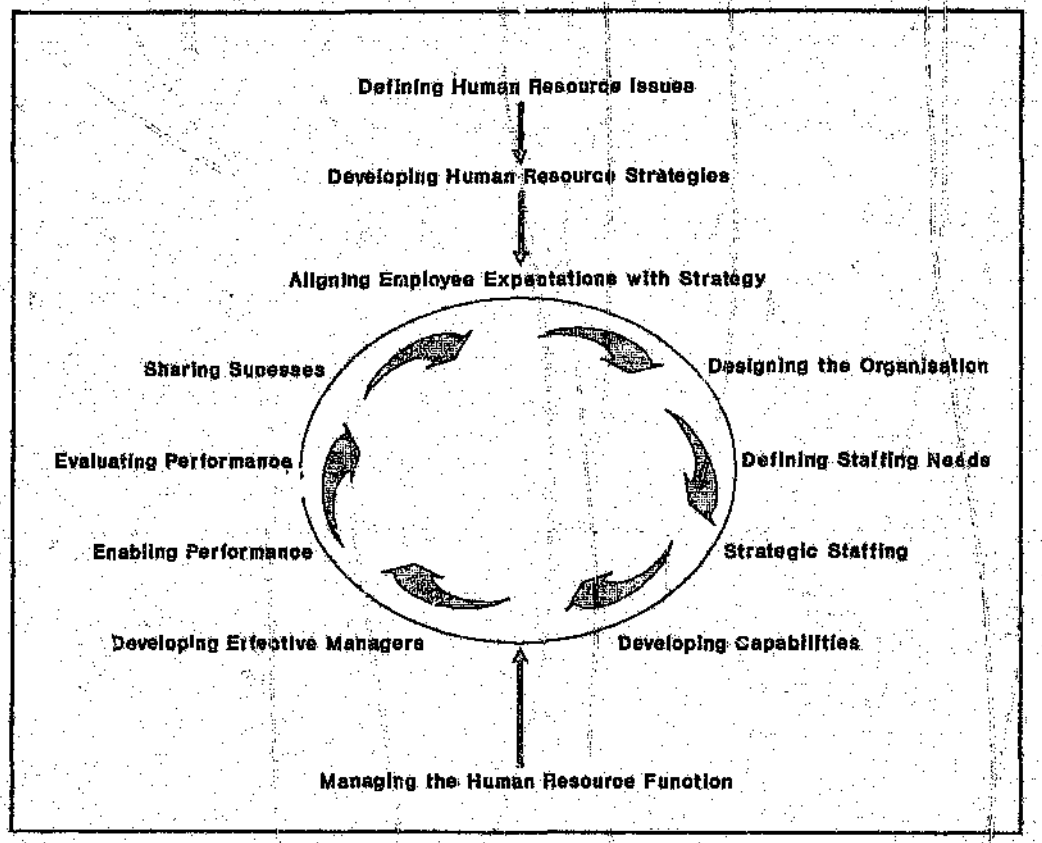

Figure 2.3 Alignment of Human Resource Management with Organisational Strategy

Source: Adapted from Walker, J.W. 1992. *Human Resource Strategy*. New York: McGraw-Hill, p. 3.

This feeds into a cycle of human resource activities covering organisational design, manpower planning, recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management and rewards management. Throughout this process the expectations of employees

have to be managed and aligned with the organisational strategy.

The fundamental objective of human resource strategy is to ensure that the performance of the organisational members is effective in achieving the objectives of the organisation (Devanna, *et al.*, 1984). Therefore, performance becomes the key and it is the function of all the other activities in the human resource cycle of activities (see Figure 2.4)

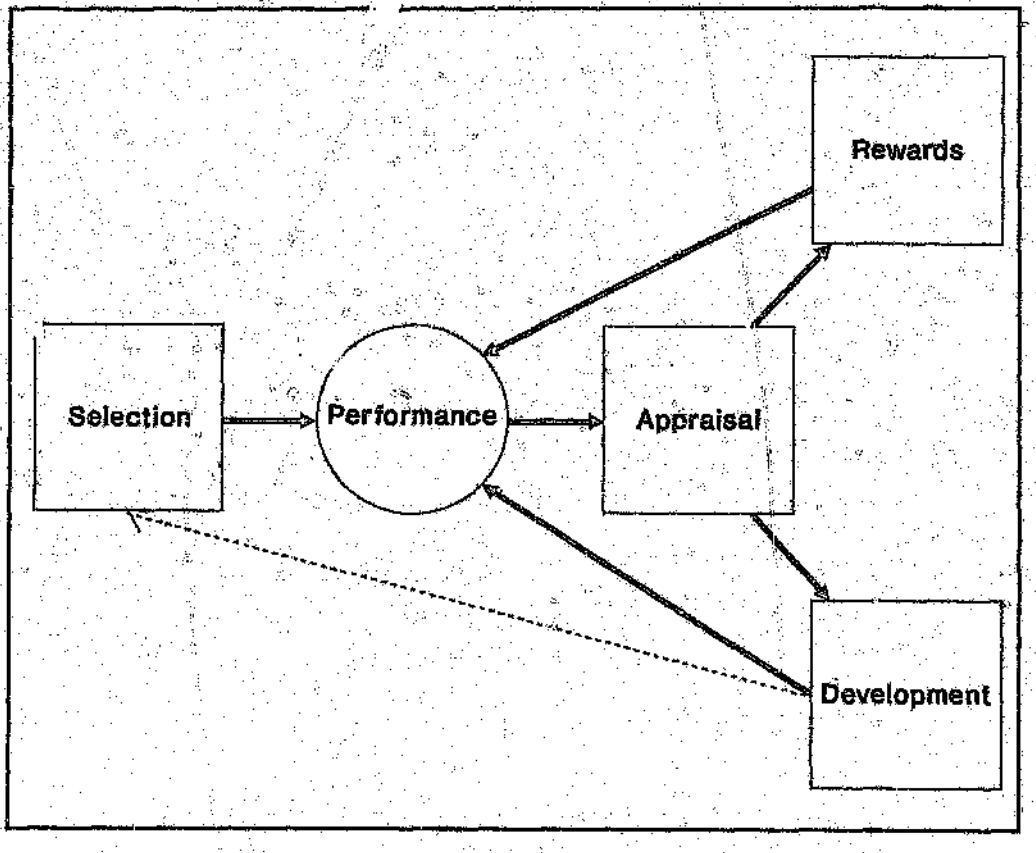

Figure 2.4 The Human Resource Cycle

Source: Devanna, M.A., Fombrun, C.J., & Tichy, N.M. 1984. "A framework for strategic human resource management", in *Strategic Human Resource Management*, Charles Fombrun, Noel M. Tichy, & Mary Anne Devanna (editors). New York: John Wiley & Sons, p. 41.

2.4.4 Constraints on Strategic Planning and Implementation

Often organisations determine new strategies but fail in the implementation of these. Lawler (1984) identifies a number of constraints which impact on the strategic plan and its implementation. These are:

- the external environment,
- the existing practices both in relation to management in general and to human resources,
- the current human resources, and
- the financial and technical resources of the organisation.

Davis (1988) states that one of the constraining factors in the implementation of strategy is a result of the time continuum in which organisations are forced to operate. Strategy formulation is an activity which takes place in the present, but it is concerned with the organisation of the future. However, the corporate culture which exists and which will underpin the achievement of the strategy is a result of the past - the history of the organisation and its people. As a result there is a culture risk which will have repercussions on the ability of the organisation to implement the desired strategy.

Buller (1988) believes that while management has become adept at handling the analytical and technical side of strategy formulation and implementation, the people side has been typically under-managed. This is supported by Hennecke (1992) who points out that organisations generally focus their attention when planning on the inanimate resources available, such as raw materials, capital and energy. Very little strategic focus is placed on the people who will make the strategies work. This has resulted in ineffective implementation of strategic plans. Davis

(1988) states that it is important to determine the readiness and receptiveness of a system or systems to change. This has to do with skills and with the capability of the organisation to change.

For Sherwood (1988, p.10) people are not simply variable costs to be managed and controlled. They are resources which must be both developed and trusted. *"Management should therefore focus its attention on enlisting people's heads (intelligence) and their hearts (caring) as integral parts of the work process and not just expect their hands to be extensions of the engineering technology."*

The historical and environmental contexts within which the organisation finds itself, therefore, have consequences for its ability to implement a desired strategy. The people, who are responsible for securing the future through their actions, are of critical importance. Their existing capabilities, world views and values will determine how they view the changes demanded of them. It is the management of views regarding change and the expectations of the people who hold them, as Walker (1992) points out, which will ensure or jeopardise the achievement of the organisational goals. Hinterhuber and Popp (1992, p.109) also point out that the greater the harmony between corporate culture and strategies, *"the higher the level of strategic management competence"*.

2.4.5 The Relationship between the Environment and Strategic Human Resource Management

The societal culture which surrounds organisations is a critical factor in the development of organisational systems, structures and processes. According to Cooke and Armstrong (1990) the goals of human resource strategies are concerned with ensuring the business strategies work. To

do so they must take into account the key human resource opportunities and constraints (Cooke and Armstrong, 1990; Dyer, 1984; Schuler and Walker, 1990). This implies, according to Baird and Meshoulam (1984), that the human resource professional must understand the nature of the internal culture of the organisation and the environment it faces. Baird and Meshoulam (1988) extend this concept by stating that organisations which do not wish to follow a life cycle which includes death must reform and renew themselves to fit the environment in which they exist.

Goodstein and Burke (1991, p.5) quote from an article in *The Wall Street Journal* which states that there is a *"New Age view of organisations as a set of open, living systems and subsystems dependent on the larger environment for survival."* As a result top management has come to realise that a critical element of organisational success is the extent to which they manage the social psychology of the workplace.

Goodstein and Burke (1991) also point out that in order both to survive and to prosper organisations must take cognisance of the external environment. They need to align themselves with the changes which are occurring and will occur in that environment. The consequences of this alignment is that the organisation will be required to change itself in order to survive.

Cultural forces, as has been pointed out previously, are part of the external environment which organisations must address. In aligning themselves with the external environment organisations must necessarily align themselves with the nature of this external culture.

2.5 AFRICAN CULTURE AND AFRICAN MANAGEMENT

South Africans have, according to Newman (1991), a long history, which dates back to the earliest colonisation, of looking toward the cultural norms of Western business. More recently Japanese influences have been felt. However, Newman (1991) believes that our own cultural diversity provides the key for co-operation in the future and should be used as a catalyst for change.

2.5.1 Lessem's Four Worlds in One

According to Lessem (1993b) there have been four sources of knowledge which have most influenced world thinking. Each of these sources have generated different cultures and philosophies and each can be correlated to one of the "four worlds".

The first of the four worlds is the world of empiricism. This has its roots in the British or "Western" culture. It has created the experiential manager and the belief that knowledge is acquired through experience. The orientation is towards action and this world values the entrepreneur and competition in business.

Rationalism which has northern continental roots has created what Lessem (1993b, p.26) calls the professional manager. In this world there is a focus on management and organisation with a functional orientation and structural perspective. The business outlook is one of coordination and hierarchy.

Lessem's (1993b) third world is one of idealism and is represented by the developmental manager. This philosophy arises out of the

Germanic (and Dutch, to an extent) traditions. Its business outlook is systemic and values industrial cooperation.

The fourth of Lessem's (1993b) worlds is the southern world of humanism. It is found in Africa as well as in Mediterranean countries such as Greece, Italy and Spain. Within this world the focus is on the family, the community and the communal. The management type is convivial and the business outlook is predicated upon the family business and on socio-economic networks.

2.5.1.1 South African management roots

Lessem (1993c) posits that the culture of business enterprise in South Africa has drawn from a number of sources, particularly its Anglo-Saxon heritage which emphasises personal enterprise. It has also drawn, to a limited extent, on the French Huguenot heritage of managerial hierarchy and, marginally, on the traditions of the co-operative German and Dutch heritage. However, it has totally ignored the indigenous, communal nature of its African heritage - the fourth of his four worlds. South Africa is communal and until South African organisations are able to capitalise and build on this communal spirit our organisations can never be successful.

The above supports Hofstede's (1980) evaluation of South African culture as evincing high power distance, weak uncertainty avoidance and strong masculine traits. However, it is at odds with his evaluation of South Africa scoring relatively strongly on individualism.

2.5.1.2 Integrating the worlds

Lessem (1993b, p.38) believes that an African management philosophy is *"a dynamic whole, an interplay between the four*

psychological or cultural types." He believes that both managerial learning and organisation development require an integration of these four elements. In addition, they provide a framework for development over time. The African management whole is, therefore, an integration of these four worlds as shown in Figure 2.5.

PHILOSOPHY	MANAGEMENT	ORIENTATION
Empiricism	Experiential	Competition
Rationalism	Professional	Coordination
Idealism	Developmental	Cooperation
Humanism	Convivial	Cocreation

Figure 2.5 The African Management Whole

Source: Adapted from Lessem, R. 1993b. "Four Worlds: The Southern African businessphere", in *African Management: Philosophies, Concepts and Applications,* Peter Christie, Ronnie Lessem, & Lovemore Mbigi (editors). Randburg: Knowledge Resources, p. 38.

The implications of this are that in developing a theory of management which is specific to South Africa, we should not be denying the history which has created this uniqueness. At the same time we should not be denying those characteristics which are inherently African and which can transform our history. The building blocks for creating a philosophy of African management

should all be utilised in this process.

2.5.2 Transcultural Management

The historical influences of colonisation have consistently imposed systems which conflicted with the African world-view. Koopman (1991a) thus believes that we should be correcting this imbalance by seeking to return to our African roots.

2.5.2.1 Challenge of the African world-view

For Koopman (1993) the challenge of the African world-view is to create systems of organisational governance which are transcultural and which satisfy both the first and third worlds which coexist in South Africa. This may mean discarding or adapting traditionally accepted human resource systems.

Koopman (1991a) suggests that grading systems are divisive and that focus should be placed on the task to be achieved by the team rather than on the role of the supervisor. This impacts the way rewards are allocated - to the team who decide how to distribute them, not to the individual - and on the notion of positional power. Positional power is conferred on an individual by his peers and subordinates. It is given by them rather than appointed by management.

Debate and relationship building become important components in this management culture. Work groups are given time to unite and to share their views through discussion. Koopman (1991a) points out that this is time consuming but necessary to gain commitment.

Finally, Koopman (1991a) points out that work groups need nurturing and stroking if they are to survive. Work groups need to feel that they have control over their own destiny. Only through this experience of an internal locus of control can they begin to move away from an external control locus.

2.5.2.2 Pragmatic humanism

Koopman (1993) stresses that organisations need to match the manner in which the organisation is structured and managed, as well as the values supported by the organisation with the needs and values of the worker. In this way the work ethic will be liberated. He further states that whites have created exclusive organisations which focus on the individual. Blacks, however, require inclusive institutions which allow them to give voice to their need to subordinate themselves to the needs of society. South African organisations are therefore, according to Koopman (1991b, p.87), *"forced to take account of the aspirations, expectations and relationships amongst people within a particular society rooted in its own value system, rather than simply superimpose our value system onto theirs."*

To do this organisations need to introduce pragmatic humanism. Koopman (1993, p.57) explains this as follows:

> *"For a man to feel fulfilled at the workplace his value system must find congruency with the form of governance over him, thereby the enterprise takes account of his norm of reciprocity, and is then able to acquire the fruits of his labour."*

2.5.3 Ubuntu

Ubuntu, according to Dhlomo (1991, p.50-51) is *"an injunction that the purpose of life for each and every person is to realise the promise of being human. Every person is a social being who can realise his ubuntu in the company of, and interaction with, other human beings."*

2.5.3.1 Ubuntu and African management

As a consequence of the centrality of human beings and their dignity and development, ubuntu gives voice and meaning to that most hackneyed of organisational statements, "Our people are our most important asset."

Potloane (1991) believes that where ubuntu exists as a management strategy, organisations are able to develop the capacity to manage cultural diversity. Ubuntu, he adds, has the power to revitalise organisational cultures which have become passive and have lost direction because it brings people together and touches the humanity deep within them.

Potloane (1991) states further that because an organisation is both a community and of a community it needs to sustain the morale of the people within it and around it and encourage their willingness. A contrary view is expressed by Drucker (1992) who states that an organisation must be in the community but not of it. From his point of view it is the nature of the organisational tasks which determine the culture of the organisation not the community in which those tasks are performed.

In these opposing views, lies some of the difference in African thinking and culture. The African spirit of ubuntu which Potloane

(1991) sees as important to the functioning of people within an organisation cannot be separated from the community in which it exists. The American (westernised view) of Drucker (1992) is able to split the two and keep them separate.

In order to fulfil the function of sustaining the morale of people in and around it, the organisation needs to foster and maintain a healthy community which entails a high level of trust. This trust must be based on honesty, consistency and equity for the benefit of all. Equity is based on merit and an environment which is non-prejudicial. At the same time the environment encourages teamwork which cuts across cultural barriers.

Oakley-Smith (1991) sees ubuntu as stressing ongoing communication and feedback which supports continuing dialogue. Within the ubuntu framework there is a stress on the importance of maintaining the integrity of the individual as well as individuality. Yet, Oakley-Smith (1991) states ubuntu values relationships and functional work teams.

According to Oakley-Smith (1991) ubuntu provides a developmental process as well as a proactive strategy with a culture which has increased constructive communication. Ubuntu develops teamwork and fosters self-help and initiative, thereby facilitating problem-solving, participative management and value sharing. By clarifying roles and expectations and by reducing racial tension ubuntu enhances commitment to the organisation.

Mbigi (1992, p.24) identifies the areas of management which are simultaneously affected by the principles of ubuntu. These are coordination, communication, competence, competitiveness

and compassion. *"The role of the HR function becomes developmental and strategic, but rooted in the spirit of Africa-based human dignity and the creation of an enterprising community."*

2.6 CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES IN THE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF PEOPLE

Newman (1991, p.26) states that *"historically, success and growth came about through valuing diversity, maximisation of potential creative growth, and strategic change management rather than the reliance on only one style, one idea or one system."* This view is supported by Khoza (1993) who points out that practising Western management techniques without question is to impose what can only be less than optimum solutions to the circumstances and challenges which face South African management. Lessem (1993b) asserts that in order to create a management philosophy to deal with our management dilemmas we need to tap into our cultural diversity and create a link with our various management attitudes and behaviours.

For Potloane (1991) cross cultural management requires more than just a knowledge of the job and the dissemination of facts. What it requires is a process of demystifying the various cultures and cultural characteristics within our society. Managers must, according to Beyer and Trice (1990), become aware of the expressive consequences of their activities. They must modify these activities to remake and remove those elements which are culturally inconsistent.

In the African context this implies a new approach which takes account of the traditions and culture of the African participants. Khoza (1991) points to what he calls a **community concept**. Business is not simply a legal entity

but a community to which the individual belongs by choice.

2.6.1 Acculturation

Acculturation refers to the process whereby people adopt a culture system which is not their own. The settings most pertinent to acculturation in South Africa are:

- migration
- urbanisation
- westernisation
- industrialisation, and
- industrial change.

The process of acculturation or culture adaptation is one where the new language, skills and knowledge critical for successful adaptation are acquired. In addition, according to du Preez (1992), the myths and stories as well a knowledge of the cultural background must be acquired. Also included are the unwritten rules or basic ways of behaving and acting.

Du Preez (1992) differentiates between "instrumental" and "integrative" acculturation. The former occurs where people adapt to another culture in order to achieve specific and limited objectives. They maintain contact with their own culture and retain the option of withdrawing to it from time to time. This option often cushions them from the stresses which occur in acculturation. Integrative acculturation occurs where people attempt to adopt the host culture completely and become indistinguishable from it.

Modernisation and urbanisation are often mistaken for acculturation.

These are, however, dimensions of acculturation and do not necessarily imply integration into the new culture.

Dickson (1992) indicates that in the U.S.A. minorities have always had to adapt to the majority culture. In South Africa, the reverse has been true. The majority of the South African workforce is forced into a process of instrumental acculturation, that is, adapting to the workplace culture with which they do not fully identify in order to survive in that environment. The option of withdrawing into their own culture and cultural patterns is retained and utilised in times of stress. As a result of not fully accepting the host culture, the workforce is less than effective and less successful than those elements which can integrate the workplace culture.

2.6.2 Value Conflict

Godsell (1992) points to the value differences which may occur when the people employed in the industrialised sectors have significantly different value orientations to those with which the industrialised sectors are imbued.

Where value conflicts exist senior employees may find themselves isolated from both their peer groups and from support and information networks. Such circumstances may stifle creativity and innovation in such people leading to conformity. Godsell (1992) adds that where value barriers exist these may lead to stereotyped leadership and may isolate organisations from their employees, customers and other stakeholders.

One solution to the problem is working for changes in the organisational culture to create "cultural synergy". This moves away from one group

or groups of values dominating the culture by incorporating the different values of the various groups within the organisation.

2.6.3 Change Management

Organisations tend to be homeostatic and, thus, resistant to change. They continually work towards maintaining a steady state (Drucker, 1992; Goodstein and Burke, 1991; Porter, 1990). When change occurs this is generally in response to external pressures rather than as a result of any internal desire for change (Goodstein and Burke, 1991). However, Porter (1990) points out that innovation and change are inextricably bound together. But, as Goodstein and Burke (1991) point out, organisations must constantly monitor their external environment and align themselves with this ever changing milieu. This process of alignment will require that the organisation will constantly change itself. Organisations must be organised for change and for the systematic surrendering of what is known and familiar (Drucker 1992).

Goodstein and Burke (1991) warn that for large scale change to occur successfully, certain fundamental elements of the organisation must be retained in order to provide a sense of stability. Therefore, Khoza (1991) recognises that in changing the organisation to take account of the African world-view, what is required is an multiple and symbiotic approach to culture. This would recognise what Western/European cultures (and others) have to offer with regard to the body of business and economic knowledge. It would simultaneously accept that there are significant lessons to be learned from the *"dynamic, evolving South African mode of dealing with the world of work"* (Khoza, 1991, p.124).

2.6.4 Managing Diversity

Schuler and Walker (1990) assert that organisations need to manage the diverse workforce by developing a knowledge and understanding of the workforce as a whole. This is not simply a moral imperative but a business and economic imperative as well. In order to compete successfully organisations need to utilise all their resources to create critical leverage in the highly competitive business environment.

There is little doubt that South Africa is a culturally diverse country. Oakley-Smith (1991) states that within our organisations homogeneity is increasingly being replaced by diversity. Nonetheless, the majority of our population have been denied meaningful participation in the economy and in the workplace. As organisations seek to change they find great difficulty in tapping the commitment and productivity of the black majority. Fuhr (1992) believes that the core of the problem has been racism and organisations have traditionally sought to address this through assimilation. Blacks have been required to change to fit the white culture of the organisation.

For Fuhr (1992) the process of managing diversity is that of creating an environment where all employees feel accepted and comfortable and which creates a sense of belonging rather than the alienation of the past. This view is supported by Human and Bowmaker-Falconer (1992) who state that managing diversity is about creating the people development systems which give employees the confidence to overcome barriers which have inhibited them from growing and developing. Managing diversity is, therefore, about the human resource systems which must be in place to allow people to overcome barriers and to develop their potential so that they can contribute effectively to their own growth and that of the organisation.

Motshabi (1993) believes that in managing diversity we should be seeking to create cultural synergy. The history of South Africa which has emphasised the values of one dominant culture at the expense of other cultures has led to a false sense of superiority and created a climate where people from other cultures have found it impossible to express themselves. The challenge, according to Motshabi (1993), is to reorient our cultural symbols so that they express a new national personality. This is affected through the analysis of the fundamental assumptions of all our cultures to enable us to enter each others' worlds. It also requires and examination of how Eurocentric management practices can be harmonised with African approaches.

2.7 CONCLUSION

The organisation is not simply a goal-oriented, single purpose institution. It is, for Hinterhuber and Popp (1992), a school of life and a microcosm of the world. As such it cultivates tolerance and confidence, aesthetics and culture. All this is accomplished within the framework of a common corporate philosophy and strategy. Notwithstanding, in an increasingly competitive environment organisations are not easily able to distinguish themselves. Relative parity has been reached in terms of technology. Beaty and Ulrich (1991) identify the ability of an organisation to conceptualise and manage change as one way of achieving competitive advantage.

Change for South African organisations must come through the way they align themselves with the external environment and its culture, and thereby, the culture of the organisational members. For Lessem (1993b) the template for an African management approach is combining the dimensions which coexist in the African Businessphere. The adjacent cultural influences are complementary forces which should be utilised for effective management of

people.

In order to manage change effectively organisations must have a fuller understanding of the national culture within which these organisations exist and operate. While theories regarding South African national culture abound, the only research which has been undertaken in this field is that done by Hofstede (1980) more than twenty years ago. Current research is required to build upon and to provide some validation of current theories.

An objective of this research was to approach the notion of a South African national culture without any pre-conceptions of what the elements of that culture are, that is, to establish a basis for understanding our national culture from the perspective of the research sample. Having identified the elements of South African national culture, it was a further objective of this research to apply those elements to the theory of strategic human resource management in order to determine whether and in what way the practice of strategic human resource management should be adapted to ensure the effective management of human resources within South African organisations.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 PROPOSITIONS

Arising out of the literature are two propositions. These are:

1) There are features of our South African culture that are perceived to differentiate it from other national cultures and that can be identified.

2) These can be utilised and built upon to create organisations which are congruent with the society in which they operate.

It was the intention of this research to test these propositions and to develop a framework for culturally congruent strategic human resource management.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions which emanate out of these propositions and which this research sought to answer were:

1) **Arising out of the perceptions and experience of the respondents are there features of South African culture that they perceive as differentiating it from other cultures? If so, how do they define those features and the core values which govern them?**

This question sought to determine the extent or otherwise of perceived homogeneity in culture within the South African population and to identify the nature of the culture/cultures which exist nationally. In addition, this question sought to determine whether South African culture is perceived as sufficiently different to other national cultures to warrant examining alternative approaches to the management of people.

2) **Given the underlying assumptions that govern the culture of people in organisations, what influence does this culture have on the way people behave in organisations?**

This question sought to establish whether the demands which organisations place on the behaviour on their members conflict with members' value systems and their core assumptions about the way people should behave and interact. The question also sought to determine whether this conflict is detrimental to the performance both of organisational members and the organisation itself.

3) **Should the systems, structures and processes in operation in organisations be altered to take advantage of the cultural features identified and, if so, how?**

With this question, the researcher sought to determine the extent to which current, accepted practices within organisations should be modified to take account of the cultural features identified and in what forms these modifications should take place.

3.3 NATURE OF THE RESEARCH

The research was qualitative in nature with the objective of identifying differentiating South Africa characteristics of the human capital at the disposal of organisations. It aimed to set up propositions and models which would require further testing in future research.

The underlying thrust of qualitative research is to interpret action, events and perspectives from the viewpoint and perceptions of those being investigated. A qualitative approach, according to Schmitt and Klimoski (1991, p.117), allows for a rich and in-depth description of the phenomena being researched. It is based on the assumption that *"the data of interest must be generated from the participant's point of view inasmuch as it is the subjective interpretation of reality that accounts for much of the variation in the phenomenon of interest"* Therefore, Bryman, Bresnen, Beardsworth and Keil (1988, p.16) state that qualitative research can be productive *"not simply because it takes the actor's viewpoint as a central focus, but because, in doing so, it may bring to the surface issues and topics which are important yet which are omitted by relying on the researcher as the source of what is relevant."*

According to Daft (1983) qualitative research is more concerned with meaning than with measurement. Bryman, *et al.*, (1988) suggest that the utilisation of qualitative research methodologies in the study of leadership may introduce a wider range of variables into such investigations. This contention arises out of their research into leadership styles undertaken using intensive interviewing.

Schmitt and Klimoski (1991) indicate that qualitative methods are often used to study the causes and consequences of culture. Schmitt and Klimoski (1991, p. 152) cite a number of research studies where qualitative research

methods were utilised. *"Schall (1983) used a combination of group interviews, observations, archival records (e.g. memos), questionnaires, and face-to face interviews with senior managers to uncover the cultural values and assumptions associated with communication rules and patterns in an organisation..... Similarly, other investigators have been interested in aspects of culture as diverse as the meaning, nature, and impact on behaviour of organisational time dimensions of work (Schriber & Gutel, 1987), management ethics (Brady, 1986), and differentiation in the context of corporate acquisitions and mergers (Nahavandi & Malekzadeh, 1988)."*

3.3.1 Grounded Theory

The underlying basis for this research was to develop a grounded theory for strategic human resource management in South Africa. This implied that the theory should be derived directly from the world experiences of the people to whom it was most relevant (Walker, 1985; Jones, 1985a; Marshall and Rossman, 1989). According to Bryman, *et al.*, (1988) the development of constructs derives from an exploration of the various meanings that people attribute and ascribe to these constructs. Consequently, the concepts which are developed are grounded in the respondents' own experiences of the objects and situations which pertain to these concepts.

This research, therefore, sought to elicit the experiences, views and perspectives of the sample through the use of depth interviews.

3.3.2 Depth Interviewing

Depth interviewing has been described in the literature as a conversation

with a purpose (Schmitt and Klimoski, 1991; Walker, 1985; Marshall and Rossman, 1989; Jones, 1985a). According to these authors depth interviews differ from structured interviews in that, while they do have a schedule of questions to be asked in each interview, the methodology is a dynamic process which allows for flexibility in permitting the researcher to *"pursue productive and appropriate lines of enquiry"* (Schmitt and Klimoski, 1991 p.139).

Depth interviews seek the participant's perspective and explore this with appropriate questions arising from the interview context. This is in contrast to highly structured interviews with a fixed questionnaire schedule which, in setting up a pre-determined schedule of questions, focuses the interview on those areas the researcher thinks are relevant and may ignore those which the respondent considers pertinent to the subject.

> *"Qualitative research methodologies seek to learn about the social world in ways that do not rigidly structure the direction of enquiry and learning within simplifying, acontextual, a priori definitions."* (Jones, 1985a, p.46).

Schmitt and Klimoski (1991) contend that qualitative research interviews are by definition relatively unstructured. The researcher will have objectives for the interview, a list of potentially useful questions as well as an outline of the order in which these questions may be posed. In terms of these constraints, the interviews conducted for this research were supported by a standardised introduction. A set of broad questions was referred to as an aide-de-memoir to the researcher (see Appendix I). The purpose of the interviews was to develop constructs and identify issues.

3.3.3 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Methodology

The dynamism of the depth interview provides a face-to face encounter with the informant where large amounts of expansive and contextual data may be obtained quickly. Because the interview establishes a personal relationship with the subject, it facilitates co-operation from the respondent. The methodology also allows the researcher to adjust lines of questioning and simplifies access for immediate follow-up. In addition, it provides the researcher access to subtle and important information contained in quality and tone of voice and body language.

While the dynamic nature of the process is one of the strengths of the methodology, it is also one of its liabilities in that it precludes (or certainly makes difficult) standardisation. Jones (1985a) identifies other weaknesses of the depth interview including that:

- Data is open to mis-interpretation due to cultural differences,
- It is dependent on the researcher's opportunity and characteristics and on the co-operation of a small group of key informants,
- Data is subject to observer effects which may be obtrusive and reactive,
- The process is highly dependent on the ability of the researcher to be resourceful, systematic and honest, and to control bias.

3.4 SAMPLING

A basic premise of this research was that organisations are Eurocentric in nature and are dominated by Western thinking and values. Schein (1990, p.29) states that *"culture controls the manager through the automatic filters that bias the manager's perceptions, thoughts and feelings. As culture arises and gains strength, it becomes pervasive and influences everything the manager does, even his own thinking and feeling."*

As a result of their socialisation, past experience and, therefore, world-view, managers in traditional business structures were viewed as mired in their "Eurocentricism" and, thus, unable to perceive and/or recognise any critical differences between their own culture and that of the majority of the workforce. Therefore, it was this researcher's belief that approaching traditional business structures in order to identify differentiating features of South African culture and the way in which this should impact on organisational systems, structures and processes would not elicit any fresh insights nor new information. Traditional business structures were seen as "part of the problem".

The sample was, therefore, drawn from a population that can be viewed as alternative to the traditional business enterprise, such as:

- Non-Government Organisations
- Consultancies/Business Service Organisations
- Academic Institutions

These organisations and individuals were seen to be less dominated by Western culture and the values this implied. In addition, it was the researcher's contention that these organisations were more in touch with the broader population and the aspirations of the larger workforce.

3.4.1 Criteria for Selection

The sample of interviewees needed to meet the following criteria:

- Educated (preferably a post-graduate degree)
- Have known dealings with a wide range of organisations and have interacted with a variety of levels of people within those organisational structures
- Be willing and able to conduct the interview in English

3.4.2 Sample Selection

This research used a non-probability sampling techniques which relies on the judgement, insight and skill of the researcher. Groebner and Shannon (1985) indicate that non-probability sampling provides the only feasible way of sampling where there is no way of estimating the total population. Thus there is no way of ensuring that any subject or element of the population will be included in the sample. There is, therefore, no statistical method of verifying whether the sample is representative of the population.

In selecting a sample from the population a convenience sampling approach was used. Convenience sampling relies on the availability or convenience of subjects for their inclusion in the sample (Groebner and Shannon, 1985). The sample was selected from lists of names supplied as references. The researcher started with an initial list of people within the desired organisations with whom she was acquainted. She was also provided with potential respondents by a variety of sources including

lecturers, friends and work colleagues. In addition she approached a number of people on a list of organisations involved in Voter Education. Through this list she made contact with one person who provided her with a list of her personal contacts in other Non-Government organisations.

The researcher then selected names from the lists obtained from the various sources balancing racial and gender characteristics. Appointments for interviews were set up.

3.4.3 Sample Size

In developing grounded theory, some flexibility was required in determining the sample size. A balance needed to be created between too few interviews to establish valid and reliable constructs and too many where no new data is elicited. It was, therefore, the intention of this research to conduct no fewer than 10 interviews and no more than 30. At the completion of the interview stage 15 respondents had been interviewed. The length of the interviews ranged from ¾ hour to 1½ hours.

Each respondent was contacted telephonically and the nature of the research explained. All respondents were interviewed at their place of work.

3.5 ANALYSIS OF DATA

3.5.1 Content Analysis

All interviews were recorded and transcribed (see Appendix IV for transcriptions). Themes and constructs were elicited from the depth interviews by developing conceptual categories as they emerged from the data. The themes and constructs thus elicited were extracted directly from the contents of the interview with no reference to the theory base. The objective was to establish the world-view of the respondents themselves without the intervention of preconceived notions of what was likely to be of importance. This required a process of listening to the taped interviews a number of times and carefully reading the transcripts to enable the researcher to interpret remarks in the context they were made.

Kelly (1986) states that insight is a critical part of the process. It is required to enable to researcher *"to penetrate to the core"* (p.60) what each respondent says. It is also required to evaluate what has been dwelt on, glossed over or ignored.

3.5.2 Data Mapping

To aid this, the technique of data (cognitive) mapping was also used. Jones (1985b) describes this as the process of *"modelling persons' beliefs in diagrammatic form"* (p.59). Cognitive mapping is composed of two main elements. The first is the interviewee's *"concepts of ideas in the form of descriptions of entities, abstract or concrete, in the situation being considered"* (Jones, 1985b, p.60). The second element is the relationship between these ideas shown in diagrammatic form

using arrows and lines to indicate relationships.

The creation of the data maps (see Appendix III) required a number of steps as described below.

- **Step 1**
  Each interview transcript was read at least three times. The reading required viewing the interview as an entity on its own without reference to any of the other interviews.

- **Step 2**
  On a further reading of the interview, related concepts and ideas were highlighted by colour coding these using a set of felt-tipped colouring pens. Again each interview was treated separately without reference to any other interview or any concept which could be elicited from the literature.

- **Step 3**
  The colour coded groups of themes and concepts were transposed to a large sheet of paper (flip-chart paper was used for the purposes of this exercise). Within the groups each concept and theme was written down in the order in which it occurred within the interview. Relationships to concepts or themes within other groups was indicated using arrows.

- **Step 4**
  The groups of constructs and themes were re-ordered so that the relationships between groups became clearer. In addition, the sequence of thought between constructs and themes within groups was re-ordered to illustrate the progression of thoughts and ideas as they emerged during the interview. Wherever

possible the actual words used by each respondent have been reproduced within the data maps. Where similar concepts and/or ideas were expressed a number of times these are only represented once within the map. Some concepts have been paraphrased to ensure clarity and/or succinctness.

- Step 5

  The final step involved checking the groupings and final concepts which were abstracted from the data map against the interview as a whole. This was done to ensure that the data map retained the overriding message/s of the interview.

The individual data maps present a summary of the interview contents in diagrammatic form. Concepts and constructs which are related or which present a progression of thought around one theme are boxed together. The arrows represent linked concepts and themes as the respondents viewed them. The start of each interview is shown in ***bold italics and is underlined***. However, the remainder of the data map does not represent the constructs in the order in which they occurred during the interview. During the interviews respondents referred to concepts already discussed or introduced new concepts which linked to others mentioned earlier. These have been grouped together to provide coherence and completeness. The interviews generally produced between six and eight groups of concepts.

The map was used to understand the way in which the respondent viewed the problem and made sense of this. From this initial map constructs or groups of constructs were highlighted. At the end of this process the researcher reviewed the maps to draw out *"clusters of constructs and relationships that seem to form the substantive categories in the data based on the concrete concepts of the respondent"* (Jones,

1985b, p.62). The final step in the process was to examine all the diagrams to produce a summary of the categories and their relationships. The results of the interviews as determined through the data maps are discussed in Chapter Four.

3.5.3 Value of the Methodology

The methodology used for this research is new and, therefore, requires some comment regarding its effectiveness and limitations. While the methodology is time consuming and very heavily reliant on the ability of the researcher both to probe during the interview and to appraise the results thereof, it is this researcher's opinion that the methodology yielded results which would not have been possible under any other circumstances.

The respondents were able to examine the subject presented to them in their own way, thus, providing substantial comment and depth. Greater structure within the interview process would have limited the extent to which the respondents could have examined the subject. Structure would also have guided the respondents to respond to the researcher's vision as opposed to allowing them to explore and present their own world-views.

The open-ended interview allowed the respondents the time to think through what they wanted to say. It also allowed them to repeat themselves. This repetition was not necessarily a draw back as in harking back to a concept already discussed the respondents often brought an added perspective to the discussion.

A danger within the unstructured interview is that the respondent will

direct the interview towards a lecture on his or her favourite topic. The interviewer has always to be alert to this and balance the probability of getting something valuable from the lecture against the need to direct the respondent to the real subject of the research.

The data mapping process was, in the opinion of this researcher, an extremely valuable tool in allowing her to make sense of the mass of data at hand. It facilitated the ordering of the data into coherent and manageable portions and yielded the relationships often hidden within the large amounts of seemingly unrelated information.

3.5.4 Cross-Referencing

Further analysis of the data was undertaken by cross-referencing the themes and constructs which emerged with those that emerged from the literature. This analysis is discussed in Chapter Five.

Once the data had been analysed the researcher developed a model for strategic human resource management which drew on the specific features of South African human capital extrapolated from the interviews. The model (presented in Chapter Five) is of a preliminary nature and requires testing in future research.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of the research results and the analysis applied in the research design. The sample demographics are detailed followed by a discussion of the data analysis techniques employed and the corresponding results. The results are discussed and interpreted in Chapter Five.

4.2 SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 15 respondents were interviewed for this research. The racial and gender breakdown of the sample is detailed below in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Gender and Racial Characteristics of Sample

RACE	SEX		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	
ASIAN	1	-	1
BLACK	5	3	8
COLOURED	-	1	1
WHITE	2	3	5
TOTAL	8	7	15

The purpose of this breakdown by race and sex is to determine whether there was any difference in the perceptions regarding culture and its impact on the management of people within business organisations across race and/or gender group.

Table 4.2 provides a breakdown of the sample in terms of the types of organisations from which it was drawn.

Table 4.2

Organisational Affiliation of Sample

TYPE OF ORGANISATION	TOTAL
NON-GOVERNMENT	9
CONSULTANCY/BUSINESS SERVICE	4
ACADEMIC	1
OTHER	1
TOTAL	15

It should be noted that one interview respondent did not come from the categories of organisation from which the sample was selected. However, because the respondent is a Traditional Leader, it was felt that his knowledge and understanding of the community would be of value to this research.

Appendix II contains a list of all respondents and outlines their background.

4.3 INDIVIDUAL DATA MAPS

Each interview was analysed and the interrelationships between constructs

and ideas is shown in the Individual Data Maps (Appendix III). What becomes most obvious from the data maps is that the concepts and constructs which emerged are, for the most part, linked. The commencement of each interview is shown in ***underlined, bold italics*** and the process and relationships indicated by arrows.

The discussion which follows represents the concepts and ideas as expressed by the respondents themselves. The researcher has used words and phrases directly from the interviews wherever possible. At this stage, the purpose is not to interpret the results but to present the subject as the interview respondents viewed it. The opinions expressed are those of the interview respondents. The researcher has interceded only to combine concepts which appeared in more than one interview and to express these as clearly as possible. However, representing the respondents view-points has been of paramount importance.

In addition, the discussion that follows does not always indicate the number of respondents who identified a specific concept or idea. In many instances specific concepts were mentioned by more than one respondent. However, in a number of cases a concept was specifically mentioned by only one respondent but was alluded to or implied by a number of others. In such instances it is not always feasible to indicate the number of respondents who alluded to the concept or theme. Certain notions have, therefore, been presented as general statements. These ideas, however, emerged as strong perceptions from at least one respondent and were often supported by impressions gained from other interviews.

While some issues discussed below may appear to be stated as fact, they are, nonetheless, the perceptions of the individuals who stated them. In some instances the interview respondents have stated their perceptions as if these are accepted truths. From the perspectives of the respondents their

perceptions are their reality and have been accepted as such by the researcher.

4.4 FEATURES OF SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL CULTURE

This research sought to answer three questions (refer to Chapter Three). The first of these questions sought to identify the nature of the culture/s which exist nationally and the extent of perceived homogeneity within the South African national culture/s.

In determining respondent perceptions regarding features of South African culture, ten of the respondents distinguished between two dominant cultures within the South African environment. These cultures run parallel to each other within our society and, at times, are intertwining and interlinked. While the two cultures can be broadly characterised as Western/European/ White and Black, there is a danger in assuming that these can be identified purely on the basis of colour or race. Culture emerges in the patterns of life of a group of people and many other factors other than race play a part in determining any individual's culture. These factors include:

- Geographic location
- Linguistic group
- Extent of urbanisation
- Level of education
- Wealth

One respondent specifically mentioned, and a second respondent implied, that there is a danger in seeking quick commonalities among what appears, on the face of things, to be homogenous groups. There is a problem in assuming either black or white racial homogeneity. The historic divisions on

racial grounds within South African society has obscured the sub-cultures which exist. A third respondent expressed the fear of exaggerating what is seen as African culture.

Nonetheless, these dominant cultures can, broadly, be associated with racial groupings in that the Black culture is more likely to be found among South African blacks and has emerged out of the experience and history of the indigenous population of South Africa. The Western/European/White culture has its origins in the roots, history and experience of the colonisers of Africa and is the more common culture found among white South Africans. This latter culture is also perceived to be the dominating culture within South Africa. As a result, this research has chosen to label these cultures as a "Colonial" culture and an "African" culture.

The discussion which follows analyses the perceptions of the dominant cultures within South African societies as expressed by the interview respondents.

4.4.1 African Culture

African culture is seen by respondents as synchronistic and integrated. It is not a culture that easily creates compartments. Therefore, the various elements of this culture, as shown in Figure 4.1 are interrelated and, while elements may be seemingly contradictory, are able to co-exist without incongruity. Contradictory elements are synchronised and integrated into an acceptable and understandable whole.

In viewing African culture it is difficult to find a starting point because of its integrative nature. Each element relates to every other element.

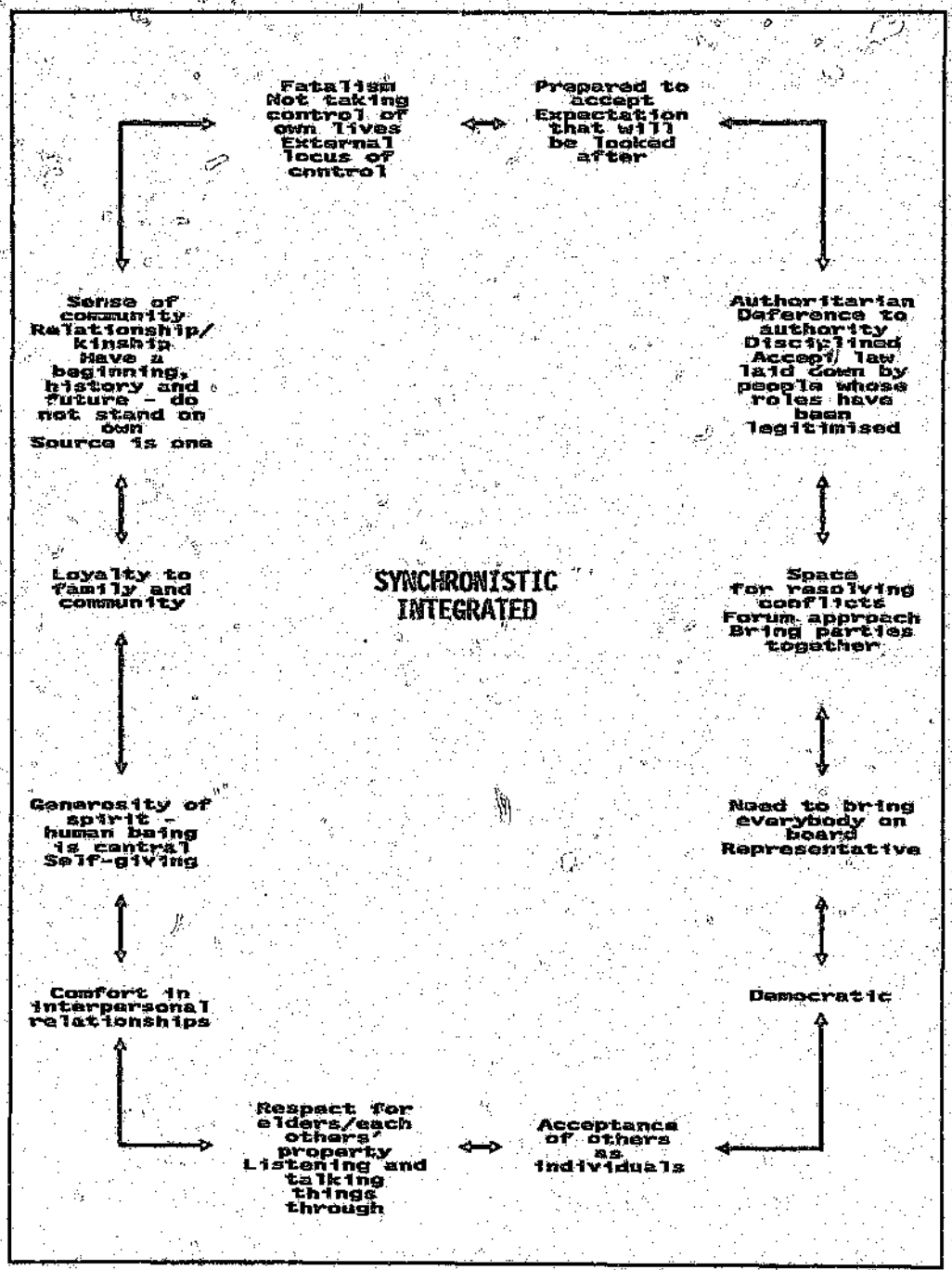

Figure 4.1 African Culture

Perhaps the most dominant feature of this culture is the sense of

relationship and kinship which exists with other people. The terms *brothers and sisters* was frequently used by the black respondents. In querying the use of this term one respondent indicated that there are no concepts such as cousins, aunts or uncles in black languages. Cousins are brothers and sisters, while uncles are fathers and aunts are mothers. As another respondent indicated, growing up in an extended family environment where cousins are treated equally and all family members eat from the same pot, the relationships become closer and, in some ways, blurred.

People feel a closeness towards not only extended family members but others in the broader community as well. This closeness stems in part from a basic sense of powerlessness over their own lives, that their lives and their fate is dependent on forces outside of their control. Therefore, to gain security, there is a need to rely on others in the community. The need to survive in adverse circumstances creates a concomitant need to rely on others. The group gives the individual the power to confront the environment. As a result, people display a loyalty to others which extends beyond the immediate family. However, with this loyalty comes an expectation that each person will, in turn, be looked after by others.

Because of this external locus of control and because of the loyalty to and reliance upon others, there is a willingness to accept, and a deference to, authority. People within this culture are willing to accept the rules and discipline laid down by others whose roles have been legitimised within a specific situation. However, in opposition to this acceptance of authority, there is a democratic spirit which requires that all the relevant people are included when issues of importance are to be discussed or decided upon. The authoritarian and disciplinary approach does not conflict with an acceptance of collaboration and cooperation nor with consideration for others.

Problem solving and conflict resolution involve extensive communication, negotiation and discussion and are, therefore, slow and time consuming. The culture provides the space and the mechanisms for conflict resolution forums and procedures which ensure that everybody who is required is brought on board. However, once a decision has been reached there is, as one respondent indicated, an almost ruthless application of the decision.

As a result, there is a concurrent respect for and acceptance of the individual who is listened to and given the time, space and platform to express his views. Experience and how one has lived out one's life, in particular, are valued which manifests itself in a respect for one's elders - their experience and wisdom. This respect for one's elders is also bound up with the fatalistic approach of the culture which values the ways and wisdom of ancestors who have the ability to affect day to day life. There is an acceptance and a reluctance to challenge situations and find new modes of operating.

Together with the respect which underlies people's relationships with each other, there is a comfort which people gain from interpersonal relationships. Because the culture is both oral and an aural, much time is spent in talking and listening and in cultivating human bonds. While the community plays an important part in providing the individual with an anchor, it is the relationships which each person forms with others which are highly prized.

Ubuntu which embodies this respect for and acceptance of other people is a real phenomenon and its values are lived out. As a result of ubuntu, people are less likely to be stereotyped or pigeon-holed. People are valued for themselves as opposed to the outward and material trappings of success. One respondent, however, felt that ubuntu is breaking down

and currently does not extend much beyond the immediate family.

In cultivating those relationships where the human being is central, there is generosity of spirit and element of self-giving which sustains those relationships and which shores up the uncertainties of life. This spirit of giving is embodied in the Sotho term and concept *Letsema*. Letsema is a system which exists in rural areas where the community contributes in assisting any of its members having an important task to perform and which cannot be managed with the resources at his disposal. Examples of such tasks would be harvesting a field or building a barn. When such tasks have to be performed the community will come together to assist with the understanding that they will be rewarded by way of food and drink for the time which they give up. They may be given a small share of the fruits of their labours in the form of a portion of the harvest. However, there is always the understanding that complete ownership belongs to the person being assisted and that when they are in need they will receive the same level of help.

The stokvels, which are perhaps the urban extension of letsema, promote a basis for mutual help and support. They also foster and bolster the links of members, predominantly women, to their communities.

The individual is integrated into his community and is at one with the community. There is an alignment of the needs of the individual with the needs of the community. In this lies synchronisity and integration.

4.4.2 Colonial Culture

The culture which this research calls Colonial, stems out of the history

and experience of the white colonisers whose roots can be found in a western or European orientation. The history of Africa, as indicated by one respondent, is coloured by colonisation during which process a new culture was imposed on Africa. The culture which was brought to African by the colonial forces and which has adapted into its own form in South Africa, is based on a doctrine of supremacy. As a result other cultures were, and still are, undervalued. Figure 4.2 conceptualises the elements of this culture.

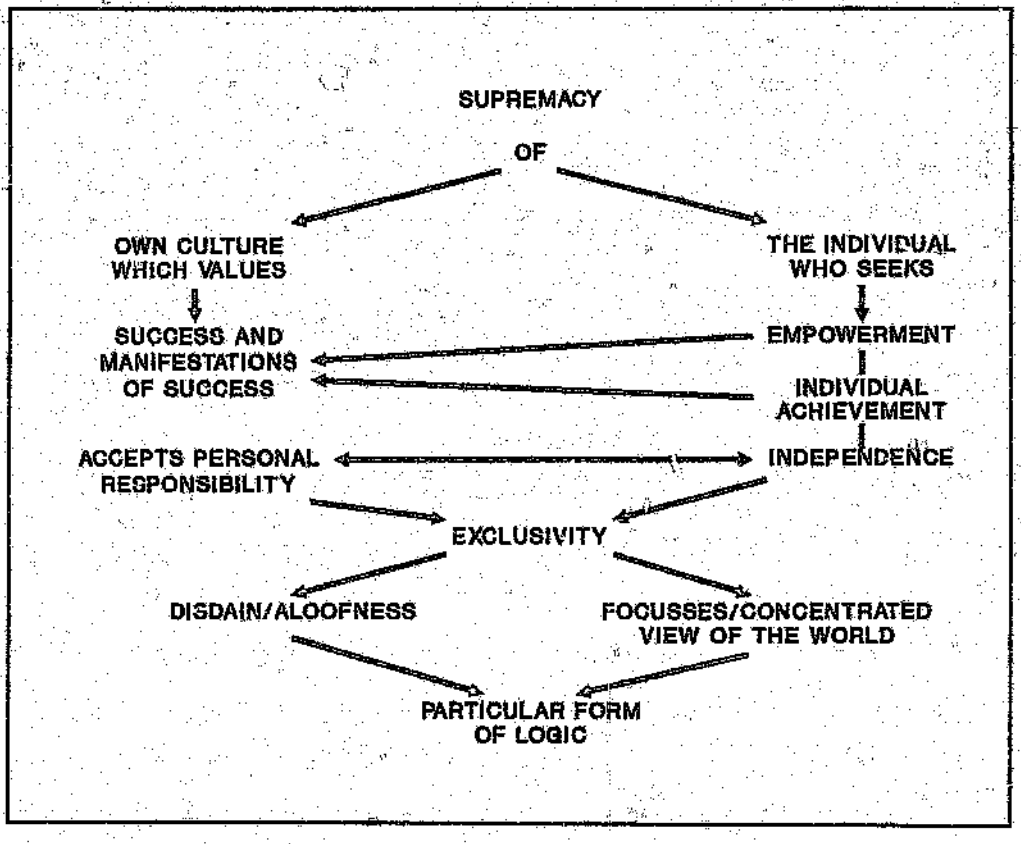

Figure 4.2 Colonial Culture

Interview respondents tended to dwell less in describing the Colonial culture. The impression gained by the researcher was that the interview

respondents felt that this was a culture with which we are all familiar. This culture has been given precedence in our national lifestyle and requires less thought and discussion to understand it.

The Colonial culture, from the perspective of the respondents, is one where individuality is valued above most other things. The individual is empowered to discover his or her own abilities and in doing so to achieve for himself. This is a culture of the self-made man who prizes his achievements and the rewards that they bring for him and his immediate family. The outward trappings of success provide the basis for judging the worth of any individual.

A corollary of this search for independence and achievement is that people within this culture tend to be blinkered. They have a focused, concentrated view of life and the world. One effect of this world-view is a sense of exclusivity where others and their world-view may be ignored and, possibly, disdained. Another consequence is a sense of detachment or aloofness which people from this culture may appear to exhibit.

This culture accepts a particular form of logic which endeavours to fit events and phenomena into a framework. This framework seeks to provide a rationale for the world which accepts personal responsibility. Because of the preeminence of individuality, personal actualisation and personal responsibility, people within this culture accept as a basic tenet the freedom of the individual to express himself and are less inclined to set and accept limits and, thus, rules and discipline.

The Colonial culture as perceived by the interview respondents is driven by the individual as opposed to the African culture which is driven by the community. The individual values himself as opposed to valuing

others and their humanity. As a result, people within the Colonial culture appear more closed and isolated from their fellow human beings than do people in the African culture.

4.4.3 Cultural Tension

As a result of the inherent differences between the two dominant cultures within South Africa, and because of the historical domination by one culture and the undervaluing of the other, the interview respondents perceive an inherent tension between the two.

The structural nature of South African society is one where we have come to rely on one sector of the population - those from a Colonial culture - for skills and for the achievements of the nation. This has contributed to the belief that people whose cultural orientation is African are unable to contribute. Blacks have, as a result, tended to underrate their own culture and languages.

Apartheid has succeeded in what it set out to do, that is, in keeping people apart. In so doing, it has contributed to the lack of knowledge and understanding which each cultural grouping has of the other. Two respondents indicated that people from an African cultural orientation are more likely to have some knowledge and understanding of the Colonial culture. They have been required to enter into the Colonial world and interface with a wider range of people than have the Colonials. People within the Colonial culture, because of their dominant position within our society, have maintained their distance from exposure to other cultures and have not, thus, learnt about these.

One respondent stated that whites are damaged people in that they have

never been able to relate to the black world. In contrast, blacks have moved in both worlds and been able to relate, to some extent, to both these worlds. Nonetheless, the separation which has existed historically in South African society has engendered mistrust and suspicion between the various cultural groups. Blacks have felt that they have been used. They have been tools of white Colonial society, a means to the ends of the people within the Colonial culture rather than co-partners.

The structural divisions within our society have not allowed for a commonality of experience between the various cultures and sub-cultures. One respondent stated that these structural divisions, which do not necessarily run along racial or linguistic lines, will continue to hamper convergence. In this respondent's view, the best one can hope for is an understanding of each other's reality.

Adding to the tension between the dominant cultures is their inherent differences as summarised in Figure 4.3.

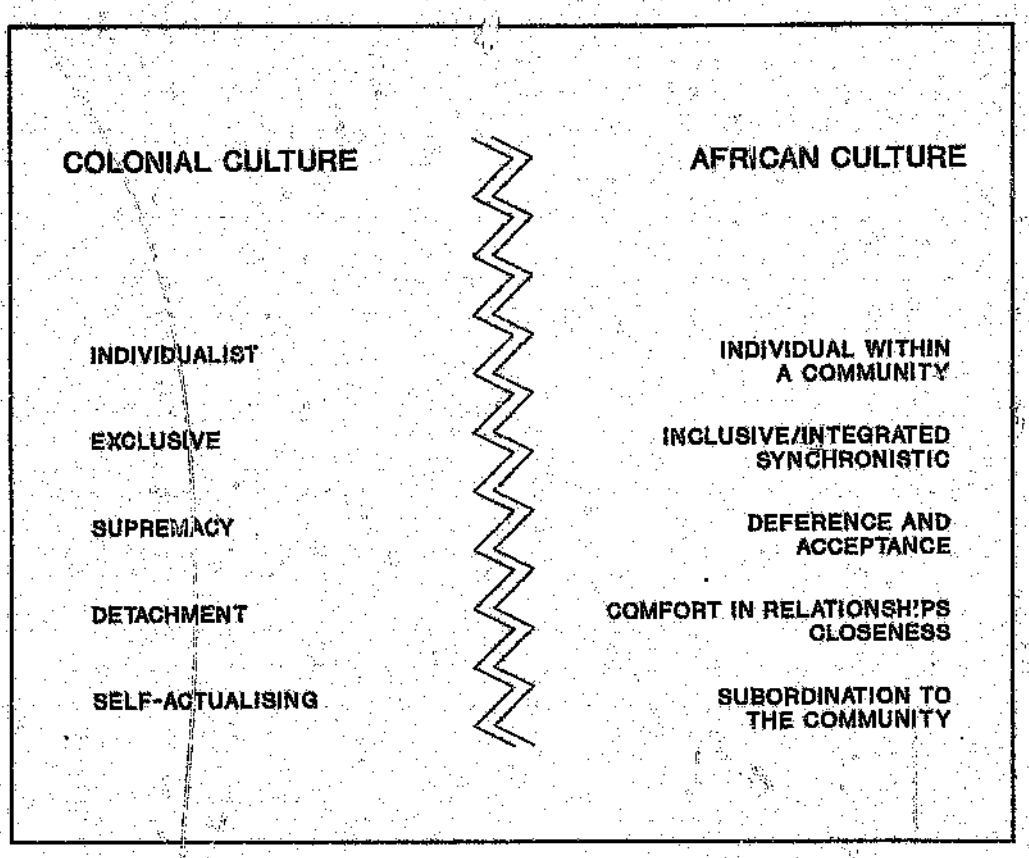

Figure 4.3 Differences between Dominant Cultures

While there are inherent differences, there are elements of similarity between the two cultures (see Figure 4.4). Interview respondents identified as a common feature the paternalistic and patriarchal nature of both cultures. They are male dominated and those in leadership roles seek to prescribe to their followers. Both cultures are perceived to foster compliance and passivity - an unquestioning acceptance of authority. The sexist nature of both cultures was a further commonality perceived by three female respondents and one male respondent. Both dominant cultures are perceived to undervalue the role, contribution and potential of women.

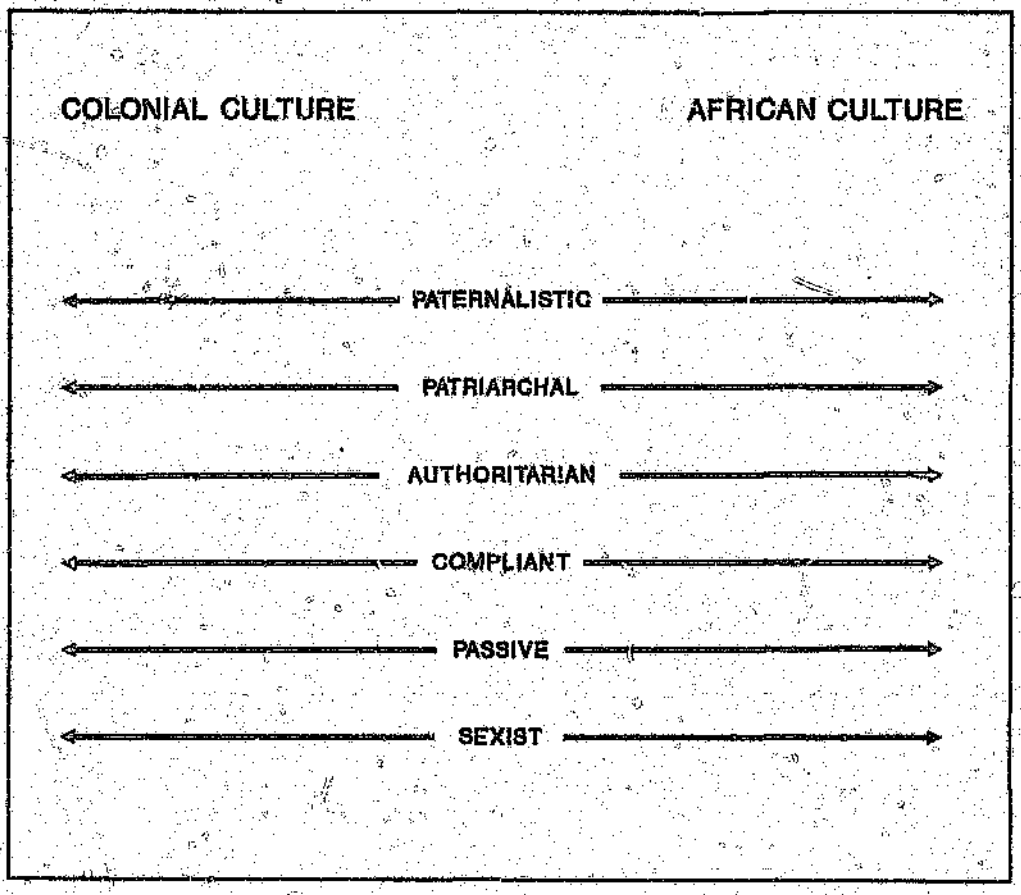

Figure 4.4 Commonalities among Dominant Cultures

One respondent indicated that the traditions and values of the past must be maintained even as society changes. There is a need to create a balance between the demands of a changing society and the concomitant needs of people for the traditions and values which have guided life. These customs still hold value and importance for significant sectors of the population.

Despite these differences the cultures are coming together. There is a new culture which is emerging in South African society which is an amalgam of the two dominant cultures but which is heavily influenced

by the Colonial culture. One of the driving forces for the emergence of this new culture is the contact and interface which takes place in the workplace.

Values and customs among people from the African culture are changing. They are forgoing their traditional beliefs. However, even for those who have adopted the Colonial culture there is a need to return to the African culture and the relationships which it provides. This is done by returning to the townships to meet and mingle with people in social settings.

As the dominant cultures start interfacing and incorporating elements from each other, it is the western culture which is being more readily adopted by African. This creates the problem where people from the African orientation fear losing their culture. They fear being smothered by the Colonial culture. As values change, people become confused and distrustful exacerbating the already existing tensions between the cultures.

Historically and, to a large extent still, any interface between the two cultural groupings has only taken place in the workplace. It is here that people are required to be together and the workplace provides the only forum for a majority of people to get to know others from a different cultural orientation. However, the South African business-sphere is heavily influenced by western and European thinking and structures. Consequently, it is representative of the Colonial culture rather than of the African culture.

4.4.4 Divergent Views Regarding Culture

Five of the interview respondents did not identify separate cultural groupings as discussed above. Of these five respondents, one did not identify specific features of culture at all, but rather discussed the implications of change for South Africa.

Three of the remaining four respondents viewed cultural differences as arising from factors such as education and lifestyle. Cultural differences, in the view of these respondents, are likely to disappear the more homogenous people are with respect to levels of education, extent of urbanisation and lifestyle which may be influenced by wealth. The fourth respondent did not perceive there to be much difference in culture between racial groups particularly with respect to the concept of fatalism and authoritarianism. Both these aspects were felt to be prevalent in South African society as a whole and indicative of the way in which this society has developed. These issues are also a factor of the stage of development of South Africa in relation to western, industrialised nations. In the view of this respondent, South Africa can be likened to western societies of 100 years ago as they entered into industrialisation.

It should be noted that only one of these four respondents was black. The overwhelming impression gained by the researcher in the case of two of the respondents was that they were loath to apply any racial categorisation to their evaluation of the question.

4.5 THE CURRENT REALITY WITHIN ORGANISATIONS

The second research question sought to establish whether there is a conflict

between the demands which organisations place on the behaviour of their members and the value systems and core assumptions which these members bring with them into the organisation.

While the cultures within organisations are influenced by the backgrounds and values which each individual brings to the organisation, South African organisations are perceived by the interview respondents to be heavily influenced by Western/European thinking and by the culture of the Colonial grouping. Consequently, organisations value individuality and individual success.

Respondents identified a number of negative features of the culture and modus operandi of South African organisations.

South African organisations were perceived by seven respondents to cultivate a culture of compliance. People are not encouraged to take decisions and are actively discouraged from doing so because of a culture of blame which punishes wrong decisions. Top management tends to bypass middle management who then feel isolated and resist change but who must still implement the decisions made by senior management.

Management in business is perceived to have a heavy top-down approach which does not acknowledge employees' prerogatives to know or to have an explanation. As a result organisations have encouraged *"I/It"* relationships, that is one-way relationships where there is no real personal contact, as opposed to *"I/Thou"* relationships. One respondent identified what he felt to be perhaps the most glaring example of the denial of humanity of 'African' people, that is where European names have been imposed upon 'Africans' where their names have been "unpronounceable" to the Colonial tongue. This is an extreme of the subjugation of one culture by another.

Business is satisfied with a minimum of contact and a maximum of execution. Management is perceived to believe it has a propriorial right to the business and ignores the contribution of the workforce in achieving any successes.

The problems which face organisations are often a result of systems and the way management is structured. Management, and senior management in particular, is perceived as not facing the realities of the South African environment. Power structures are dominated and controlled by a white male elite which is reluctant to share information.

Two respondents specifically mentioned that they do not perceive any real degree of strategic thinking within organisations. Change appears to be as a result of caucused decisions as opposed to real strategic evaluation of the environment. Models of change and operation are adopted because they appear to be in favour at the time, rather than because they are appropriate to the organisation and its needs. The vision of top management is often not spelt out. As a result the above issues, change is often not successful.

South African organisations are perceived by respondents to be remiss in their development of people. The workforce as a whole is under-utilised and under-developed. In addition there has been little investment in technology. Shareholders and management seek maximum profits at the expense of investment in all resources.

Three respondents stated that South African business organisations are white, male dominated. Two of these respondents, both white-females, perceive organisations to be sexist. However, there is agreement that women tend to collaborate with this and even support sexism. Women do not take responsibility. They are content to remain in supportive roles where they know they are successful. They are unwilling to take the risks attached to front line positions. In addition, they collude in sabotaging other successful

women who break out of the mould.

South African organisations are perceived to be particularly remiss in their acknowledgement and recognition of the cultures and values of the large proportion of their workforce. Employees need to feel that they and their contribution is valued by the organisation. The contribution of the worker should be harnessed for problem solving. However, participation should not be used simply because it is fashionable. Participation should be functional in that employees should be encouraged to participate where it is relevant and related to their job functions.

4.6 TRANSFORMATION

The third research question sought to determine whether the systems, structures and processes in operation in organisations should be altered to take advantage of the features of national culture identified by the respondents.

Twelve of the interview respondents indicated that organisations need to undergo some form of transformation process whereby the cultures and values of the majority of the population are revalued and taken into account. This requires that organisations become more representative of the demographics within the South African population. It also requires that organisations undergo a cultural change by becoming in tune with and incorporating the values and beliefs of the African culture and become more democratic in their structures. Only through people valuing each other can organisations and the people within them become innovative.

This transformation requires a paradigm shift which necessitates unfreezing of current mindsets - prejudices, attitudes and stereotypes - and a questioning

of current values so that management in particular, and all employees in general, can begin to understand and appreciate all the various cultures within the environment. Organisations need to move from valuing people as units to valuing people per se. People who enter businesses are not isolated entities, they are part of a community and a family both of which need to be taken into account. All organisation members need to explore the positives in African culture which create a sense of teamwork. To bring the cultures with which people enter organisations into closer harmony requires creativity and an open-mindedness. Respondents believe we need a common frame of reference which accepts the humanity of each person. To do this organisations need an understanding of and sympathy to the environment in which the workforce operates

One aspect of this transformation process identified by the research respondents involves learning to listen, talk and consult. In doing so the need for acceptance of one another is both a prerequisite as well as an outcome. Organisations need to create the space and time for talking and listening and for people of all cultural groupings to adapt and to develop. Respondents are aware of the time consuming nature of communicating through talking and listening but feel this to be an important component of the cultural change which they believe must come.

Employees need to be given the opportunity to adapt. They also need to be confronted honestly about their development needs.

There is a need for organisations to recognise the collective effort of all employees and allow employees to share in the wealth created by these combined efforts. This implies that organisations must address the question of remuneration and the low wage structures which have characterised the past. There must also be a re-evaluation of the expectations of shareholders in terms of the generation and distribution of profits.

One respondent expressed the view that organisational culture change must be strategically linked. Any change in culture must be congruent with the needs of the organisation and its strategic direction. Change simply to accommodate what is viewed as an important national cultural grouping is not of critical importance if it does not serve the strategic ends of the organisation.

4.7 AFRICAN CULTURE WITHIN ORGANISATIONS

The application of African culture to organisations has, from the perspective of the interview respondents, a number of implications for the way organisations are structured and operate. In the African cultural world-view there is a need for organisations to take account of the role the organisation plays as a community for the worker. Because the African world-view is synchronistic, people from this cultural orientation find it difficult to divorce their work lives from the private lives. They do not leave their values and assumptions behind when they enter the organisational portals. Therefore, the organisation is viewed as an extension of their personal lives.

The above has, in the opinion of respondents, implications for how the organisation structures its relationship with its workers and the community at large. The organisation has, as its first responsibility, to develop and care for its workers. But a second responsibility is that of the development of and care for the larger community from which the workforce is drawn. The organisation must be part of the community and live out its commitment to the community.

One respondent, however, felt that there is a danger in social responsibility becoming the sole concern of business. In her view, social responsibility is the concern of the state and this role should not be abrogated by business.

The African world-view feels more comfortable in an organisation which fosters a feeling of family and respect for the individual. As one respondent indicated, in such an environment the employee does not need to be monitored. He understands his commitments to and relationship with the organisation and fulfils his obligations to it. In such an environment there is accommodation and tolerance. A community within and of the organisation is built in time and relationships. An organisation which accepts this, allows people the time and freedom to express themselves.

Two respondents specifically identified an additional concern for business as being the nature and structure of employee benefits. Because African culture and our societal structure - the lack of educational and job opportunities - does not encourage early independence of children there is a need to employee benefits which will acknowledge the dependent status of children until much later than is currently the case. Organisations should, therefore, examine the structure and rules of employee benefit schemes such as medical aid and pension schemes to ensure that the these meet the needs of employees.

Another concern is the overall relationship between the organisation and its employees. African culture is caring of other people especially those dependent upon a leader. Therefore, within an organisation, the expectations which workers have from management and the Chief Executive where people in these positions will assume the role of provider and [illegible]. There is the expectation that those in authority will assume the responsibility for the well-being of their workers. Leadership roles, however, must be legitimised by followers. There is the possibility that if these leadership roles are imposed, these will be sabotaged.

Linked to this is the need for employees to feel that they matter to the organisation, that their contribution is valued. They, accordingly, require the

space to be able to participate in shaping their own work lives.

A further factor which needs to be taken into account is the way in which decisions are made. African culture accepts that all those affected by decisions will be given the opportunity of providing input into the decision making process. It also accepts that having been given this opportunity the decisions made will be adhered to provided that the leadership role has legitimacy. Within organisations this has implications for the way in which decisions are made and the manner in which promotions and appointments to management positions are undertaken.

4.8 NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED BY ORGANISATIONS

The interview respondents highlighted a number of other issues which translate into needs for the way in which organisations are structured and managed. These issues are identified in the discussion which follows.

4.8.1 Development

Ten of the interview respondents identified the need for organisations to develop their people. Individual growth and development leads to improved self-esteem among employees as well as growth for both employees and the organisation. Education changes the outlook of the individual who is more able to contribute effectively to organisational success.

Business needs to address the imbalances of the past in upgrading the human resources within as well as without. In this way people are provided with the skills and opportunity to be productive. Organisations

need to find the potential in their employees and facilitate people in realising this potential. As people develop they are able to become masters of their own destiny and more effectively contribute to the organisation.

4.8.2 Business Understanding

Linked to the need for people development is the need to educate employees in how business works, in the first place, and, secondly, what the aims and objectives of the particular business concerned are. Employees often do not know what business the organisation is involved in and do not understand the channels of communication and control which exist in organisations. An understanding of the role of the organisation in society supports the release of employees' commitment. Sharing information becomes a critical issue here.

4.8.3 Business Structures

Stemming out of the need for a greater understanding of the mechanisms of business is an acceptance that the fundamental structures of business will not change significantly as organisations become more "African". The institutions and practices of running a successful business must be retained. However, it is the processes, the premises and the practices which must be altered to reflect the broader South Africa. Employees need to be brought to an understanding of the value of their contribution in the workplace and the effects of their actions.

4.8.4 Affirmative Action

While only two respondents specifically referred to Affirmative Action, the majority of respondents alluded to the concept and its underlying principles. If organisations are to reflect the broader South African society there must be a commitment to Affirmative Action. This process, however, is not one of replacing white faces with black. It is a developmental process. Positive roles models should be identified and time frames set to ensure the achievement of targets. Organisations need to be committed to harnessing the ability of all people to contribute.

Affirmative Action is an enrichment process which will result in a change in organisational culture. By bringing in groups of people who have historically been excluded from key positions in critical mass, the culture of the organisation is likely to undergo a change as these people bring their own values, constructs and assumptions to the organisation.

4.8.5 Addressing Fears

All the issues discussed above create fears and concerns which must be addressed. Conflicts both inside and outside the organisation arise when people feel threatened. Management needs to understand that there is no loss of control through information sharing and that subordinates are not there to undermine management authority.

As both organisational culture and national culture change there is the need to ensure that people from other cultural paradigms do not feel threatened. Organisations, therefore, need to recognise the diversity within the workforce and manage it in such a way that it does not disempower people.

4.8.6 Balance

In addressing the needs of the workforce as expressed by interview respondents, organisations need to retain a balance. Change must have a strategic purpose. There must be convergence of the needs of the workforce with those of the organisation. Organisations need to identify the linkages and blockages in the achievement of this convergence. Simultaneously, the aspirations of the workforce in terms of career paths must be balanced against the needs of the organisation.

4.9 CONSOLIDATED DATA MAP

In examining the individual data maps certain common features emerged despite the fact that not every interview followed the same pattern. These common features have been discussed above and are summarised in Figure 4.5.

The result of the respective histories and life experiences of different groups in South Africa is manifested in two dominant cultures - an African culture and a Colonial culture. These cultures exist in tension with each other. There is a cultural divide which separates the two but which is, gradually, being overcome. The expectation of respondents is that as these two cultures move towards one another and merge they will form a new culture which will tend more towards the characteristics of the Colonial culture.

People who come into organisations bring with them elements of their own specific culture. In doing so they influence the culture of the organisation. Organisational life is the meeting place of the various culture groups within the South African environment and it is from here that a new national culture will emerge. However, because business organisations have their

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roots in the western orientation which is common to the Colonial culture they are more dominated by western values.

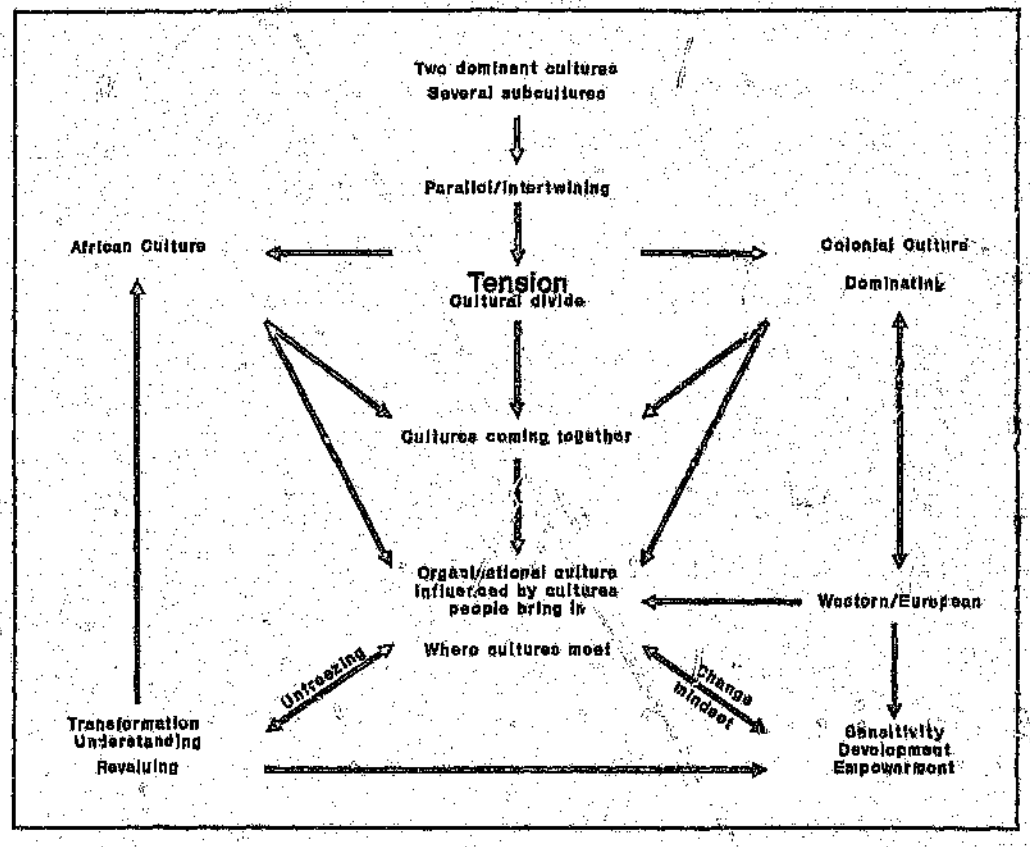

Figure 4.5 Common Features Emerging from Individual Data Maps

There is an acceptance on the part of all respondents that the cultures found within organisations need to change. These cultures need to undergo a change of mindset and become more sensitive to the needs of the people who work within the organisations. This process of transformation requires some form of unfreezing or psychological rebooting in order for a greater understanding of all cultures to come about. There is a need for South African business to take account of African culture in order to facilitate the empowerment of people.

4.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a summary of the research findings and individual data maps. The perceptions which colour the world-view of the respondents are perceived as reality. The issues identified in this chapter are those which the research respondents believe to be pertinent to the problem of identifying the features of a South African national culture. However, from the point of view of the research sample, there is not a single South African culture. There are two dominant cultures which co-exist in tension with each other. This duality of cultures complicates the problem of effectively managing the human resources within organisations.

The problem facing management is how to balance the competing demands of the two dominant cultures while harnessing the potential for competitive advantage which exists within each of these cultures.

In Chapter Five the research results will be interpreted and discussed with reference to the literature as reviewed in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This research set out to answer three questions as stated in Chapter Three. This chapter will evaluate the research results in the light of the research questions and in view of the literature as set out in Chapter Two.

5.2 FEATURES OF SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURE

The first research question was designed to establish the degree of perceived homogeneity with respect to culture within the South African population and to identify the nature of the culture or cultures which exist nationally. The objective in establishing this similitude within the national culture was to determine the extent to which South African culture is perceived to be different from other national cultures and whether this difference warrants a different approach to the management of people.

Both Potloane (1991) and Hofstede (1983) agree that culture moulds and colours our thinking. Where the norms of different cultural orientations are at odds with each other in a given situation, a cultural gap arises. Kilmann (1990) states that this can have consequences for the organisation in terms of both productivity and morale. It is important, therefore, to establish congruence between the actual culture within an organisation and the desired culture as evinced by the people within that organisation.

5.2.1 Homogeneity

The research results indicate that there is no perceived single homogenous national culture within South Africa. Instead there are two dominant cultures which this research has labelled 'Colonial' and 'African'. However, even within these cultures there exist sub-cultures which are influenced by, among other factors, language, geographic location, lifestyle and wealth. These two cultures run parallel within the South African society but interlink and intertwine.

While people from the two cultures interface at various points in South African society, those arenas wherein they do meet are dominated by the Colonial cultural orientation. On most other levels structural factors within South African society succeed in keeping the two cultures apart. The most prevalent meeting place of the two dominant cultures is in the workplace which is governed by the values and assumptions of the Colonial culture. This Colonial domination is as a result of historical factors and traditional power structures both within the workplace and South African society as a whole.

Within the workplace cultural conflicts have the potential for creating a number of problems (Schein, 1990). Where two conflicting cultures come into contact these conflicts tend to reinforce the relative cultures of each group. Within the South African context the conflict is exacerbated as the dominant power group seeks to ensure that all members "fit" the culture within the organisation. Schein (1990) points to the problems which occur when this "fit" is not achieved. Problems of alienation result from members' feelings of being unproductive or their attempts at conformity. The effects of the lack of organisational creativity and innovation can be felt on the ability of the organisation to respond to the environment.

One effect of the need to have members of the organisation "fit" into a dominating culture has been the exclusion of members of the subordinate culture from positions of power. This has promoted the relative inequalities within South African society and has made it more difficult for 'Africans' to break out of the lower class status imposed upon them by apartheid.

While these two dominant national cultures exist within the South African milieu they are, as Lewin (1989) points out, in a dynamic process of change. Just as South Africa is a society in transition, (Douwes Dekker, 1993), so the cultures within the society are in transition. The interview respondents perceive the cultures within the South African environment to be changing. The dominant cultures are moving closer together, albeit gradually. The expectations of the research respondents are that the two dominant cultures will come together as a composite of the two. However, these expectations are underlined by a belief that the resulting culture will, because of its dominating force, more closely resemble the Colonial culture than the African culture.

5.2.2 Colonial Cultural Features

A number of adjectives were used by the research respondents to describe the culture which has been classified as Colonial (refer to Figure 4.2). These include:

- Authoritarian
- Autocratic
- Patriarchal
- Compliant

- Passive
- Individualistic
- Independent
- Blinkered/focused

In light of the descriptions and perceptions of Colonial culture on the part of interview respondents, it would appear that this culture fits the profile of South African national culture as described by Hofstede (1980). In his research Hofstede (1980) found South African national culture to be characterised by high levels of individualism where the bonds between individuals and societal groups are loose. Hofstede (1980) found South Africans to be more concerned with their own self-interest and that of their immediate families rather than with collectivities. Hofstede's (1980) research also described South African national culture to be accepting of large differentials of power within organisations. The compliant and authoritarian nature of the South African Colonial culture as described by the research results would indicate that this acceptance of power differentials is still the case.

The terms used by respondents to describe the Colonial culture demonstrate a greater affinity with Masculine traits as described by Hofstede (1980). Respondents indicated that they perceived the Colonial culture to be concerned with individual success and achievement and how this is represented by the accumulation of material goods. Success and the visible manifestations of that success are respected.

According to the perceptions of the interview respondents, because the Colonial culture is concerned with the individual, his immediate relationships and his achievements, the people within this culture tend to be focused and, to an extent, blinkered. People are unaware of others in the community which surrounds them in their search for self

actualisation.

5.2.3 Features of African Culture

The features of African culture as described by the interview respondents indicate a culture which has synchronised and integrated a number of seeming contradictions (refer to Figure 4.1). The culture accepts authority yet is, simultaneously, democratic in that it provides mechanisms to include those who will be affected by decisions by eliciting their views and opinions. In this way the culture supports Koopman's (1991a) view that it seeks to remove dissent rather than gain consent.

The African culture places great value on relationships which meet the needs of the people for both security and affiliation. The group provides a power to face the uncertain environment. Dissent from the group/community leaves the individual defenceless against the forces of society with which he does not feel equipped to cope. Therefore, the individual is willing to accept the authority of those in positions of leadership and authority provided he feels that authority is legitimate and protective.

This reliance on and loyalty to the community or group illustrates another contradiction within the African culture. This contradiction lies in the approach of this culture to both the individual and to the community. The individual and respect for the humanity of the individual is of paramount importance within this culture. This respect for and cherishing of the humanity of each individual is evidence of the Ubuntu discussed in the literature (Vilakazi, 1991; Potloane, 1991; Dhlomo, 1991). Yet the needs of the individual are subordinated to the

needs of the community. Both Lessem (1993a) and Koopman (1991b) stress the communal nature of African culture.

In Hofstede's (1980) terms African culture can be described as falling between the poles of the individualism/collectivism spectrum. This is perhaps the *"philosophical dividing line"* (Hofstede and Bond, 1988, p.18) which divides Western and African thinking. Because western thinking is compartmentalised, individualism and collectivism are seen as opposing ends of a spectrum. African thinking does not see individualism and collectivism as opposites but rather as complimentary parts of a whole. In his analysis of South African culture, Hofstede (1980) found an emphasis on individualism. This is not contrary to the core values of African culture. What Hofstede (1980) appears to have missed is that the individual cannot be separated from his community in an African world-view.

If Hofstede (1980) erred on the side of individualism, it is important to ensure that a critical analysis of the African world-view does not err on the side of collectivism. The term which both Koopman (1993) and Lessem (1993c) use to describe the African world-view is ***"humanism"***. Humanism is a more appropriate term in that it denotes the individual, his humanity and his relationship to and with the community. The term humanism symbolises the devotion to and concern for the human race and human interests which is germane to the thinking and core values of the African world-view.

If African culture does not conform to the conception of individualism/collectivism which Hofstede (1980) describes in his research, it does fit within the spectrum of Power Distance and that of Uncertainty Avoidance. African culture has been willing to accept relatively large levels of differentials in equality both within government

and the workplace. However, one of the aims of the liberation struggle was to eliminate such differences within the South African society by creating a more egalitarian society through a redistribution of power. African culture is being less accepting of the large power distances which have characterised the South African environment and the demand is for greater equality in the workplace, in government and in society as a whole. African culture displays, nonetheless, strong uncertainty avoidance. The culture is rooted in the principle of protecting the individual from the stresses of an uncertain environment.

African culture can also be described as feminine in that it values relationships and the support which individuals and the community can provide.

5.2.4 Convergence Between the Dominant Cultures

The results of the interviews indicate that there are perceived points of convergence between the dominant South African national cultures which provides a veneer of similarity. Both cultures are perceived by the interview respondents to be authoritarian, paternalistic and patriarchal. In these both cultures are alike in accepting large power distances and in seeking to avoid uncertainty through the creation of rules and structures which govern societal life. Despite the existence of some homogeneity, it is the differences between the dominant national cultures which create tension.

5.2.5 Divergence in Dominant Cultures.

In analysing the two dominant national cultures as described by the

fifteen interview respondents using the dimensions described by Hofstede (1980) different profiles emerge. Figure 5.1 illustrates these profiles pictorially. Both cultures display similarities in their profiles, as discussed above, with regard to Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance but are strikingly different when viewed on the Individualism/Collectivism and Masculinity/Feminism dimensions.

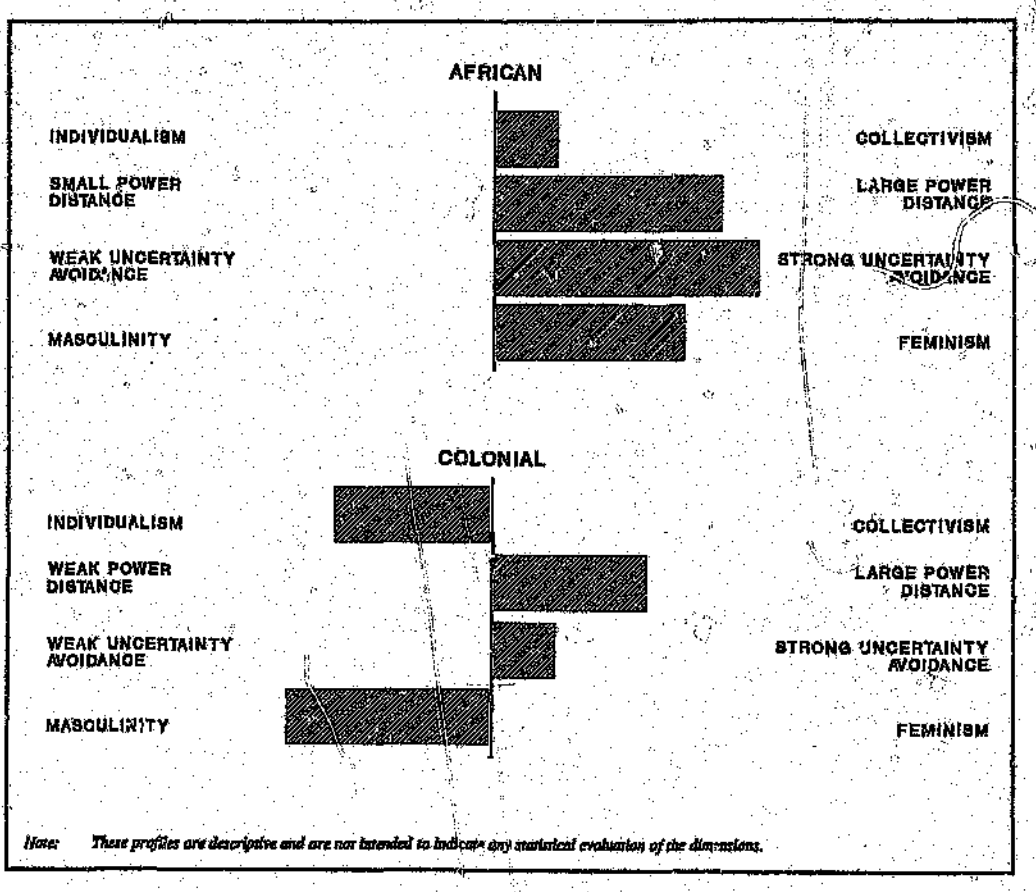

Figure 5.1 National Culture Profiles

The similarities in the profiles must, however, be seen in conjunction with the mapping of the various dimensions as identified by Hofstede (1980). Figures 5.2 to 5.6 map the two dominant national cultures along paired dimensions as identified by Hofstede (1980). These maps are

pictorial representations only and do not represent any statistical analysis.

Figure 5.2 maps each dominant culture on the Individualism/ Collectivism and the Power Distance Dimensions.

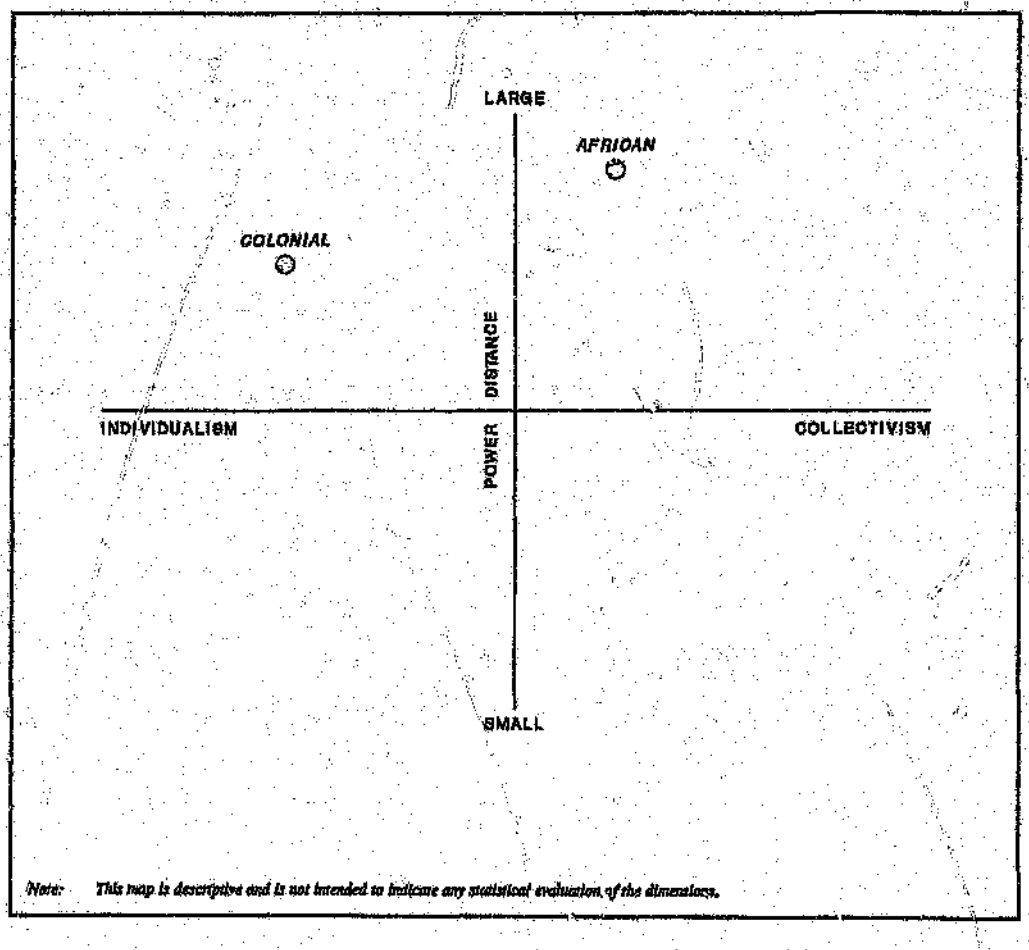

Figure 5.2 Individualism/Collectivism - Power Distance Map

The Colonial culture falls within the Individualism/Large Power Distance quadrant while the African culture falls within the Collectivism/Large Power Distance quadrant.

Figure 5.3 maps each dominant culture on the Individualism/ Collectivism and the Uncertainty Avoidance Dimensions. The Colonial culture falls within the Individualism/Strong Uncertainty Avoidance quadrant while the African culture falls within the Collectivism/Strong Uncertainty Avoidance quadrant.

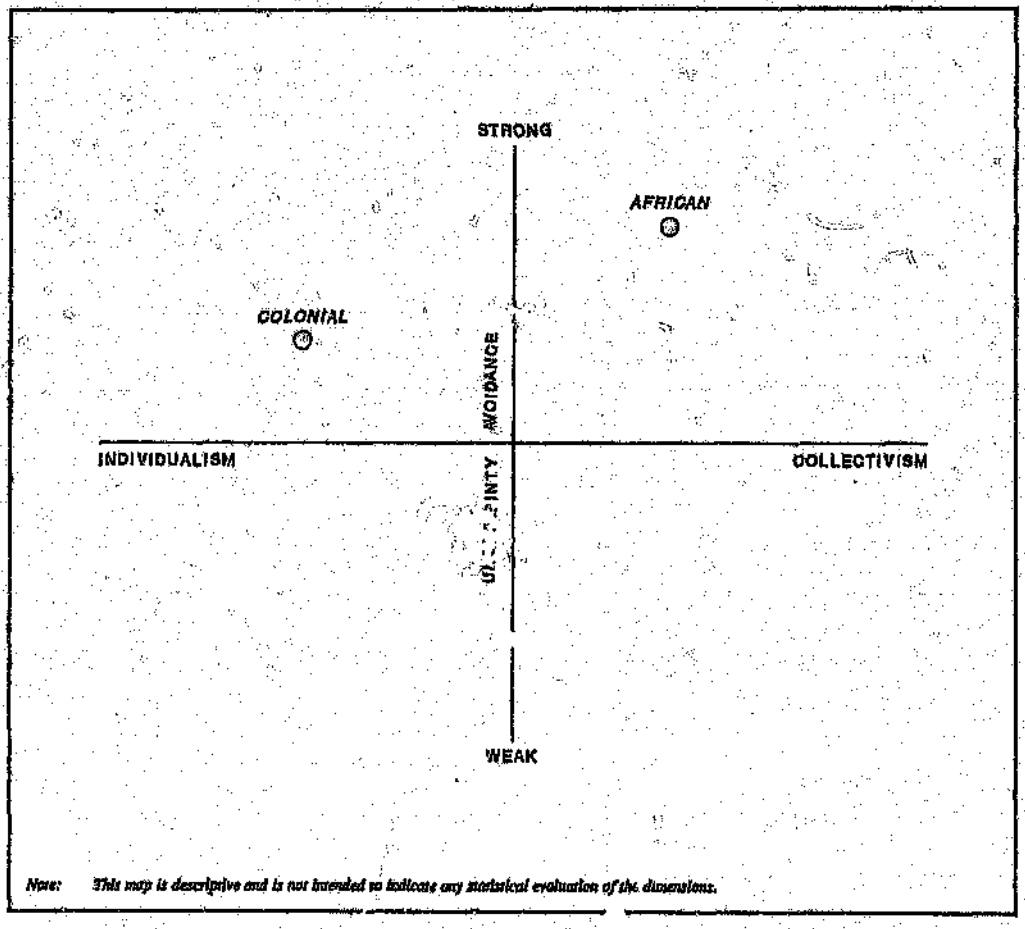

Figure 5.3 Individualism/Collectivism - Uncertainty Avoidance Map

Figure 5.4 maps each dominant culture on the Individualism/ Collectivism and the Masculinity/Feminism Dimensions. The Colonial culture falls within the Individualism/Masculine quadrant while the African culture falls within the Collectivism/Feminine quadrant.

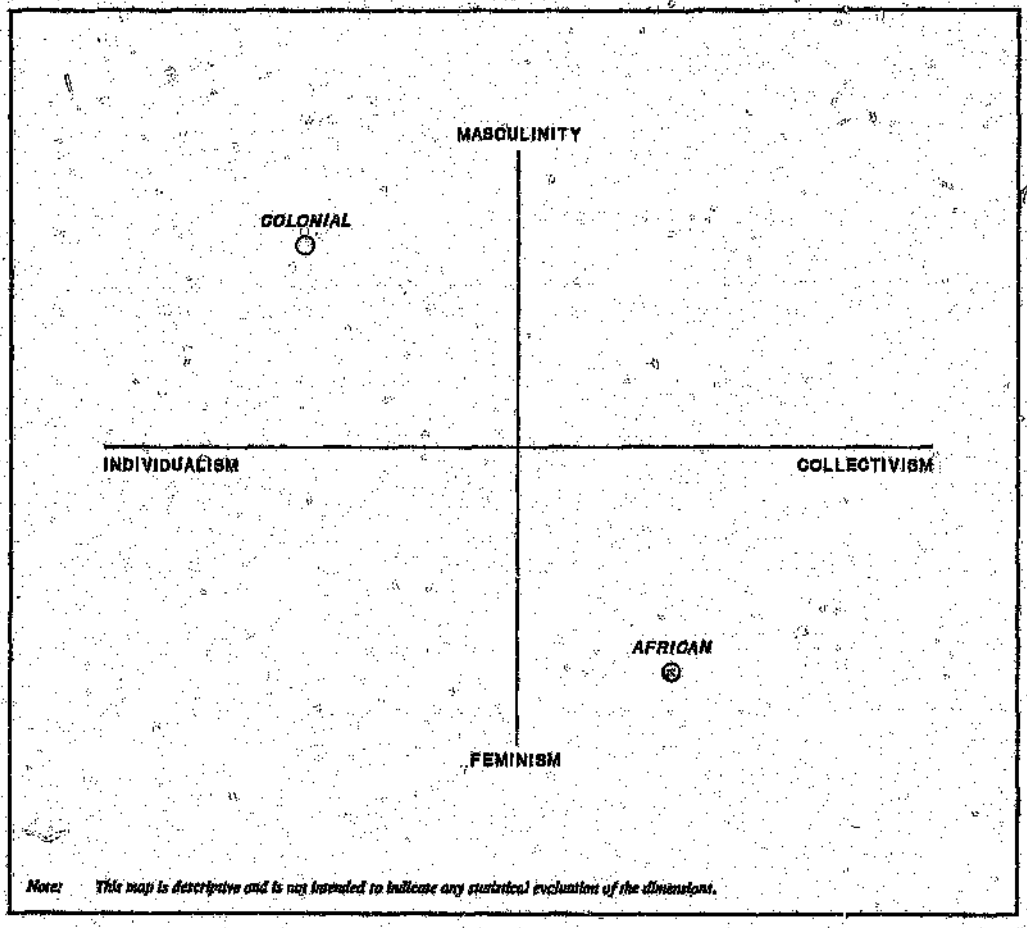

Figure 5.4 Individualism/Collectivism - Masculinity/Feminism Map

Figure 5.5 maps each dominant culture on the Power Distance and the Uncertainty Avoidance Dimensions. Both the Colonial culture and the African culture fall within the Large Power Distance/Strong Uncertainty Avoidance quadrant.

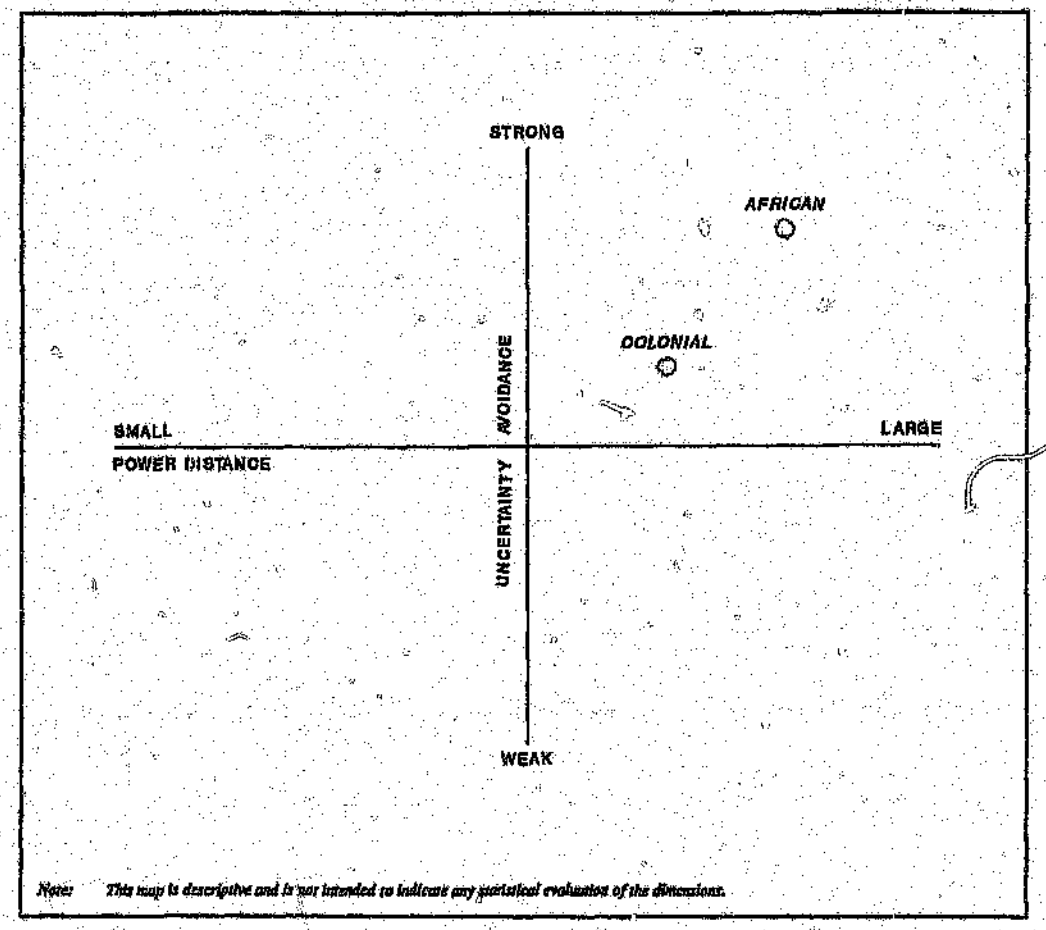

Figure 5.5 Power Distance - Uncertainty Avoidance Map

Figure 5.6 maps each dominant culture on the Power Distance and the Masculinity/Feminism Dimensions. The Colonial culture falls within the Large Power Distance/Masculine quadrant while the African culture falls within the Large Power Distance/Feminism quadrant.

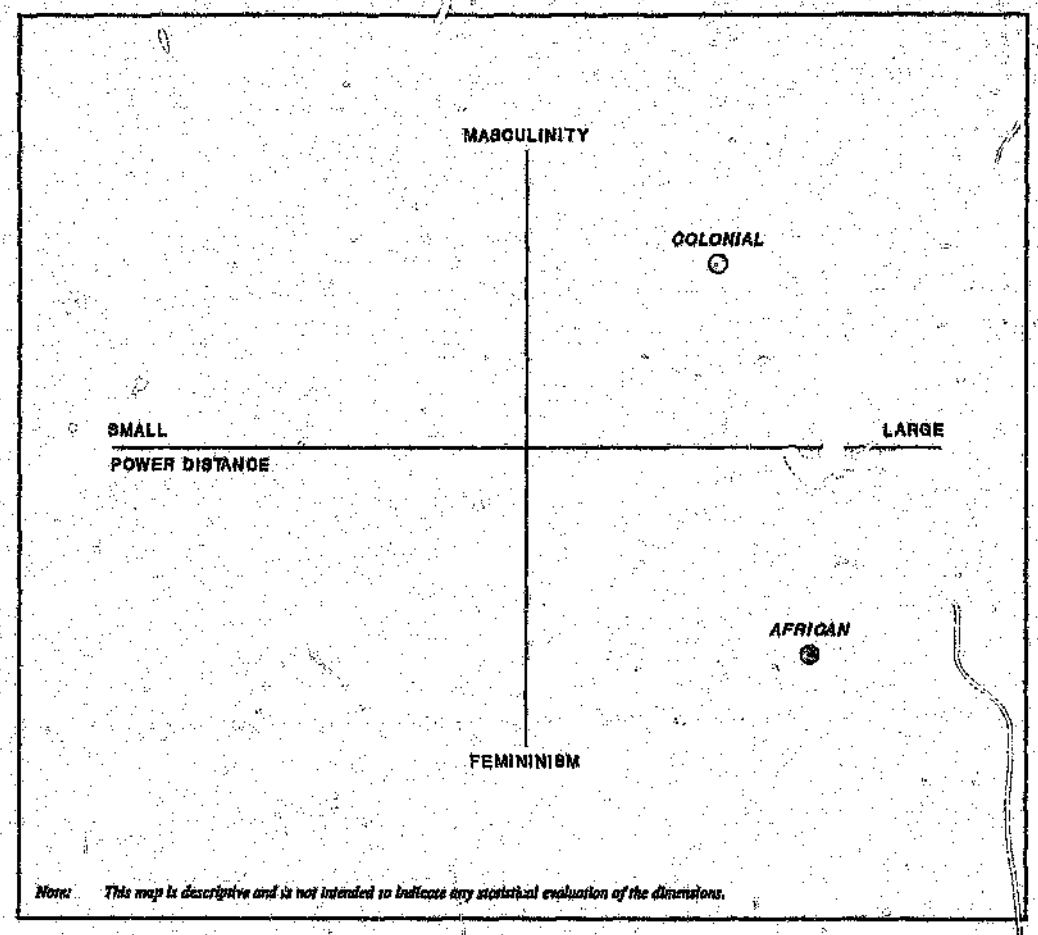

Figure 5.6 Power Distance - Masculinity/Feminism Map

In all but one of the above maps the two dominant national cultures fall within different quadrants. It is herein that the tension between the two cultures lies. While there may be some similarity in terms of discrete dimensions when paired with each other dimension fundamental differences in the two cultures become apparent.

5.2.6 Research Findings versus the Theories

Hofstede (1980) identified South African national culture as being an

individualist culture which, nonetheless, accept large differentials in power. What Hofstede (1980) failed to recognise was the duality of national culture which exists within South Africa. This research has identified two dominant cultures, one of which has been completely overlooked by Hofstede (1980). While African culture as identified by this research does fit into Hofstede's (1980) analysis in that it evinces an acceptance of large power distances and low uncertainty avoidance, Hofstede (1980) failed to identify critical features of this culture.

As indicated by Hofstede and Bond (1988) with regard to Eastern culture, there may be features of a culture which were not identified in Hofstede's original research (1980) because the western mind is unable to encompass the concepts involved. With regard to the African culture, this research would seem to indicate two specific areas which the original research undertaken by Hofstede (1980) failed to identify. The two critical features are:

- the emphasis on the acceptance of the humanity of every individual and the respect and care for relationships and people which results from this - Ubuntu. Dhlomo (1991) and Potloane (1991) both identify ubuntu as a significant feature of South African national culture.

- the synchronistic and integrative nature of African culture which views the individual as an entity but at the same time as part of a community and which can align seemingly contradictory features with ease.

Koopman (1991a) recognises these features of the African culture and understands the inclusionary nature of African thinking. Koopman (1993) also recognises the duality of our national culture and the need

to satisfy both elements within our society.

Lessem (1993a), like Koopman (1991b) emphasises the communal nature of South African national culture. Lessem (1993c) also identifies four sources from which the culture of South African business is drawn. The results of this research do not substantiate these four sources. However, the research respondents tended to categorise everything that was not African as being Western. There was no attempt on the part of the sample, nor did the researcher request the sample to do so, to identify in greater detail any more specific determinants of the Colonial culture which the research respondents indicated as a predominant culture within South Africa.

5.2.7 Implications of Divergent Cultures for the Management of People.

The objective of the first research question as posed in Chapter Three was to determine whether South African national culture is sufficiently different from other national cultures to warrant examining alternative modes of managing people. A definitive answer to this is only possible by an examination of other national cultures. However, within the context of the perceptions of the interview respondents ten of the fifteen respondents indicated that the "Africanness" of our national culture provided a means of differentiating South Africans from people of other national cultures.

Certainly the existence of two national cultures differentiates South Africa from other countries where national culture is often more homogenous. In addition, these cultures are in conflict with each other in terms of the basic assumptions which each has regarding the

relationship of the individual to his fellow man and to the community at large. This conflict implies that modes of people management that stem out of the assumption that all people are relatively homogenous are unlikely to take account of the differing value systems which each culture may have.

Organisations which are structured in terms of the western value systems and, therefore, are more in tune with the Colonial culture, are going to be in conflict with the values and assumptions of those members of the organisation who come from an African cultural orientation. Both Fonbrum (1984a) and Godsell (1992) state that organisational culture must be consistent with the culture within society. It is, consequently, necessary for organisations to take cognisance of the duality within the South African cultural environment and, thus, to examine alternative approaches to the management of people.

5.3 THE INFLUENCE OF NATIONAL CULTURE ON BEHAVIOUR WITHIN ORGANISATIONS

The second research question posed by this research (see Chapter Three) sought to determine whether the demands placed on the behaviour of members by organisations conflict with the core assumptions and basic value systems of those member with respect to the way in which people should interact and conduct themselves. The question also intended to examine whether this conflict was damaging to the performance of the individual within the organisation and the organisation as a whole.

Inter-cultural interface has become the norm within South African organisations. Yet organisations exclude the cultural basis of an entire segment of the national population. The culture shock which Potloane (1991)

describes as a result of this interface impacts on people from both dominant national cultures and can have a profound effect on the ability of the organisation to be innovative and react to changing market conditions. Organisational dysfunction is a consequence of the culture gap (Kilmann, 1990) which exists and the shock of interfacing within a culturally conflicting environment.

5.3.1 The Perceived Behavioural Demands of Organisations

The interview respondents perceived organisations to have their basis in the western philosophy which underlies the Colonial culture. As such, organisations prize and reward individual achievement. Positional power and its symbolic accoutrements are valued and sought after. Positional power is sought because it carries the possibility of moving from a position of subordination and compliance to one which wields authority and demands compliance.

While positional power is sought after, organisational cultures are perceived to discourage decision making by punishing "bad" decisions. In additions, the Colonial culture is risk averse. These factors promote a reluctance to make decisions or to be creative in response to the demands of the environment.

Within organisations power brings access to information. Conversely, information provides power. The achievement of power, therefore, is dependent on the individual's ability to gain access to information. The research results indicate that interview respondents perceive those with power to be reluctant to share information. The research results indicate that this reluctance to share information is a consequence of the fear of losing power when information is shared. It also stems out of the

paternalistic approach of the Colonial culture which believes those in authority are best able to make decisions for the majority. There is also a perception arising from the research results that management is reluctant to utilise the knowledge and input of subordinates in making decisions.

The Colonial culture which underpins the culture of organisations in South Africa values the individual and his achievements over relationships and caring. The significance of this individual striving is that, in focusing cultural members on themselves and their immediate familial relationships, it detaches cultural members from outsiders. Organisational cultures, therefore, often appear to encourage aloofness and to encourage, what one respondent called, *"I/It relationships"*. These cultures also focus on life within themselves with little awareness of the life which surrounds them and which affects the daily living of the members. The results of this research indicate that respondents perceive organisations to be task-oriented as opposed to relationship-oriented.

Although there is an emphasis on task achievement within organisations, in the view of the research respondents, there has been little investment in the development of people confirming the views expressed by the Institute of Personnel Management (1992). Organisational members are, therefore, expected to achieve without being provided with the necessary skills to be productive. The skills required are both those related to the task and those which provide an understanding of the business. Understanding the business requires that organisational members understand the goals and objectives of the business within which they find themselves - the mission of the organisation and its role in society. Understanding also implies a knowledge of how a business operates - the roles, relationships, systems, procedures and channels of

information flow - so that these can be utilised more effectively by the workforce.

Profitability and shareholder wealth are perceived by respondents to be major priorities of organisations. However, this does not co-exist with a need for wealth creation where all the organisational stakeholders, the workforce included, share in this wealth. The historical nature of a low wage structure provides no incentive for the workforce to increase shareholder wealth.

5.3.1.1 The response of the Colonial culture to organisational demands

Because the assumptions and values within organisations have grown out of those of the dominant power base, the culture of organisations in South Africa more closely resembles that of the Colonial culture. Members of the Colonial culture have been able to be successful within organisations because of their access to the national and organisational power bases. Selection based on cultural factors - in Schein's (1990) terms they "fit" into the organisational structure - has also ensured their entry into organisations and facilitated their movement within these. In addition, access to education and training has given members of the Colonial culture entry into organisations at levels which provide them with acceptable rates of pay and mobility within the organisation. (It should be noted that while this is true of males it is not necessarily, in the perception of a number of respondents, true of females.)

As a result of the above issues there is less of a problem in fitting into the current organisational cultures on the part of members of the Colonial cultural grouping than there may be for members of

other cultural groupings.

5.3.2 The African Cultural Expectations within Organisations

The African culture values relationships. Therefore, it seeks relationships both within the organisation and with the organisation. Relationships fulfil the need for affiliation as well as provide a sense of security. Members of the African culture, thus, would prefer to enter into what one respondent calls an *"I/Thou relationship"* within the organisation where their value as people, as well as their contribution, is acknowledged and respected.

Simultaneously, the African world-view as perceived by the interview respondents supports Vilakazi (1991). The security needs of members and their development must be ensured. This implies that members of the African culture look to those in positions of leadership and power to advance the well-being of African cultural constituents through the mutual interactions which take place and through the employment contract that is established. Members of the African culture, therefore, seek an employment contract which will protect them from the vagaries of the external environment and which will provide them with employment benefits which allow them to fulfil their obligations to their extended relationships.

The extended relationships of the individual are important in the contract between the employee and the employing organisation. Because the African culture does not compartmentalise life - there is a sense in this culture that all things and people are inter-related - life outside the organisation cannot be separated from life within. There is a consequent expectation that the organisation will, as Potloane (1991) highlights, be

a community and of a community. In other words, a community is created within the organisation itself while the organisation, simultaneously involves itself in the life of the community which surrounds it.

The emphasis which African culture places upon relationships is often to the detriment of the task. However, the African culture believes in the humanity of each individual. If the employee is treated and accepted as a human being, that individual does not need to be monitored or disciplined. By appealing to his humanity and by fostering within him an understanding of the value of his contribution, the individual can be expected to meet his obligations. Where the employee does not fulfil his obligations, the African culture expects that the community - in the work environment, the work team - will apply sanction.

The African world-view accepts discipline and authority but expects that authority be benign. Those in authority are expected to provide the space and forums for the member to provide input into decisions that affect him. Authority and those who wield it can only be acceptable, and hence the decisions made by those in authority, if that authority is legitimised through action. Compliance is a logical outcome within the African culture where authority and the resultant decisions have been legitimised.

The spirit which underpins *Letsema* and the *stokvels* is one of mutual assistance and sharing both the burdens and the fruits of one's endeavours. Within organisational life the African culture consequently expects that the benefits of labour will flow to all who contribute. African culture, nonetheless, accepts that the bulk of the benefit will flow to the owners of the business.

5.3.3 The African Culture/Organisational Interface

Where the needs of the African culture interface with the demands of the organisation there is a cultural gap not unlike that experienced in the interface between the African and Colonial cultures. The research results indicate that even where Blacks appear to have assimilated the Colonial culture and are successful in traditional business structures, the level of acculturation is, in Du Preez's (1992) terms, only instrumental. These people appear to withdraw to the African cultural environment which fulfils their need for affiliation and relationships. They maintain their links with the community through structures like stokvels.

Khoza (1993) intimates that managerial reality is determined by cultural and social factors. Similarly, employee reality is determined by the cultural and social factors inside and outside the organisation which impact on the lives of organisational members. The two realities are at odds with each other. For organisations to be functional there is a need to harmonise these divergent and differing realities.

5.4 ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

The final question posed for this research was to identify the extent to which organisational systems, structures and processes should be changed to ensure that the various elements of the national culture can be accommodated and effectively utilised within organisations. Drucker (1992) states that organisations should be constituted for change. The known and familiar should be systematically relinquished. In so doing, the organisation is able to capitalise creatively and strategically on the changes within the environment.

The results of the research indicate that the necessity for change revolves around the processes, practices and premises of business rather than the institutions which go to make up a successful business. This research is concerned with the processes, practices and premises which constitute the way people are managed within an organisation. Of specific concern is how these systems of people management impact on the development and implementation of a strategic approach to the management of people.

5.4.1 Integrating African Culture

There are a number of features of African culture which the interview respondents felt could be productively incorporated into or accommodated within organisations. In order for this to occur, the first priority is for management to become more sensitive to the aspects of the various cultures which exist within the environment. This supports the view expressed within the literature (Khoza, 1993; Koopman, 1993; Newman, 1991). The research respondents identified a need for an unfreezing of management reality in order to rid management of its stereotyped thinking. This is necessary in order for management, and therefore organisations, to identify the potential and value within alternative cultural paradigms and to harness these for the benefit of the organisation.

African culture, as has been stated previously, is concerned with relationships and the respect for the individual within relationships - ubuntu. The results of this research are in agreement with the literature (Oakley-Smith, 1991; Mbigi, 1992) that incorporating the spirit of ubuntu into organisational processes and culture will be to the benefit of organisations. Through ubuntu the organisation is able to harness the commitment of people. A humanist approach to the management of

people is required.

5.4.2 A Humanist Approach to Strategic Human Resource Management

The literature (Cooke and Armstrong, 1990; Walker, 1992; Miles and Snow, 1984; Sparrow and Pettigrew, 1988; Buller, 1988) points to the need for congruency between the organisational strategy and the strategic human resource processes. However, the process of organisational strategy development is one predicated, largely, on externalisation, that is, the demands of the environment in which the organisation is faced and the threats and opportunities therein. (This is obviously an over-simplification of the process which must, of needs, examine the internal capacity of the organisation to meet the external environment.)

Strategic human resource management is, according to Baird and Meshoulam (1984) a process which involves the identification of organisational strategic goals. These are then used as a basis for the design of human resource practices, procedures and programmes. The human resource function, according to Schuler and Walker (1990), seeks to add value to the organisation through the identification and analysis of the issues which are most crucial to the success of the organisation and the achievement of its competitive advantage. Strategic human resource management, therefore, becomes concerned with the selection and retention of the "right" high-calibre people, the development and rewarding of such people and the assessment of their performance in the achievement of the objectives of the organisation (Cooke and Armstrong, 1990; Tichy, *et al.*, 1984).

Walker (1992) indicates that the first phase of aligning the human resource strategy with the organisational strategy requires an assessment of the internal and external constraints and opportunities which confront the organisation. Devanna, *et al.*, (1984) state that the fundamental objective of human resource strategy is the achievement of the organisational strategy through the performance of people.

5.4.2.1 Management of the organisational community

From the African perspective the organisation cannot be separated from the community within which it exists and from which it draws its workforce. The research results highlight a perception among the interview respondents which supports the view expressed by Potloane (1991) that the organisation must be a community and must, simultaneously, be of a community. The needs and lives of those who work within the organisation cannot be ignored if these same people are to be effective within the organisation.

Figure 5.7 identifies three levels of community which are pertinent to the operations of the organisation. The first level of community is that of the organisation itself - its strategic direction, the people who are charged with the achievement of this strategy, its shareholders and its customers and suppliers. The second level of community is the situational community. This situational community is located in the geographical surrounds of the organisation and of the people who work within the organisation. The final level of community is the broader environment within which the organisation is placed. This dispersed community includes those people and institutions whose impact on the organisation is not immediately apparent.

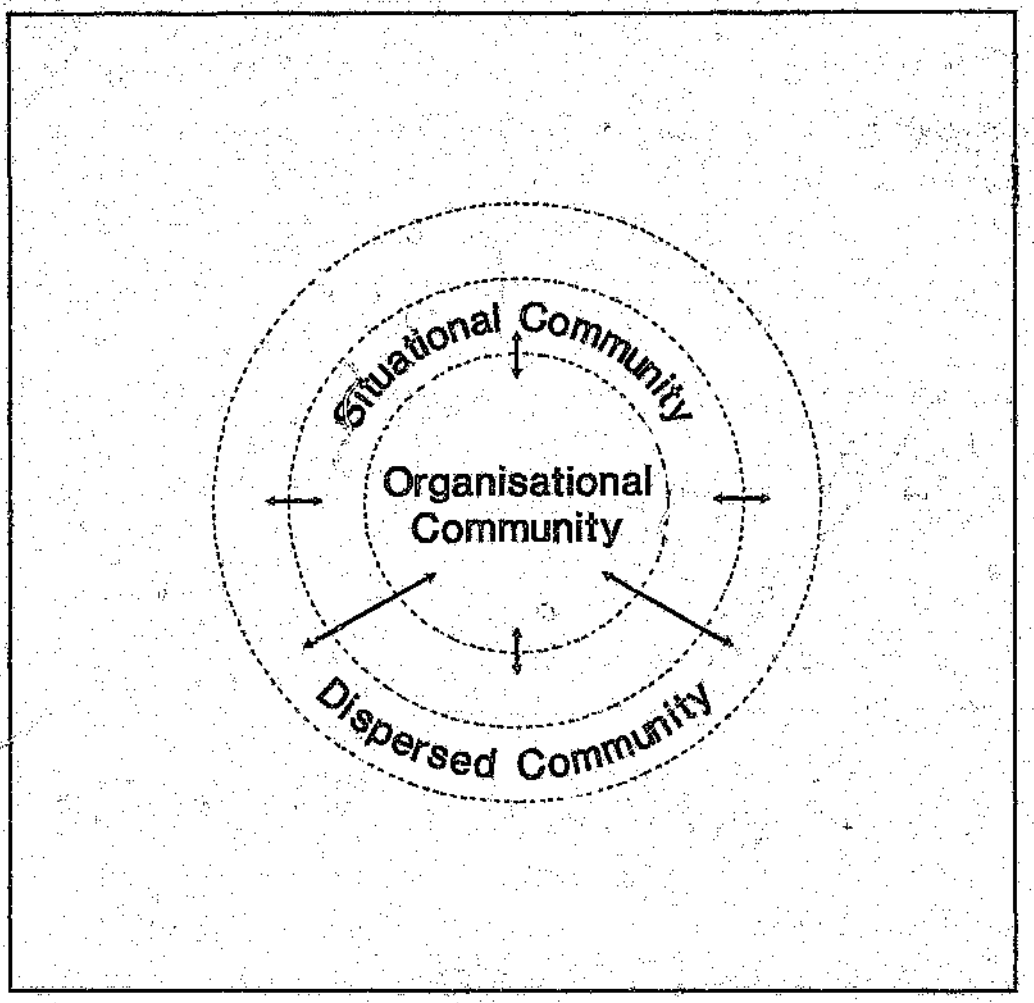

Figure 5.7 Levels of Community Impacting on the Organisation

Managing people within the African world-view denotes a recognition of the responsibilities which the organisation has to each of the three levels of community. The primary responsibility of the organisation is to the organisational community. The needs and worth of each of the stakeholders must be recognised and balanced. The perceptions of the interview respondents are that only once those needs and the worth of each stakeholder have been satisfied can the organisation move on to examining and meeting

the needs of the next level of community.

The interview respondents view the situational community to be the next critical area of concern after the organisational community. The situational community is the environment in which those who work within an organisation live. There is a need, in the view of the research respondents, for management within organisations to be aware of this community and to contribute to the upliftment of this community. The organisation has a social responsibility to deal with and in this level of community.

The alignment of the human resource strategy with the organisational strategy must take into consideration the needs and demands of the various levels of community and the constraints within these communities.

5.4.2.2 Constraints on strategic alignment

The achievement of an alignment of human resource strategy with the strategy of the organisation is hampered, within the South African environment by a number of constraints. These limitations can be found at an organisational level as well as an environmental level.

A large proportion of the South African population is under-educated and under-trained. They do not possess the skills which organisations require to be competitive in either national or international markets. The perceptions of the interview respondents bear out the findings of the Institute of Personnel Management (1992), that organisations have themselves not invested sufficiently in training and development, thereby draining their human resources. The "right people" are, therefore, neither available

within the organisation nor without it.

If the "right" people are not available then performance in the achievement of the objectives of the organisation is, essentially, unattainable under current circumstances. Competitive advantage within the market place then becomes a matter of which organisation is capable of performing less poorly as opposed to which organisation is able to perform best. The additional problems arising when people are unable to meet the expectations of the organisation manifest themselves in decreased morale and commitment.

Shareholders' expectations of expected returns have not adjusted to the current economic environment. These expectations are, thus, not being satisfied. Simultaneously, shareholders view any profit generated by the business as being their rightful property. Effective remuneration structures, particularly when seen from the perspective of an African world-view, are not and cannot be put in place.

Cultural conflicts between various cultural groupings within the organisation and between the organisation and some of those cultural groupings creates problems related to the accomplishment of tasks and the development of creativity and innovation. Dysfunctional behaviour hampers the organisations ability to respond the environment effectively. The lack of recognition, or the inability to manage the cultural diversity within the organisation, is a major stumbling block for a number of organisations.

All these constraints do not affect all South African organisations

all the time. However, they outline a management reality which must be addressed when aligning human resource systems and practices with the strategy adopted by the organisation. Davis (1988) contends that the organisation of the future is created from the reality of the current organisation. This current organisation is, in turn, a product of the organisation of the past, its history and the history of its people. It is, consequently, the organisation of the present which must be used as the driving force for creating the future. The realities of the present must be confronted and dealt with.

5.4.2.3 Managing the current reality within an African world-view

Devanna, *et al.*, (1984) cite the cycle of human resource activities which constitute the management of the human resource function. These inter-related activities begin with what Walker (1992) calls strategic staffing. The required staffing needs are assessed and the necessary resources recruited into the organisation. Devanna, *et al.*, (1984) see the next step in the process as being the management of performance which is then evaluated. For Walker (1992), however, the process of selection is followed by the development of capabilities and a process of enabling performance. This is more in tune with the needs of management in an African environment where skills are in short supply. Only once capabilities and potential has been developed can the individual be expected to perform. An appropriate climate for performance must also be created. Effectiveness can only be evaluated in a climate conducive to effective performance. Once performance has been evaluated, effective rewards must be apportioned. In Walker's (1992) terms this is sharing successes. Figure 5.8 illustrates a human resource cycle which is more appropriate in an African

setting.

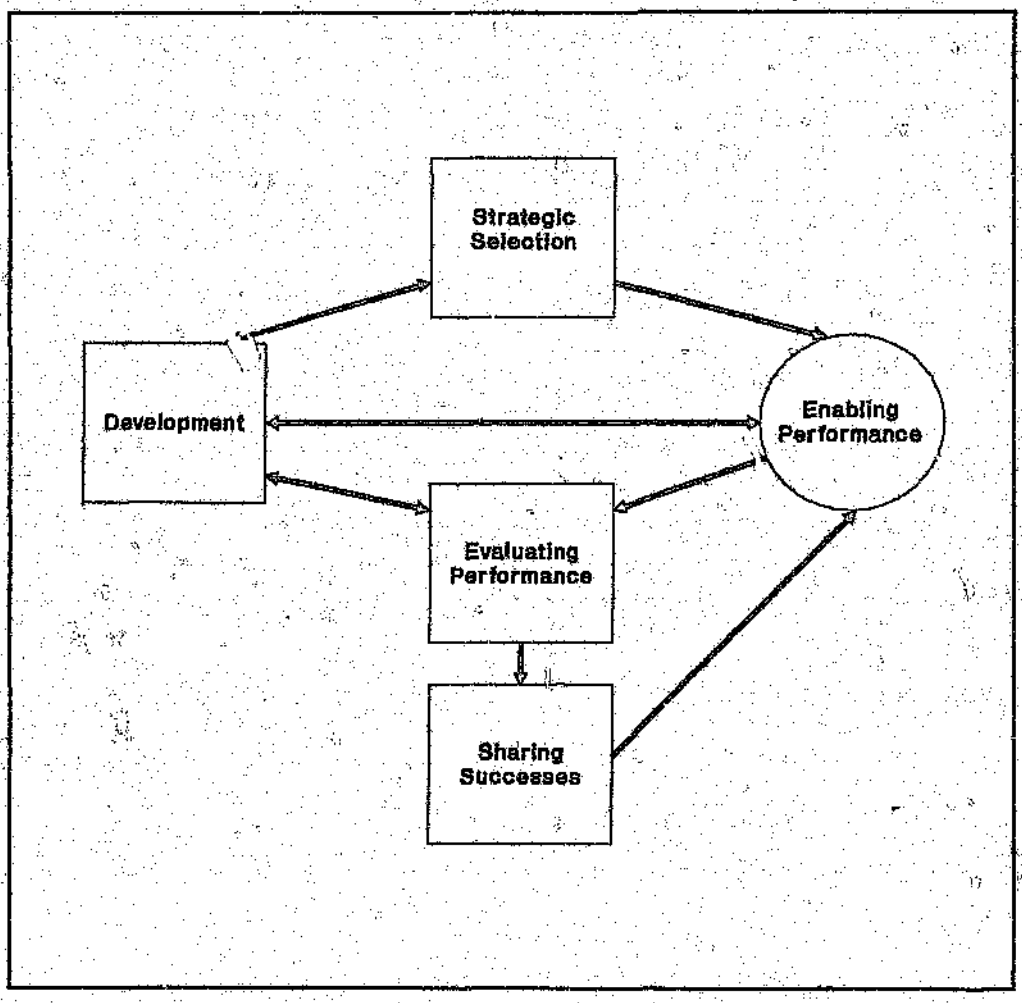

Figure 5.8 The Human Resource Cycle within an African World-View

The human resource cycle, in terms of the needs of an African world-view and the environmental constraints, must focus on developing the potential and capabilities of the internal staff to ensure their effective performance in the achievement of organisational goals. The process demands a focus on employee development and enabling performance. In addition, the process

must take cognisance of the need to share successes not simply through market related remuneration structures.

The African world-view acknowledges the relationship between ownership and benefit. It also acknowledges a relationship between labour and the benefit which flows from providing this labour. Management, in an African world-view, needs to recognise the advantage gained through increased commitment to organisational objectives when those who share in organisational success include those who have contributed their labour as well as those who have contributed their equity.

The African world-view demands a community which acknowledges the contribution of the individual and fosters the benefit of the individual within it. The individual within a benign community is able to commit himself to the goals and objectives of that community. The interview results indicate that respondents perceive the obligations of the organisation to be, first and foremost, to its internal community. Once the needs of the internal community have been attended to, the organisation can look to attending to the needs of the broader community.

From a selection and development perspective, this denotes a need to seek potential from within the organisation before seeking to fill positions from the outside. A balance must be created between the demands of the organisation for skills and the demands of the workforce to be provided with such skills. Figure 5.9 illustrates the relationship of the human resource cycle with the environment.

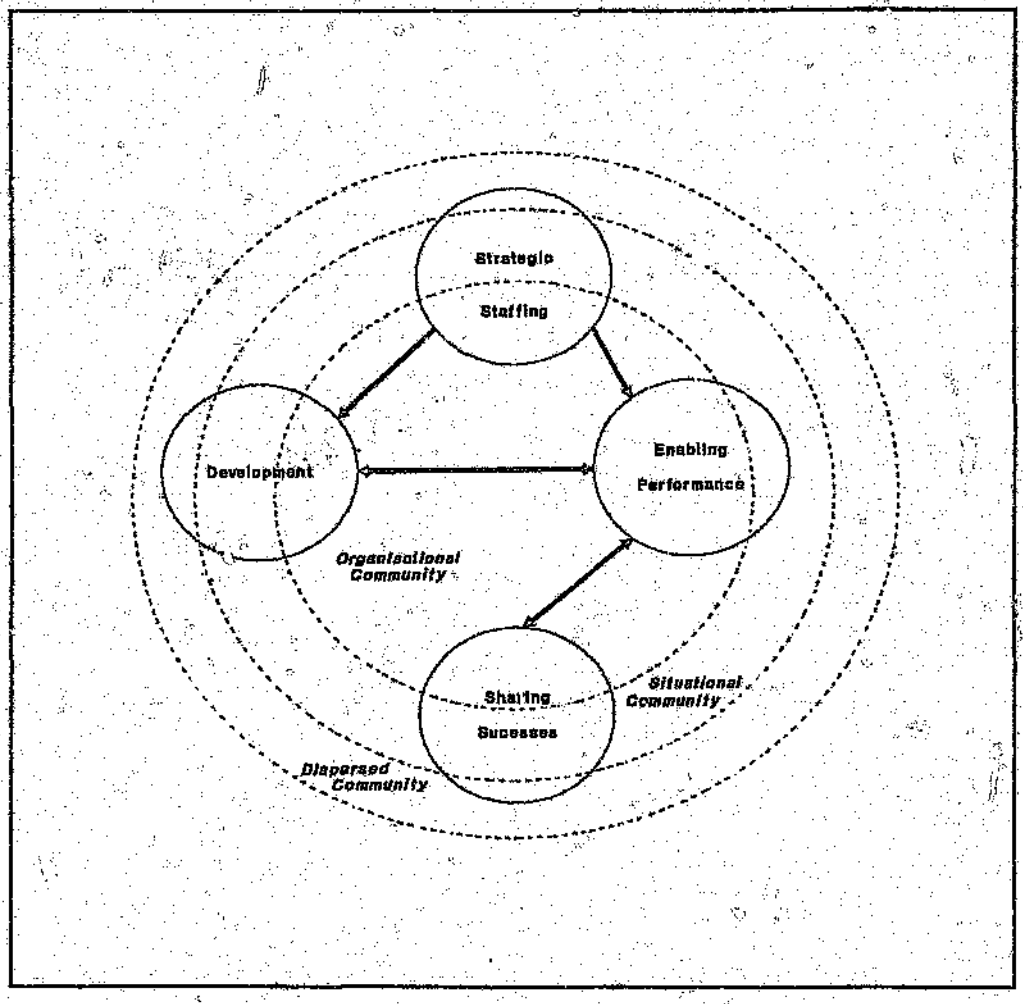

Figure 5.9 The Relationship between the Human Resource Cycle and Communities

The strategic selection process must be both internal and external to satisfy the demands of both the organisation and the workforce. Thus, the human resource cycle within the context of an African world-view focuses the strategic staffing component on the internal organisation as well as on the environment within which the organisation is placed.

In the same way that strategic staffing must be focused on all three levels of community, so must development. The first priority for the organisation in an African environment is to develop internal staff so that they can contribute to the achievement the strategic objectives of the organisation. This development process includes the alignment of employee objectives with those of the organisation. The second priority is to develop the situational community. This assists employees to fulfil their obligations to their community as well as providing a long-term pool of skilled labour from which the organisation is able to draw. The spin-off benefit for the organisation comes in increased commitment to it on the part of employees who perceive the organisation as being committed to the broader community.

In a similar fashion, sharing of successes becomes a priority. In the South African context, profit is a short-term issue which is not sustainable without a commitment to wealth creation. Wealth creation is a long-term view which accepts the principle that successes and rewards belong to a wider community than simply shareholders. If the creation of wealth is reliant on the contribution of labour as well as equity, then the African world-view perceives that the wealth created must be shared more liberally.

5.4.2.4 Enabling performance

Critical to the achievement of the strategic objectives of the organisation is the performance of the individuals within the organisation. Therefore, the organisation must be st ... ured to facilitate this performance. Selection, development and rewards are tools which expedite effective performance. These systems must be supported by management styles and organisational processes.

An African world-view requires a management style which will allow the individual to participate in and contribute towards decision which affect the daily working life of that individual. In an African cultural environment, the ability of the individual to contribute constructively towards decision making is recognised and encouraged. The individual's understanding of the task and his ability to contribute to problem solving need to be harnessed. Simultaneously, management needs to provide each employee with the information necessary to perform his job and to assess of his own level of success.

Management style also needs to adapt to developing *"I/Thou"* relationships with the workforce. This arises out of a recognition of the worth and contribution of each individual, but also requires that management embark on a process of getting to know the workforce. Listening skills and conflict management skills take on a critical role within this process.

The research respondents perceive the African culture to be an oral/aural culture. The emphasis, therefore, lies in talking and communicating through discussion. Traditional organisational culture, however, stresses communication through the written word. This manner of communicating has less impact on people who are often literately disadvantaged and who rely on the spoken word for communicating. Management, therefore, needs to learn to use oral communication effectively so as not to exclude people from an African cultural orientation from the flow of information within the organisation.

Performance is also enabled in an African world-view through trust. Traditional organisational structures are viewed by the

research respondents to be punitive. People have to be monitored and disciplined by the management structure. In an African environment, people are trusted to align their own needs with those of the community. People are seen as human beings who can be trusted and do not require constant monitoring. This has implications for the way in which managers manage and the way in which sanction within an organisation is applied.

Sanction becomes the task of the community, not that of the manager, as the individual who has failed has hindered the community in the achievement of its goals. The role of management changes from that of monitoring and controlling to that of making strategic decisions based on the information and input provided by all organisational constituents.

5.4.2.5 Time and cost constraints

Managing within an African framework has implications for increased costs in both time and money. There is a recognition among the research respondents that problem solving within an African framework is time consuming. In addition, the costs of developing people within the organisation and extending that development to the surrounding communities is expensive. Short-term solutions in buying in the skills required are often seen as more expedient within the traditional organisational structures.

Strategic human resource management is not only about ensuring that short-term organisational goals can be met. If human resource management is to be truly strategic, it must assist the organisation to ensure its survival into the next decade and century. This presupposes that a long-term view of the managing of human resources is a priority. Creating and sustaining competitive

advantage comes, not only from meeting the short-term requirements of the organisation, but from ensuring that the organisation has access to the resources it requires in the future.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The findings of this research indicate that there are two conflicting dominant cultures within the South African cultural environment. These cultures run parallel with our society and interface most commonly in the workplace. The workplace is, however, dominated by one of those cultures - the Colonial culture. This dominance exacerbates the already present conflict which exists between the cultural groupings.

As a result of this inter-cultural conflict, organisations are less effective than they might be if cognisance were taken of the features of the less dominant culture - the African culture. By moving away from regarding people as factors of production to recognising the humanity of each individual, and by incorporating features of African culture into the way in which people are managed, it is the contention of this research that both organisations and the people within them can become more effective.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS RESEARCH

According to Hofstede (1983) nationality is important to management. Nationality and national history shapes the forms that government and institutions take. Nationality has symbolic importance for people. As a result people feel the differences between themselves and others as a reality. Finally, the cultural features of nationality shape the thinking of people. An understanding of national culture becomes important if, as Fonbrum (1984a) asserts is necessary, organisational culture is to be in any way consistent with societal culture.

Within the multi-cultural context of South African an understanding of the various societal cultural forces within which organisations must survive and function is important. Douwes Dekker (1993) states that South Africa is a society in transition. Within this environment organisations must, according to Drucker (1992), be constituted to cast away the known and familiar in favour of the new which will provide competitive advantage.

South African organisations, according to the results of this research, are constituted on western lines and dominated by western thinking. This finding supports Lessem's (1993c) contention that management within South Africa has drawn its paradigms from a predominantly western orientation. Within a multi-cultural society which is undergoing change the old paradigms need to be re-examined and replaced, where necessary, for more relevant paradigms.

The results of this research indicate that there are two dominant cultures within the South African context - a Colonial culture with its roots in the western thinking and history of the white colonisers of Africa and an African culture which has its roots in the values and experience of the indigenous population. However, historical and structural factors have allowed the Colonial culture to assume dominance within the cultures that exist in organisations. African culture has been under-valued by all sectors of the population and the potential of this culture in supporting organisational success has been ignored by organisations.

The results of this disregard for the values and features of one of our dominant cultures has been that large sectors of the population have been alienated from their work-lives. They are required to conform to a foreign culture which diminishes their feelings of humanity.

As South African society and markets open up the need to compete more effectively in our own national market and in international markets becomes more important. While sanctions may have had a negative effect on the economy, they cushioned South African organisations from the competition of international organisations. That cushion no longer exists and South African organisations must devise ways of creating and sustaining competitive advantage. This signifies that all people, but particularly those with an African cultural orientation, who enter organisations have to be managed in a way which will harness their commitment to the organisation and minimise their alienation and organisational dysfunction.

Porter (1990) states that nations that have built competitive advantage have done so by building on those features of national culture that are unique to them. The differentiating feature of South Africa lies in its multiplicity of culture and particularly in those features of African culture which distinguish it from a western way of thinking. From an African perspective these

distinguishing features are the relationship which exists between individuals. African culture recognises and cherishes the humanity of each individual yet does not separate the individual from his community.

The synchronistic nature of African thinking is able to accept greater alignment between the strategic objectives of the individual and the needs of the organisation. However, if this synchronisity is to be harnessed organisations have to review the way they manage people. The process of strategic human resource management is one of aligning the management of people within an organisation with the strategic direction of that organisation in order to achieve the strategic goals of that organisation. If human resource management is to achieve its strategic objectives it must take cognisance of the features of African culture which will facilitate the alignment of organisational and individual objectives.

The results of this research indicate that the management of human resources in a strategic fashion within the South African context suggests a need for greater organisational recognition of the concept of community - the organisation as a community and the organisation within a community. In order to create this community, the cycle of human resource activities as outlined by Devanna, *et al.*, (1984) requires reorganisation. A greater emphasis should be placed on development. Development is not an outcome of performance and performance appraisal. Rather performance is an effect of development. In addition, development is not simply an activity which takes place within the confines of the organisation, it involves the surrounding and dispersed communities as well.

Within the cycle of human resource activities Devanna, *et al.*, (1984) include rewards. The analysis of the research results indicate that rewards must include sharing successes in the form of sharing wealth created. This suggests that an emphasis purely on profitability, which implies shareholder

wealth, is not sufficient to drive commitment. Commitment within and African world-view stems out of the knowledge that all who contribute will receive a share of the benefit.

This research highlights the need for a paradigm shift on the part of management in order to harness the commitment of a large and growing sector of the workforce. If management is to manage effectively this constituency cannot be ignored. If organisations are going to create competitive advantage within an increasingly competitive market place all the resources at the disposal of the organisation have to be effectively managed.

6.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research was intended to be a pilot study and in the form of theory building rather than theory testing. The results of this research indicates a number of areas for future research.

- Hofstede (1980) analysed South African national culture (as well as 50 other national cultures) in terms of four dimensions. Research is required to establish how South African national culture/s currently measures in terms of these dimensions.

- The concepts of the features of South African culture as indicated here require further testing using a more structured approach and a larger sample to determine whether the perceptions of research respondents are accurately borne out by a larger sample.

- This research suggests that conflict exists within organisations between different cultures. Both the perceptions and reality of various strata of organisational constituents regarding this inter-cultural conflict should

be analysed. This would mean tapping into the perceptions of management as well as various levels of the workforce.

- Kilmann (1990) states that the gap between desired and actual norms impact on productivity and morale. An investigation of the extent of the gap between actual and desired norms needs to be undertaken both to determine the extent of this gap and the relationship between any gap and its impact on productivity and morale. Depending on the design of the research this may be within a single organisation or across a number of organisations.

- This research has suggested a framework for an African approach to strategic human resource management. The potential effectiveness of this approach needs to be established. Such research would be complimented by investigating management and/or workforce readiness to accept and implement such an approach and the constraints which might hinder such an approach.

6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

The research was intended to be a pilot study which would identify themes, constructs and concepts. As is common in qualitative research, the sample size was small which reduces the reliability of the data. In addition, given the nature of the methodology it would be difficult to replicate the research and validate the findings in this way.

The methodology demanded that the researcher was able to identify themes and concepts which emerged from a quantity of unstructured data. The qualitative nature of the data made it inaccessible to any statistical analysis. The results were, therefore, a function of the researcher's ability to "read"

the data effectively. The data which was obtained was also highly reliant on the goodwill of the prospective participants and their ability to articulate their thoughts and experiences in respect of the topic.

The structure of the data maps as presented in Appendix III also reflects the researcher's interpretation of the constructs and themes in the manner in which these have been grouped together. It is possible that another analyst might group certain concepts differently which might impact on the interpretation of the results.

The research has been limited to the Pretoria-Johannesburg areas. Because of this the data obtained cannot, necessarily, be extrapolated to include the whole of South Africa. There may be features of national culture which are identifiable in other regions which have not been tapped. Simultaneously, features which have been identified may only be applicable to the region from which the information has been gathered.

6.4 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

South African organisations face a number of challenges in a rapidly changing environment. Not least among these challenges is how to survive in an increasingly competitive environment with diminishing access to the skills required to sustain organisational effectiveness. A priority for organisations is to ensure that the human resources at the disposal of the organisation can be utilised effectively and productively. This challenge suggests that a new approach to the management of people is required.

This research utilised a different and novel methodology which has yielded substantial amounts of useful data. The data mapping approach to the analysis of the data allowed this data to be charted and evaluated in

manageable segments. As an approach to developing theory this methodology has proved to be extremely valuable. It can be recommended as a methodology to others wishing to establish constructs from the perspective of a small sample.

The results of this research indicate that there are two dominant South African national cultures, a Colonial culture and an African culture. The African culture, particularly its emphasis on the acceptance of and respect for the humanity of each individual, has been neglected in terms of its potential usefulness in spurring organisational effectiveness and harnessing the commitment of people to the achievement of organisational goals.

While the respondents in this research recognised the need to maintain proven methods of organisational structure and systems, they perceived a need to recognise and revalue the features of African culture. Of particular significance, in the view of the research respondents, is the value which African culture places on humanity and the relationships between people and between people and the community. By harnessing these values in the way people are managed within organisations, the research results indicate that there is potential for improved organisational effectiveness and for harnessing competitive advantage.

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APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW INTRODUCTION AND AIDE-DE-MEMOIR

INTRODUCTION

I am currently studying towards a requirement for a Masters degree in Human Resource Management. As a requirement for the degree I am required to undertake research into a topic of my choice. I am, therefore, trying to determine whether there is such a thing which we can call a South African culture and what the features of this culture are. I am interviewing a number of people who are not experts on culture but who have a wide range of contact with a variety of people at all levels either within organisations or within the community. I am trying to establish their views and perceptions.

AIDE-DE-MEMOIR

1. In your opinion, are South African organisations structured to allow employees to succeed?

2. In your opinion, are there features of the South African workforce which make it unique?
   - How would you describe these features?

3. What do you believe are the core values and beliefs of workers in South African organisations?
   - Do you believe that these differ from the core values/beliefs of workers in other countries?

- In what way are these different?

4. What, in you opinion, are the strengths of the South African workforce?

5. Are there aspects of societal/cultural factors which, in your opinion, are being ignored by organisations?
   - Why do you believe these to be important?
   - How, in your opinion, should they be incorporated into organisational structures/systems?
   - What effects can be expected by incorporating these?

6. If society is changing how, in your opinion, should organisations be adjusting to fit these changes?

7. Do you believe that organisational structures in any way mirror those of society and social culture?
   - Should they do so and in what way?
   - What benefits,in your opinion, are to be derived from this for both employees and for organisations?

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS

DR ALLWOOD - WITS MEDICAL SCHOOL

Dr Allwood spent eight years practising medicine in Black rural hospitals. After returning to specialise in Psychiatry he worked at Baragwanath Hospital. He is currently with Wits Medical School.

LAURA BEST - BLACK SASH, PRETORIA ADVICE OFFICE

Ms Best has a B.A. (Hons) majoring in Industrial Psychology from the University of Cape Town. She has worked at the Pretoria Advice Office of the Black Sash since graduating two years ago.

VAL CHRISTADOU - COMMUNITY TRAINING INSTITUTE c.c.

Ms Christadou trained as a primary school teacher. While teaching at the E.H. Harris school in Johannesburg she was required to teach English to immigrant children. During this time she developed the foundation for teaching English as a second language. She left teaching to set up her own business which is concerned with providing English language literacy to those for whom it is not a home language.

ALICE COETZEE - INSTITUTE FOR A DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE FOR SOUTH AFRICA (IDASA)

Ms Coetzee is currently involved in Voter Education projects for IDASA. Prior to this she worked for two years in Mamelodi and Atteridgeville in trying to resolve the education crisis through forums. Before joining IDASA she worked for some time as a journalist and for six years in Public Relations.

MICHAEL GUMBI - NATIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT TRUST

After leaving school in 1987, Mr Gumbi became one of the founders of the Johannesburg Youth Movement, the objective of which was to provide an umbrella body which could help in developing the youth. The National Youth Movement was launched in 1992 as a result of the problems and demands facing the youth in South Africa. This movement became a Trust in 1993. Mr Gumbi continues to work with the Trust.

SHERI HAMILTON - TRAINING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERACY (TELL)

Ms Hamilton is currently the Director of TELL which she and a group of co-workers formed two years ago. TELL is concerned with the development of literacy programmes and the training of literacy facilitators. Prior to starting TELL Ms Hamilton studied Journalism and worked as a journalist for a number of years. She subsequently worked with other NGO's in the literacy field. She is currently also part of the National Literacy Co-operation which is a coordinating body charged with forming a national umbrella organisation for all agencies involved in the field of literacy.

JOE MALAPELA - COMPUMENT

Mr Malapela worked in industry for a number of years in the marketing field. He subsequently moved into advertising as an Accounts Executive. He now works for Compument as a consultant where his role is to design and implement Affirmative Action programmes within companies.

ZINZI MANDELA-HLONGWANE - OPERATION HUNGER

Ms Mandela-Hlongwane grew up in Soweto. Although she now lives in Bez Valley she is still an active member of a Stokvel in Soweto. She currently works in the Fund Raising and Promotions Department of Operation Hunger.

CHIEF MDITSHWA - TRANSKEI CONSULATE

Chief Mditshwa is a traditional leader and was a member of the Transkei Legislative Assembly. He is currently Consul at the Transkei Consulate in Johannesburg. While his duties take him away from those of a traditional leader, he has appointed a replacement in his absence, he is still required to attend to these duties on significant occasions.

MATHATA MODIBANE - IKAGENG-BELLAVISTA ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE

Ms Madibane has a Master of Education from the University of the Witwatersrand. She works for Ogilvey Mather as a Media Planner in the mornings and is Principal of the Ikageng-Bellavista Adult Education Centre which operates from Monday to Thursday in the evenings.

LOT NDLOVU - BLACK MANAGEMENT FORUM

Mr Ndlovu is the Executive Director of the Black Management Forum and a director and trustee of numerous companies and organisations including the Institute for Personnel Management. He has worked in the corporate sector for a number of years in Human Resource Management and Labour Relations.

KUMI NAIDOO - SACHED

Kumi Naidoo is Assistant Director for Educational Outreach of SACHED as well as the National Director of the National Literacy Co-operation which formed to establish a communications network between literacy organisations and to co-ordinate and consolidate the effects of this sector. The National Literacy Co-operation is now being formed into a national Adult Basic Education NGO which will unite all affiliates into a single organisation.

KEITH PEACOCK - MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT

Mr Peacock trained as an engineer in his native England. After moving to South Africa he worked as Principal of Khanya College for two years. He now operates his own consultancy which deals in strategy development and implementation as well as affirmative/positive action programmes.

JOE RAKGOADI - PROJECT LITERACY

Mr Rakgoadi is currently involved in facilitating Voter Education programmes run by Project Literacy. He has previously been involved in literacy training. Prior to joining Project Literacy he worked in industry and commerce.

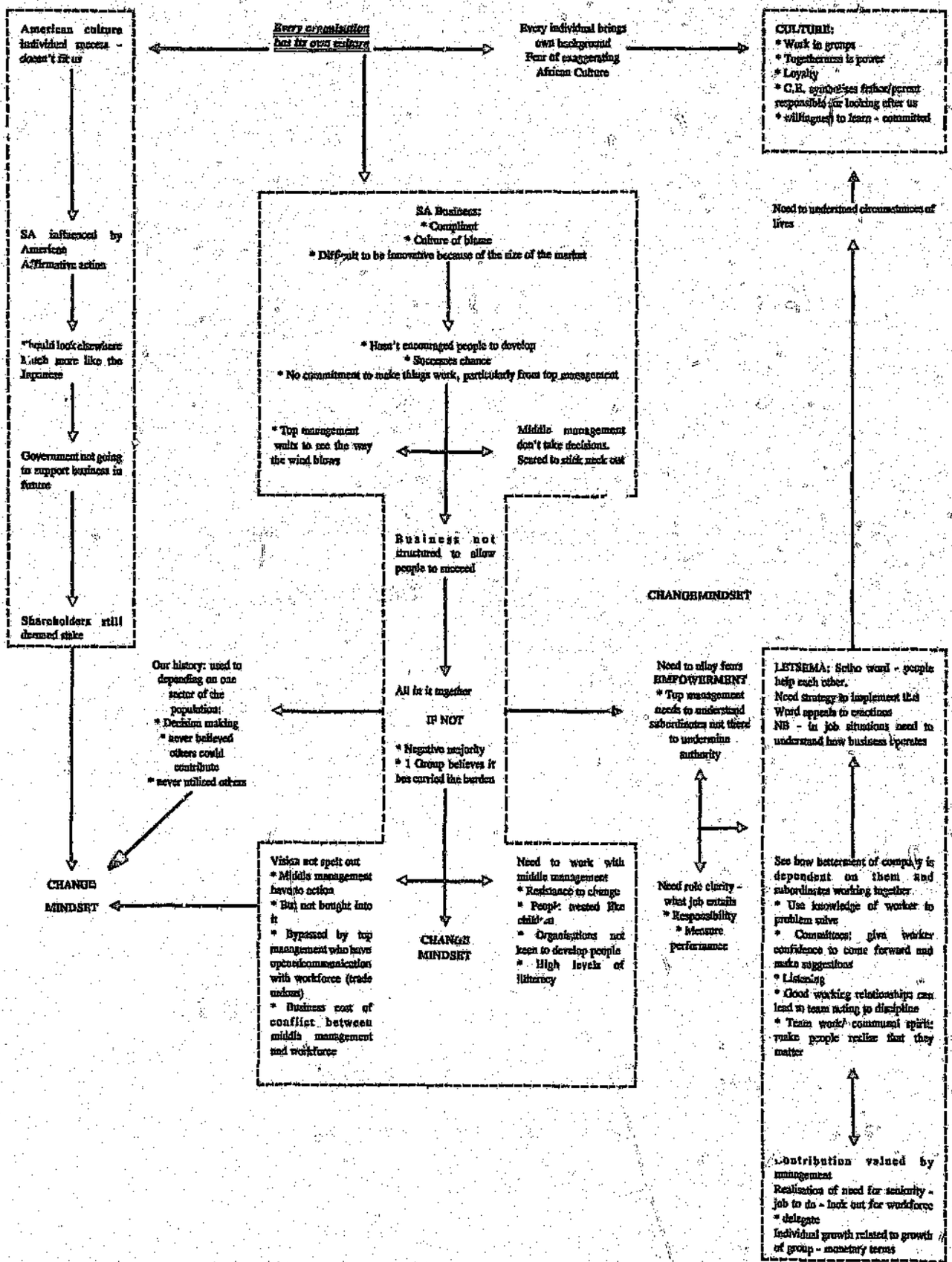
NOMVUYA SOBUWA - ALEXANDRA HEALTH CLINIC

Ms Sobuwa was born in the Transkei. She trained and worked as a nurse. She then joined MEDUNSA after completing her degree and lectured for a time there. After deciding that her skills and interests lay in administration she completed a Masters degree at the Rand Afrikaans University. She tried to enter the private sector but was unsuccessful because of the belief within organisations that her nursing experience was inappropriate. She was appointed Director of the Alexandra Health Clinic in October 1993.

APPENDIX III

INDIVIDUAL DATA MAPS

DATA MAP 1: INTERVIEW 1



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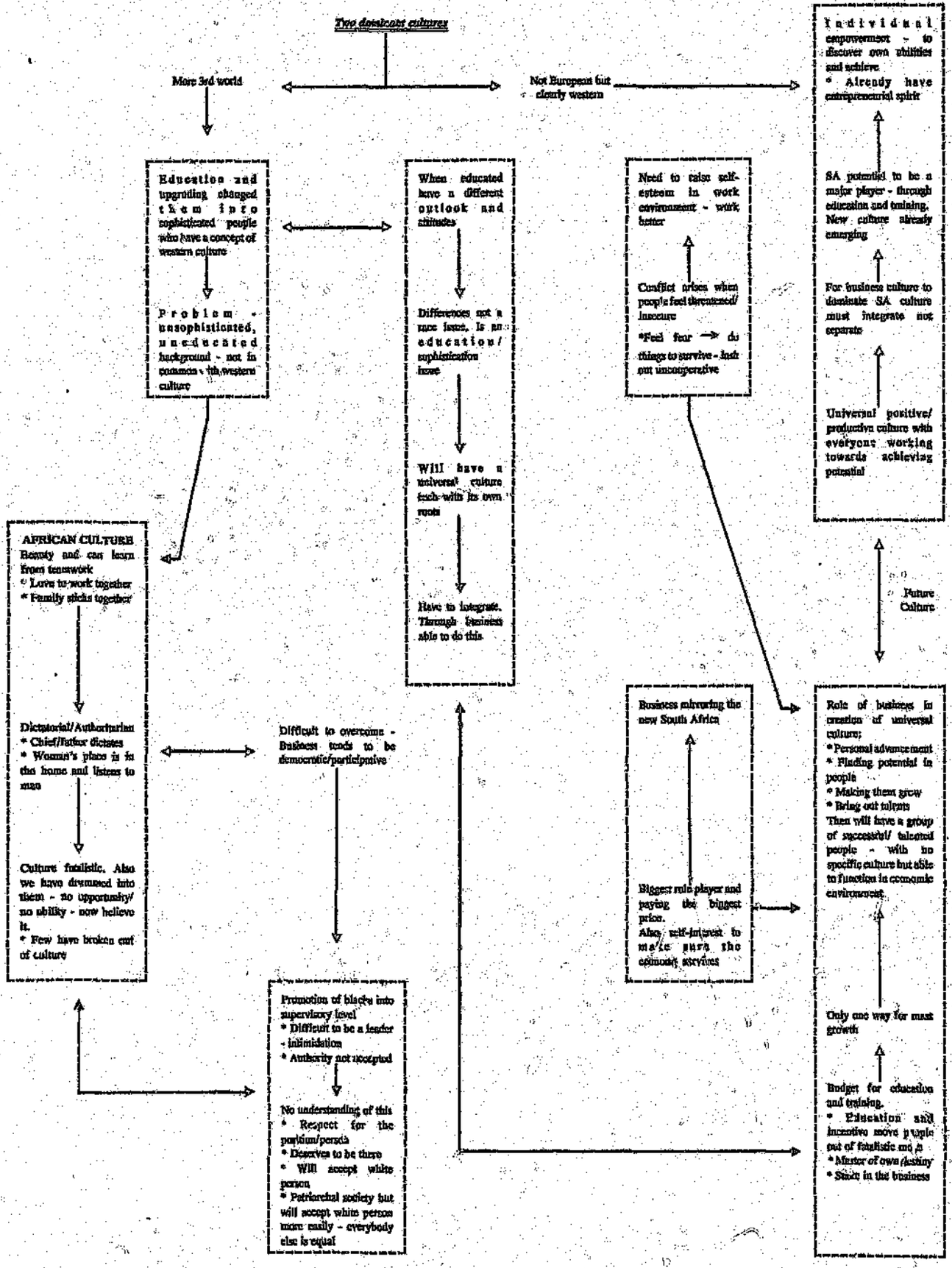

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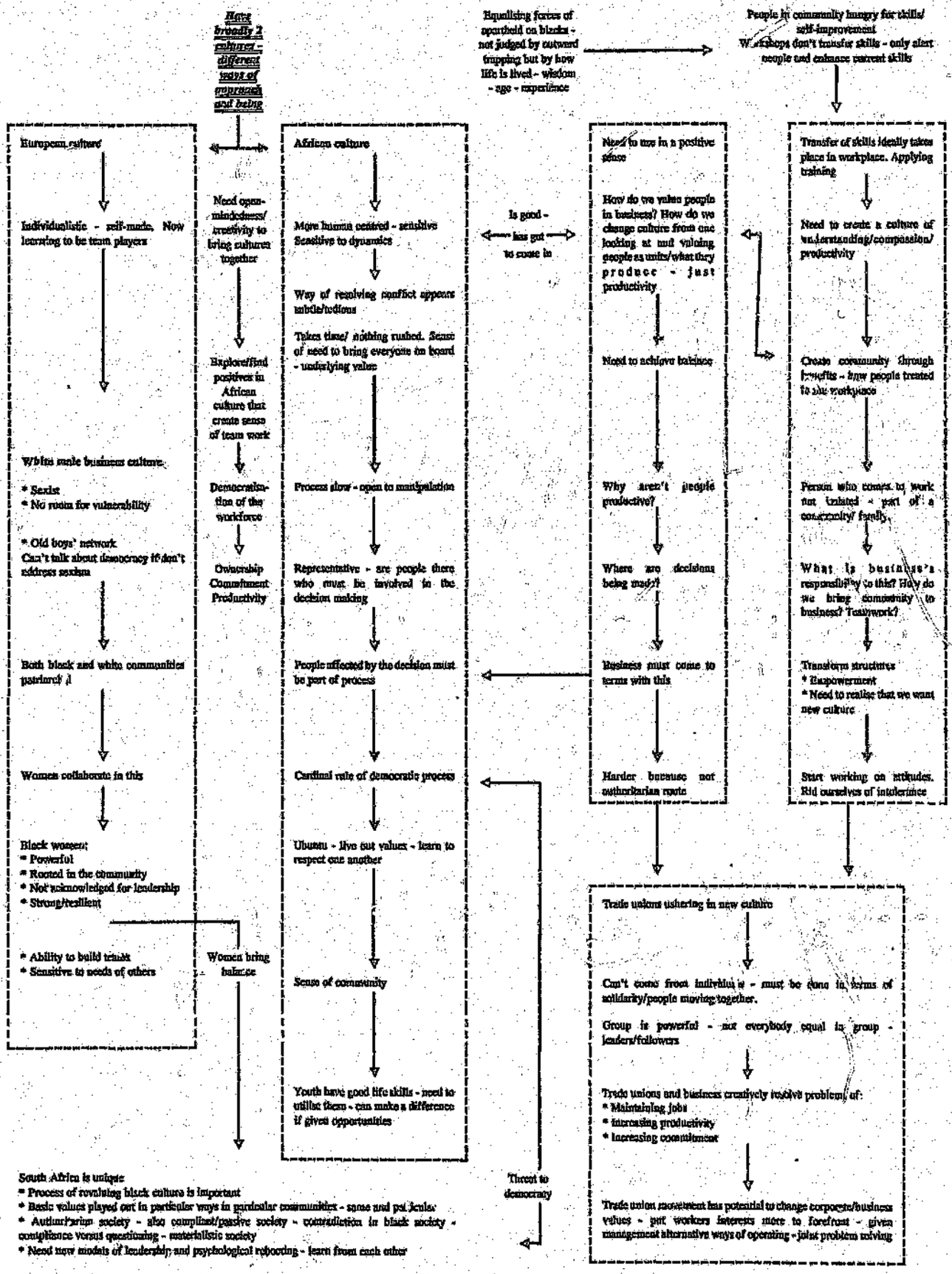

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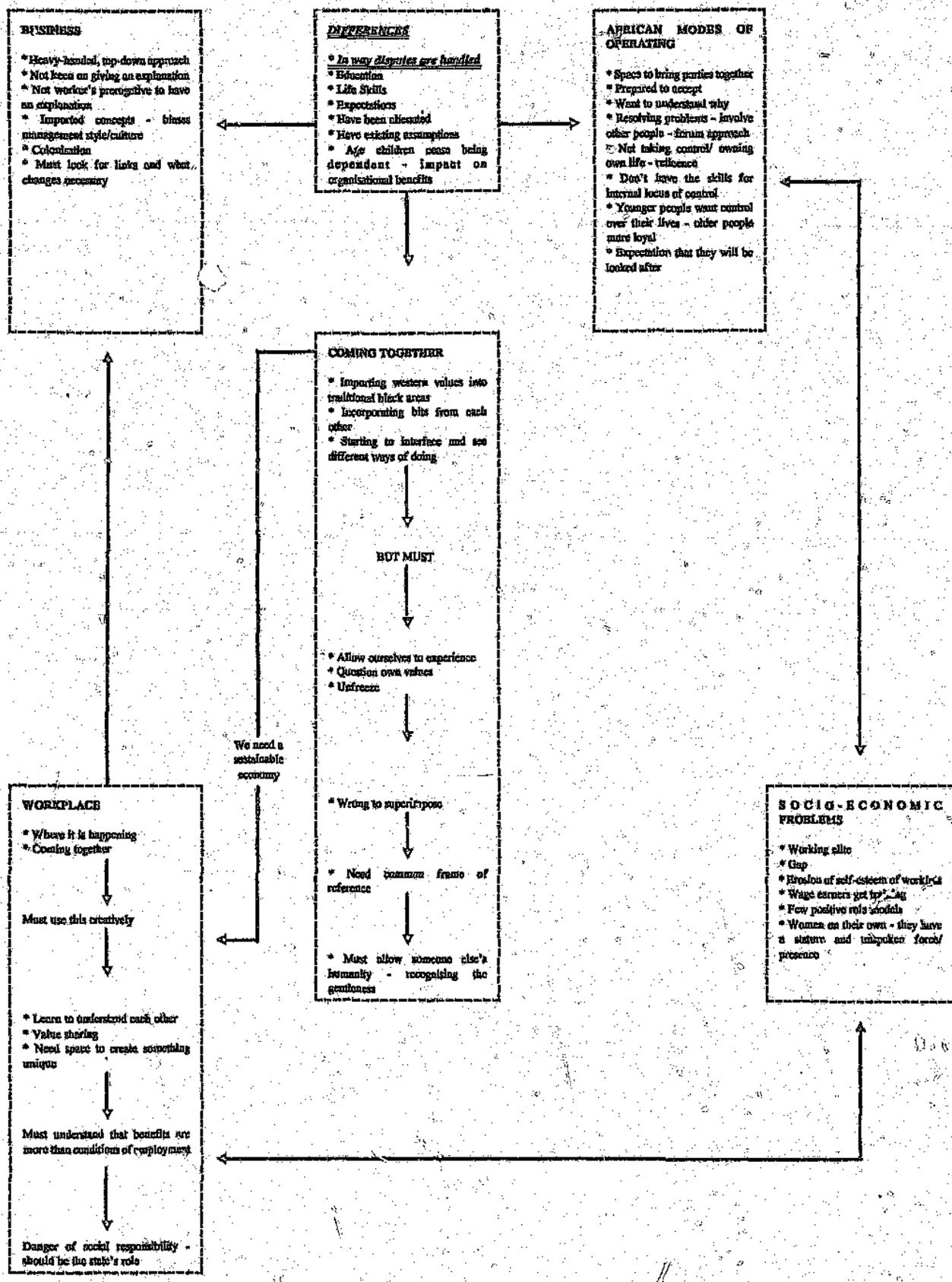

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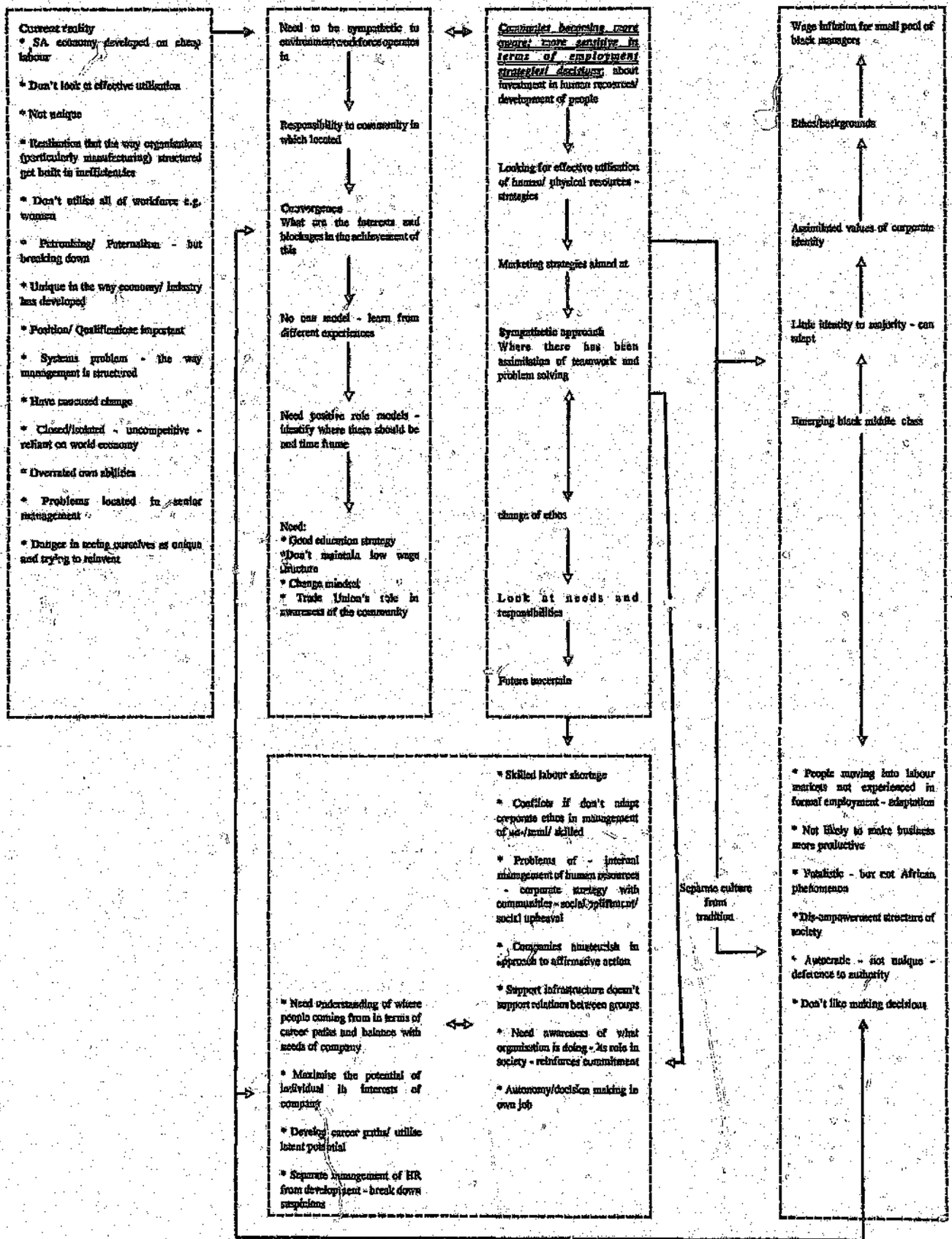

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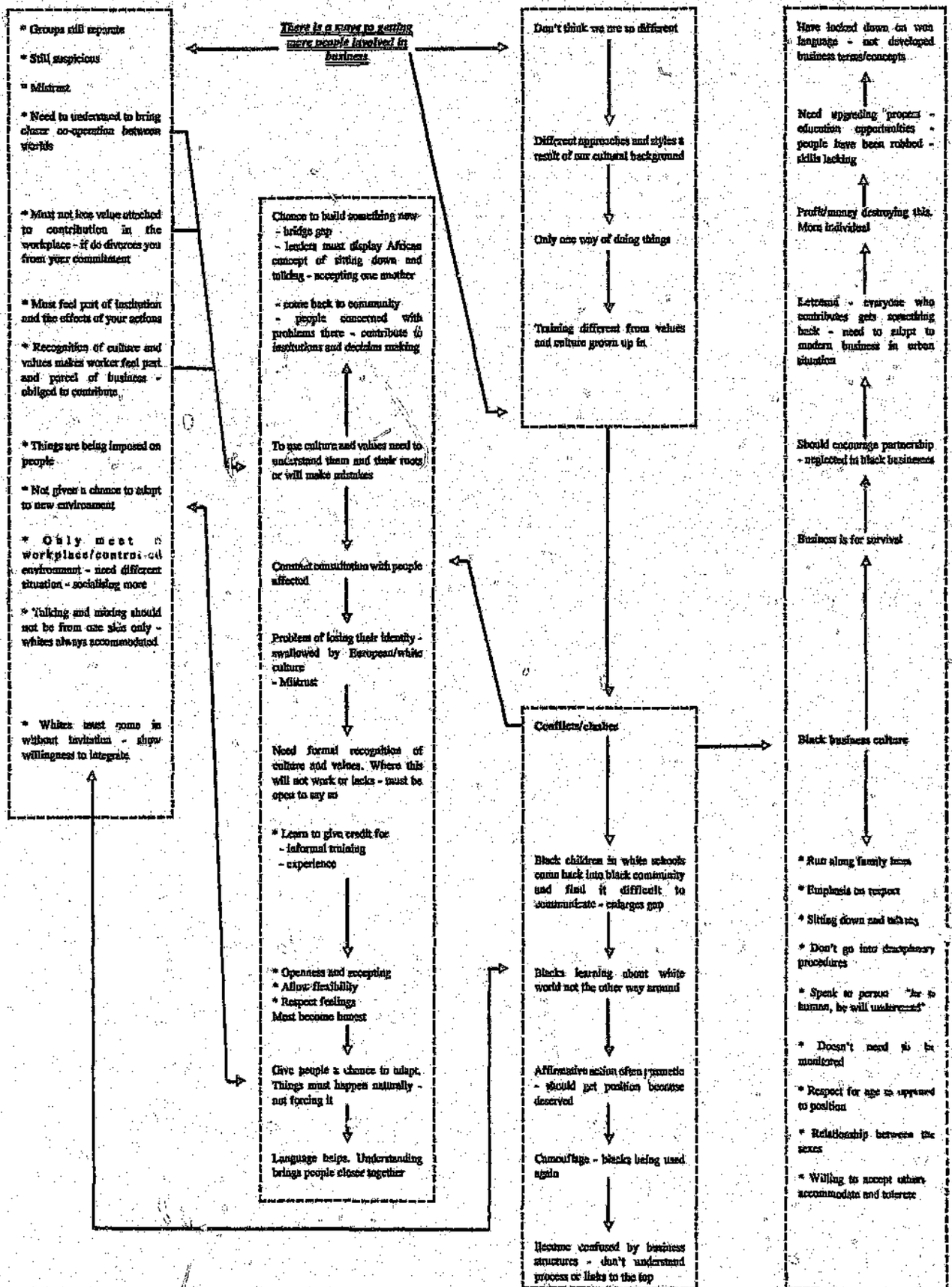

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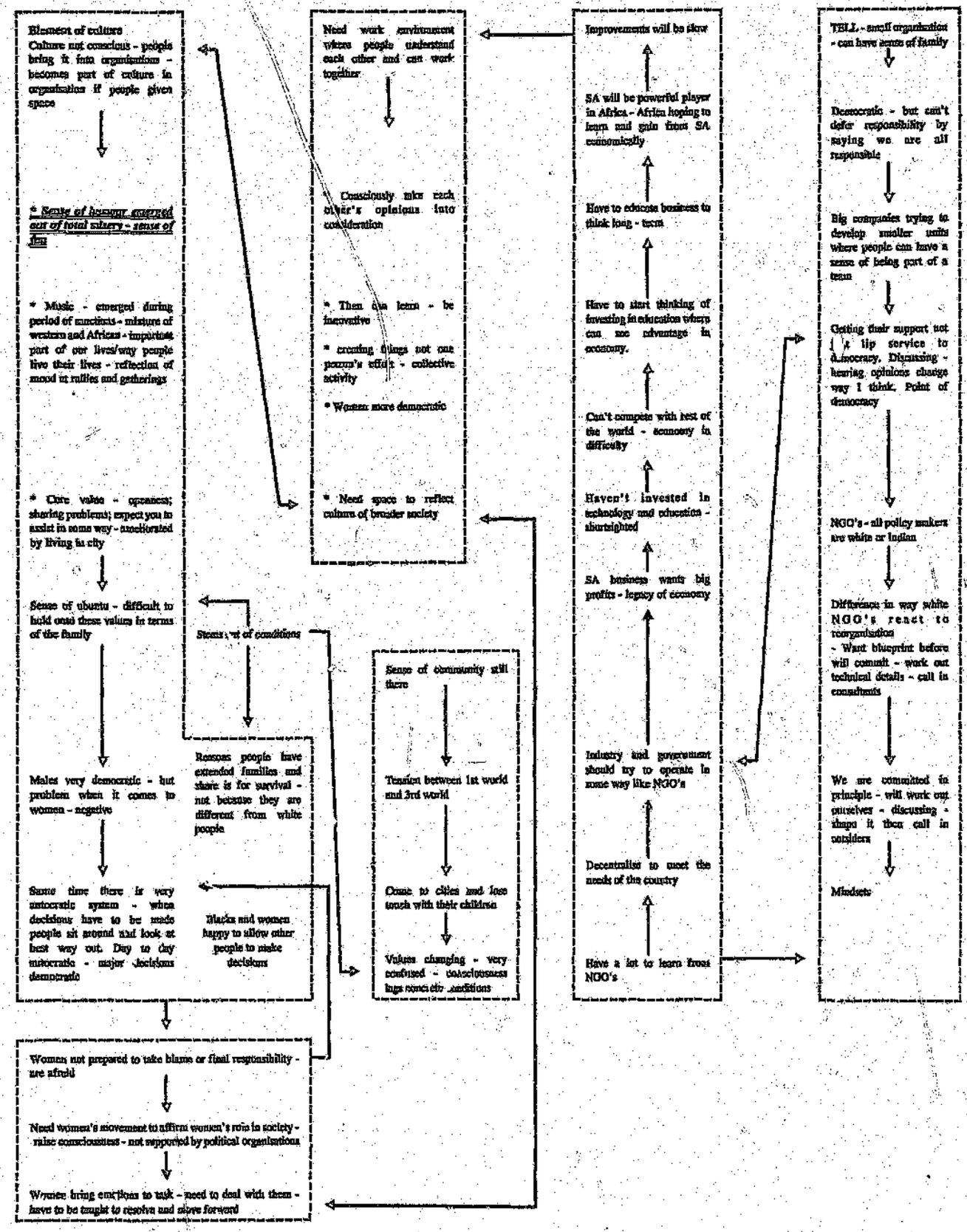

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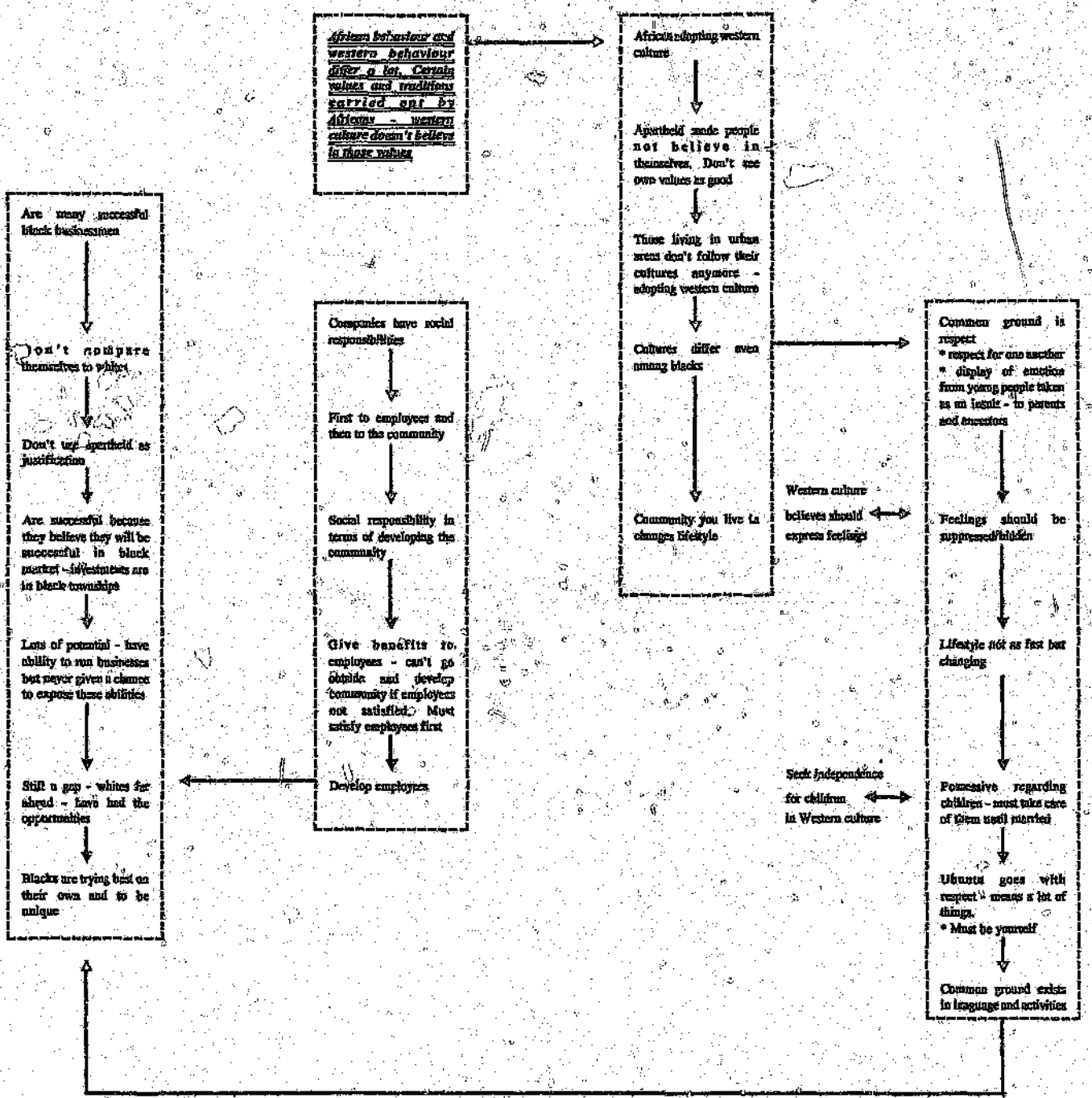

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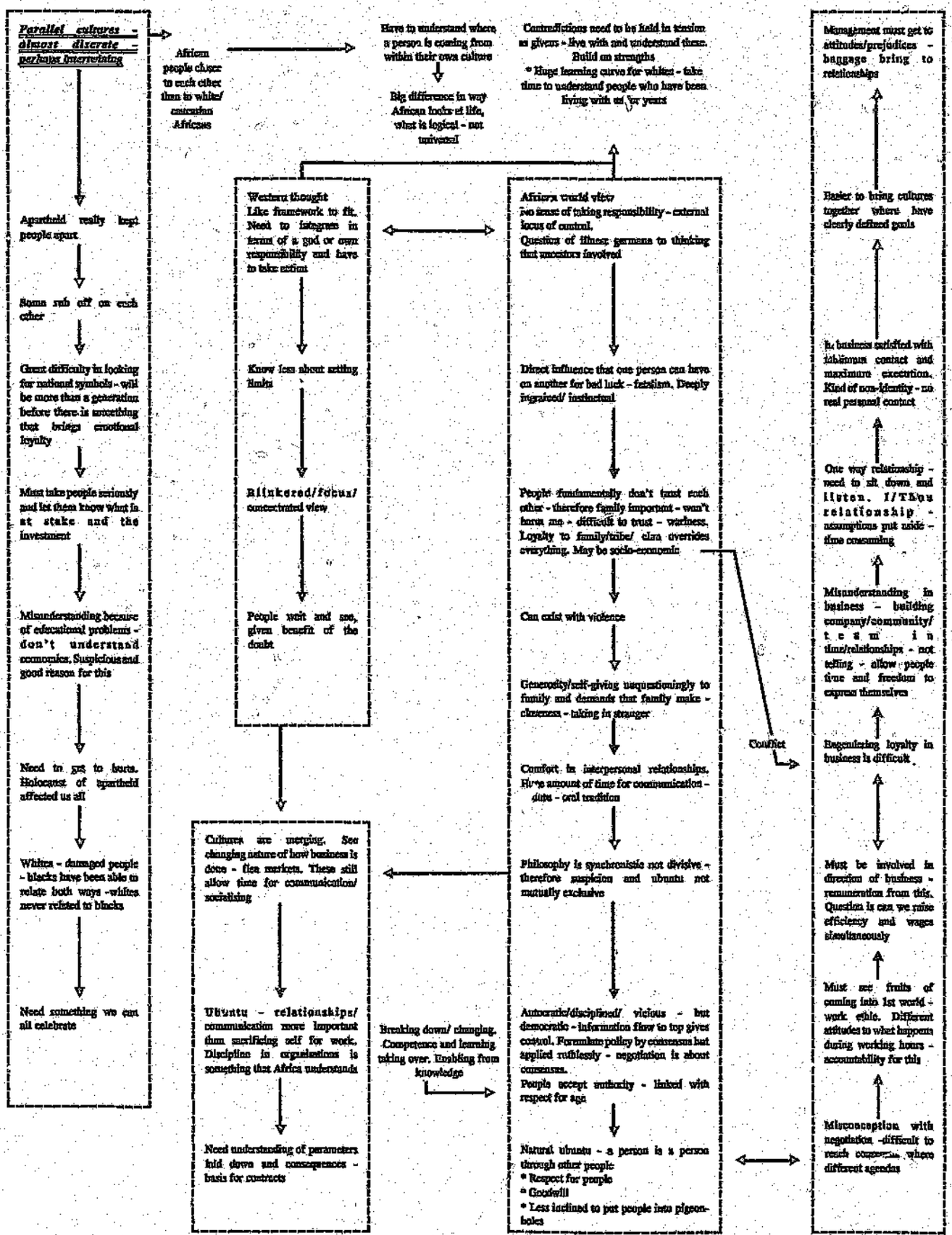

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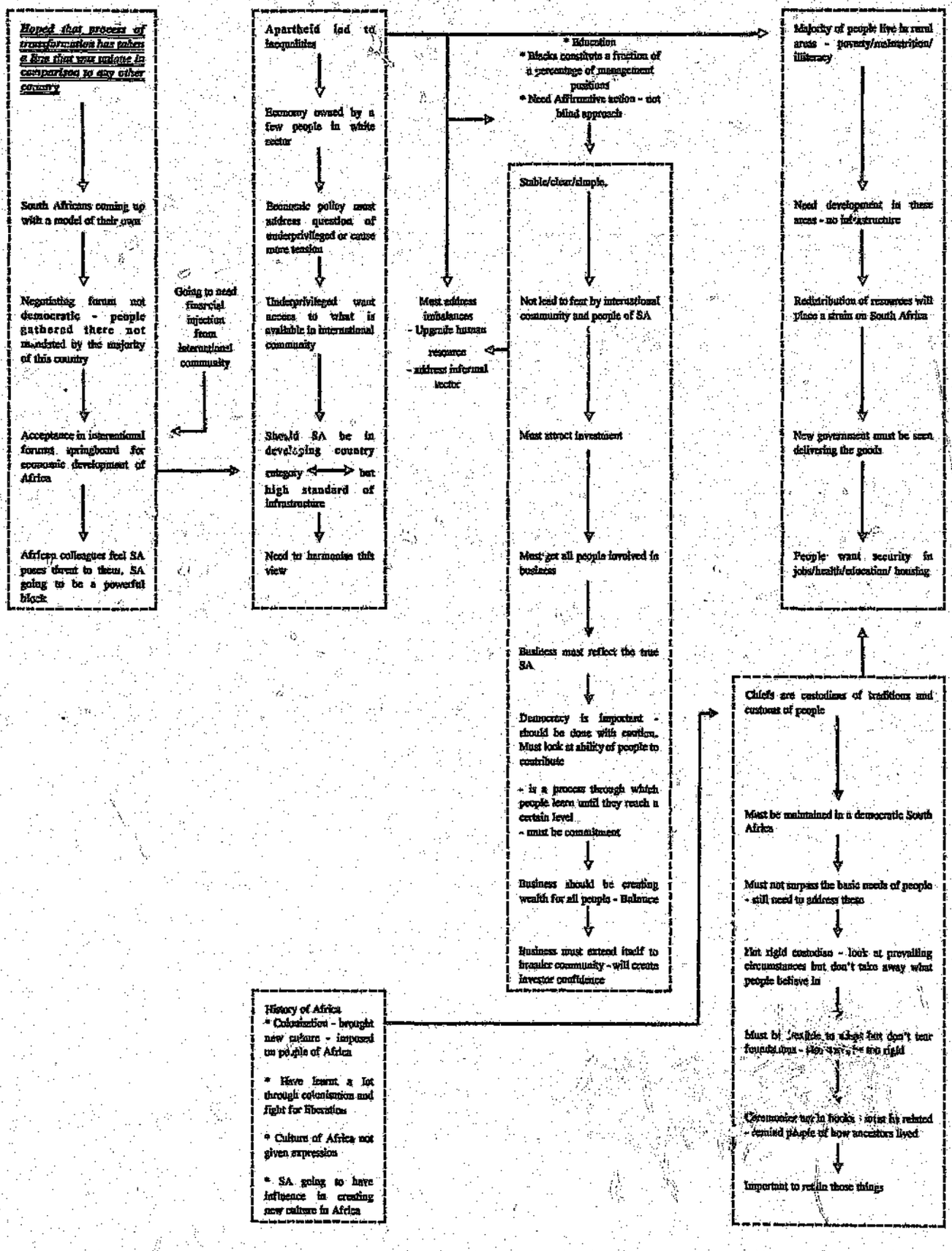

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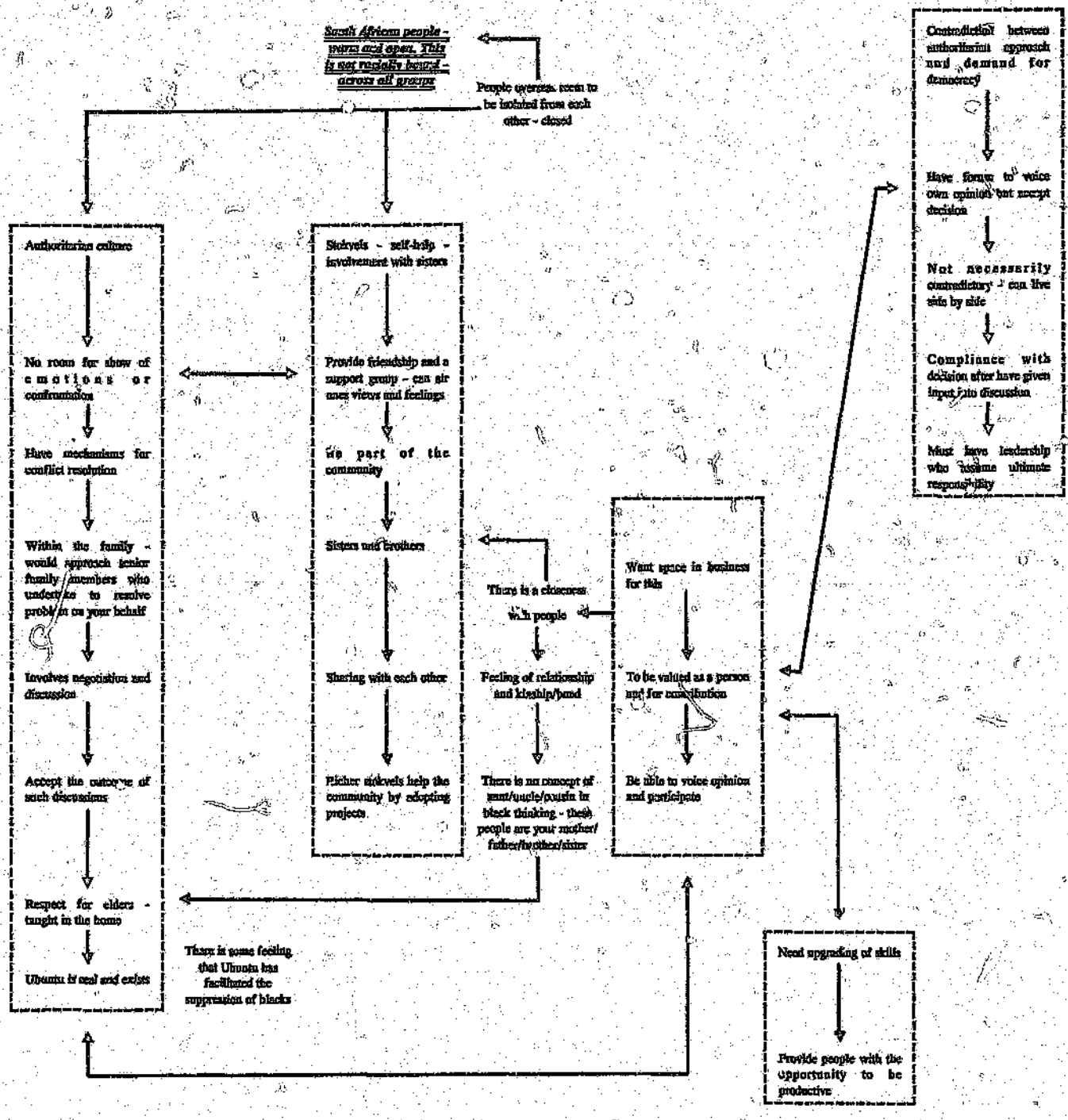

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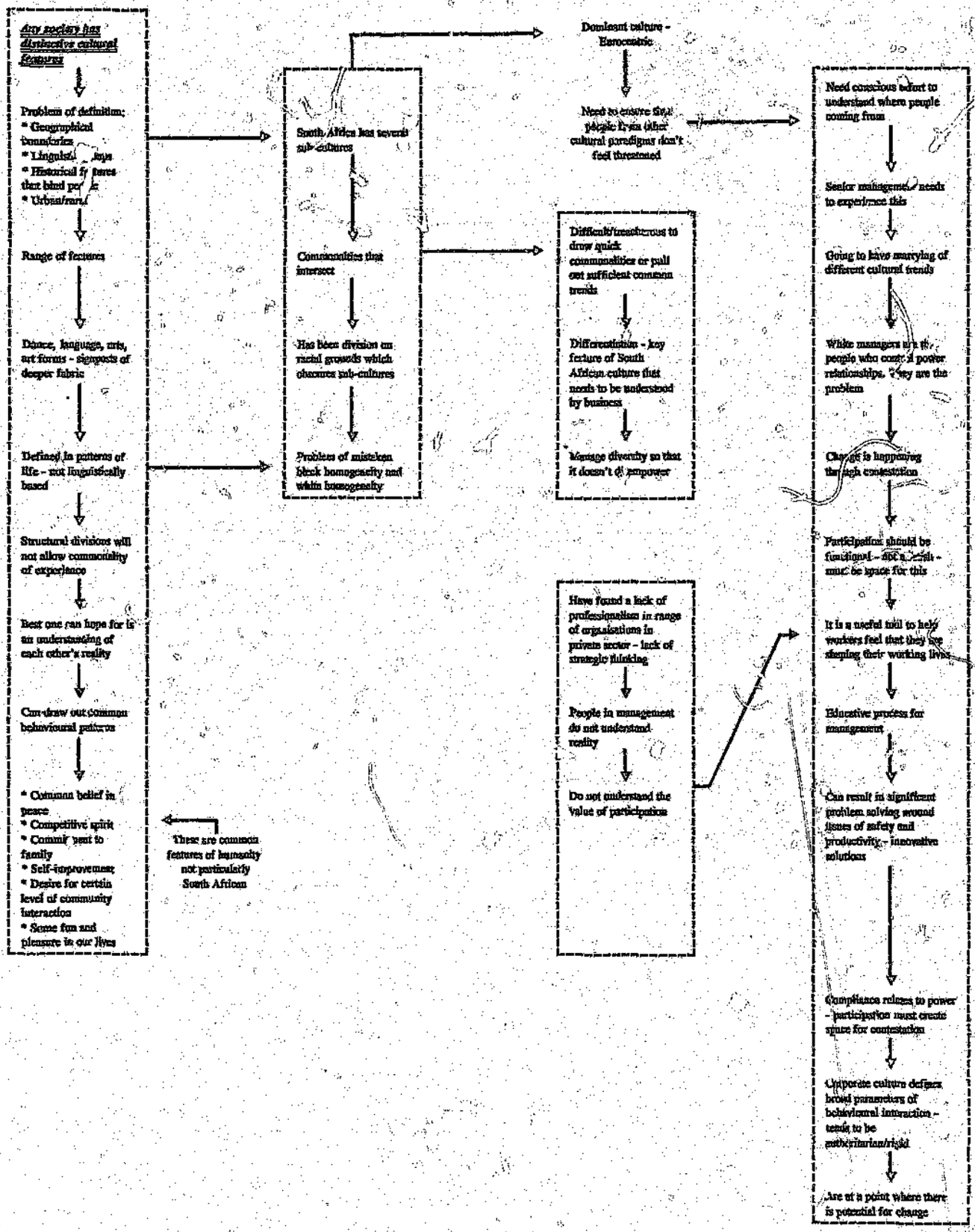

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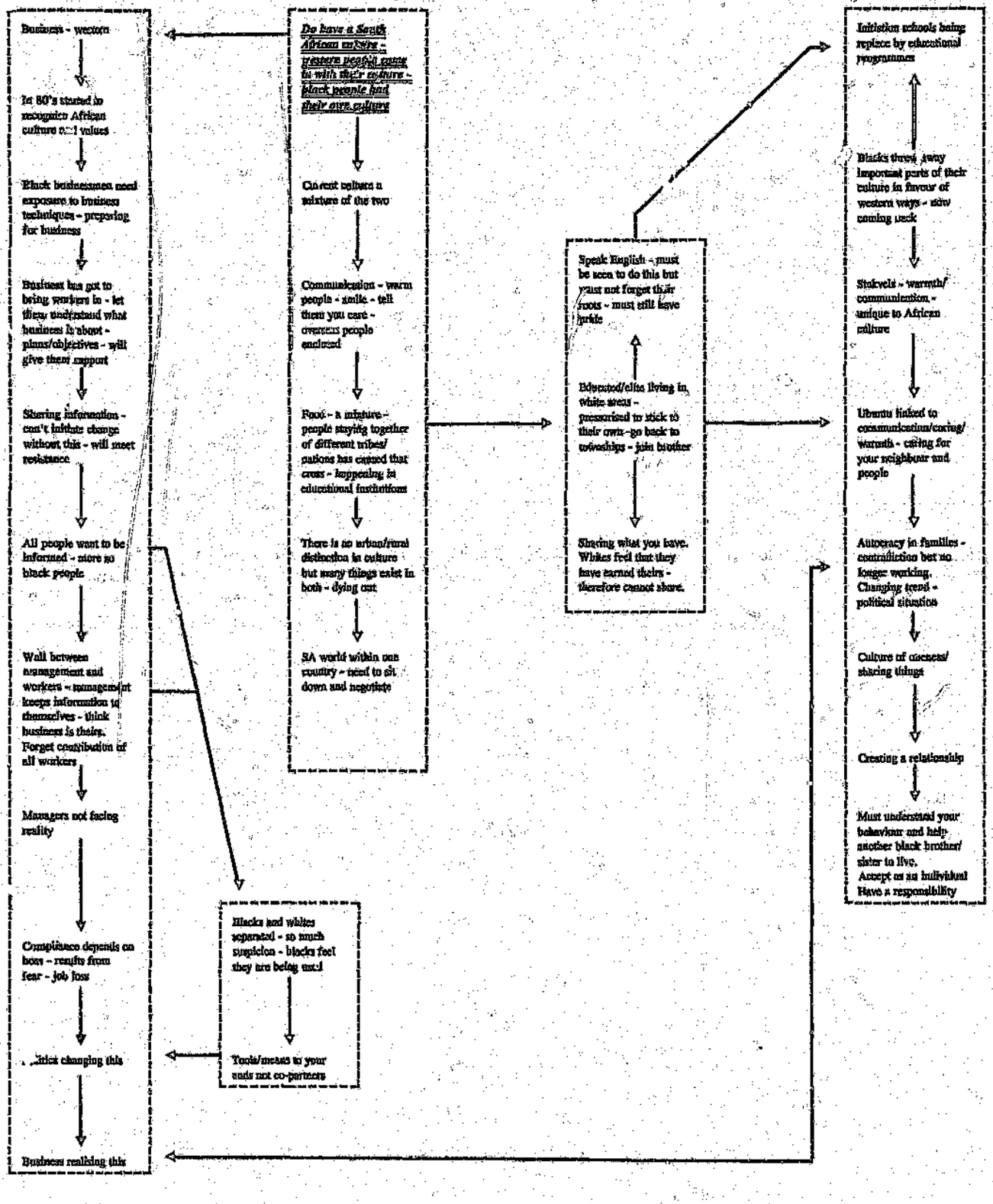

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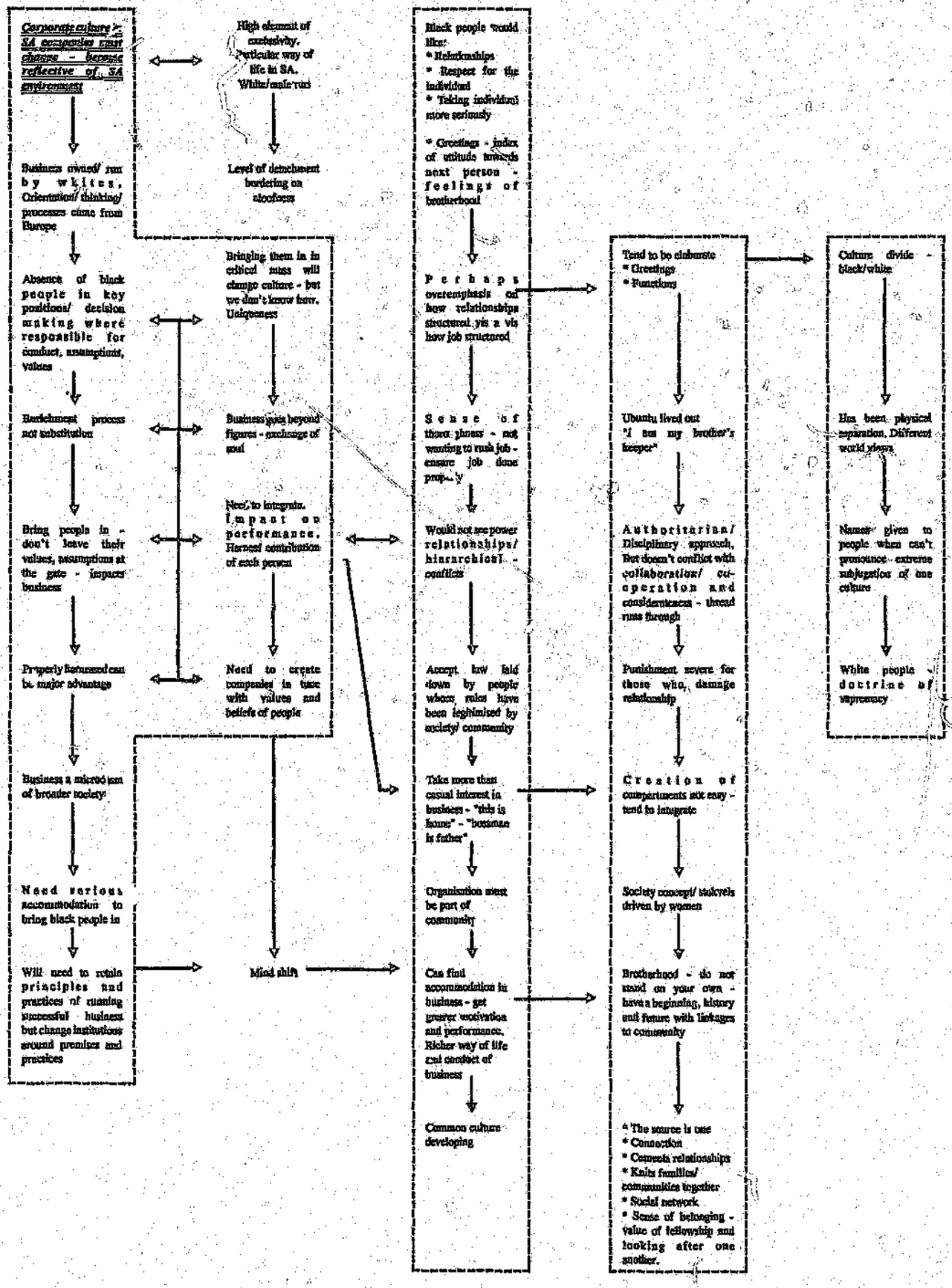

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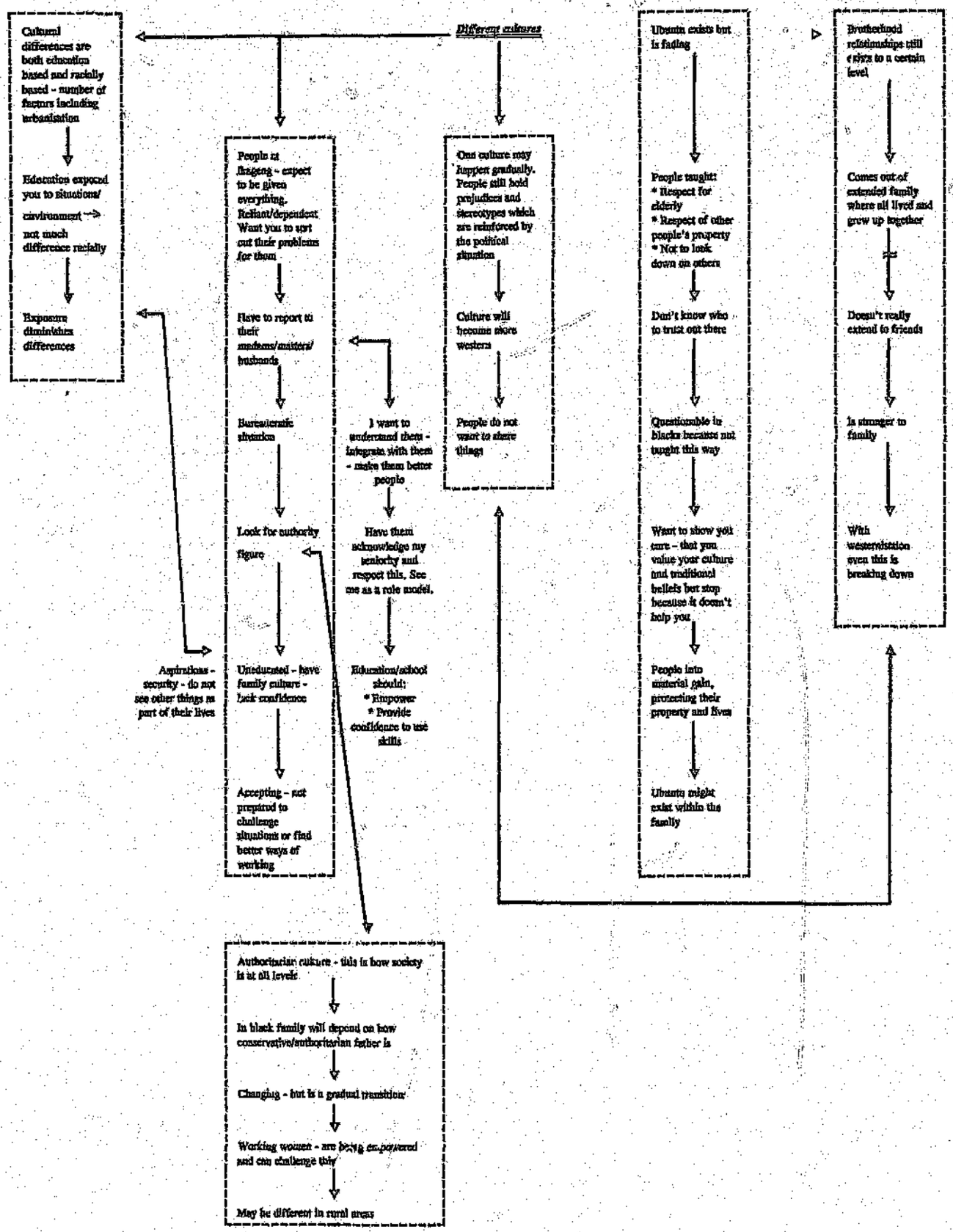

APPENDIX IV

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

INTERVIEW NUMBER 1

Researcher

In your opinion, the opinions that people have about African culture, is there such a thing as African culture or South African culture really, and how do we utilise this to make our business more effective? That is what I am looking at.

Respondent 1

African culture in a broad context or African culture versus what is normally called business culture?

Researcher

I believe there is a clash. There is little information regarding African culture in business and how do we bring the two together.

Respondent 1

My view simply is - I actually believe we have every organisation - has its own culture, for example take the mines - the culture tends to be very paternalistic - if you live within that culture, you actually have to know like the top guy and you are down there and in order to succeed you have to recognise that if there is anything you want to do if you do not go through the boss man then you are in trouble. But on the other hand - based on that all the people who come into the organisation have come from different backgrounds. My fear is that people tend

to exaggerate what they call African culture as it relates to business culture or white culture. For instance if you take an issue - if a black man comes to work late it does not necessarily reflect that he is not time consciousness. I think there could be a number of things. One of the things could be we have an unfortunate situation in South Africa where those who do not have much tend to stay very far from the workplace and if one were to tell a lot of employers here in Sandton for example that their workers who stay in Soweto have to jump into up to three forms of transport to come to work. But there has always been this thinking that has been as a result of blacks not being conscious of time. I do not actually relate to the belief that there is that type of culture.

Researcher

I am looking for the positive features of culture, I am not looking for the negative features. A personal view is that we focus too much on the negative features of other peoples cultures rather than on the positives. But a question - do you believe South African organisations are actually structured for people to succeed - the broad base of people in South Africa to succeed?

Respondent 1

It is actually interesting if you look at South African business - South Africans as a whole tend to be very compliant. We always take our cue from the politicians and if one wants to be very negative I can actually say it is actually very comfortable for the average South African business to listen to the government because they will get that perk. Anyone who went out of step with that would actually not benefit in terms of how the South African society was structured at that time. South African business by its own nature has not encouraged people to develop at whatever level and the fact that we have had a few successes is by chance. South Africans even at the highest levels deal in committees. In South Africa you rarely find businesses where you have really organised top management - we are always waiting and waiting to see which way the wind blows. We have mostly blame cultures in the organisations. If you speak to middle management

they have this fear - they will not take a decision - that is what we were talking about - empowerment - they fear if the boss man is not involved I am not going to put my neck on the block in case things will go wrong. So I think that South African business is not structured to make people to succeed.

Researcher

How do we structure organisations to make people to succeed? What things should we be looking for? You talked about empowerment - how do we empower people? - if it is not in our nature how do we bring it out?

Respondent 1

One of the important things that we are actually going to learn the bitter way. In terms of the scenario I have just painted and the future I think that there is going to be even less support for private business from government, so they are actually going to battle to succeed. The other interesting thing is that the other stakeholders - the shareholders - are still going to demand their stake which again links to the average business. They are going to have to change their mindset. In other words they have got to understand that we are all in it together. I think that is where empowerment is going to be. You know the guy at the top has to realise that his subordinates are not there to undermine his authority. If he empowers them - role clarity - people have got to know. If you employ somebody , you as the senior person have got to have an understanding of what this job entails and ensure that the incumbent in the job knows exactly what is expected of him. Once they understand and once want to have the responsibility and of course then you have to empower them - say this is your job, if you do this you will then have to make these decisions, you do not have to be running to bossman for every decision - that is the sort of empowerment one is talking about.

Researcher

Are there any features you see in the workforce that are unique that are different from other countries as you see it.

Respondent 1

South Africans are always very influenced by the Americans. I find that very strange because if you look very carefully at the Africans our culture is not very different from that of the Japanese - the Orientals - particularly blacks. We tend to work as groups and that togetherness is power. If it could actually be utilised in a very positive way. If you look at the Americans it is more the individual. It is the individual who has got to succeed. And our upbringing of compliance clashes with what the Americans are preaching that you have got to stand out there and do your own. That your success is yours - to hell with everybody else which is the stand that you are taking. And I actually always become very surprised that why do we copy.

If you talk affirmative action, the only example that people remember is the American experience. They keep on saying that in America you had quotas and this is what happened. But if you look at countries like Sri Lanka there is actually affirmative action. The ruling party started going to the smaller ethnic groups and trying to lure them in so that they could broaden their base as the governing bodies. But the only example that comes to mind is America. The American experience does not necessarily fit into our experience and the way Africans and Afrikaaners necessarily look at things.

Researcher

How do we differ? You talked about the group and the power of the group are there other ways in which we differ from the Americans for example?

Respondent 1

Can we come back to that?

Researcher

If you look at South Africa particularly in the political sphere and also perhaps in the social sphere, there is all this change - these new ways of doing things - how

do we translate that into business? Business is still doing things the way it has always done things. It is not looking for new solutions - there are businesses which are innovative, but for the most part businesses are still continuing to do things the way it has always done things - How do we translate what we have learnt in the political sphere into the business sphere?

Respondent 1

Let us not kid ourselves, that is going to take a long time. If you look it is very difficult for businesses in South Africa to become innovative or even for companies introduce new products because the market is so small. If you look at the budgets that are always left for research and development in countries like America they are always enormous and the spin off is that if you get it right the benefits are actually going to be there because the numbers in terms of the population. If you have 2% of any market in the States you have a lovely niche you can survive because of the numbers. You cannot have the same in South Africa - that is the problem we are faced with. You can only be innovative up to so far.

We have to hope for a miracle to happen. We have a history - we have always been used to depending on a certain sector of the population which is white only - in terms of decision making and in such a way that we have never actually believed that the other nations can actually contribute, for example the Indians. I have been amazed at what the Indians have achieved. If you go to a place like Lenasia in 15-20 years they have changed that area. It is incredible, it is vibrant. They have got it in them to become business people. But we have not really utilised that. We have always been dependent on thinking that the Whites will carry us through politically, economically or hardships - and those days are gone. All we need to do is pull together and call on the other people and say you now have a role to play. But that says we have got to make these people the stakeholders otherwise they will always be negative and we will have the majority of the people who will moan and groan and complain - even if we say they are

justified to do that it is not achieving anything. On the other you will have another group who traditionally believe they carried the burden and they go on. In the end we find ourselves in a mess unless we change that. How we do that is very difficult.

Researcher

Are organisations structured to allow this massive group of people to succeed?

Respondent 1

No I do not think so. They definitely are not. Even to this day all you have to do is pick up the phone or go to a party and meet the chief executive of any company - it is talking to them and what they tell you and they say "Oh you know we tried five years ago to place in some blacks and develop them in our organisation but you know sad to say it has never worked." And of course it is not going to work because you have never had a commitment from, in particular, top management. You are working in human resources and I can actually guess that top management sees affirmative action as the responsibility of the human resources department. But have they actually empowered the human resources - if you came with a crazy idea of how to do this would top management allow you to do that.

Researcher

Probably not. But we are an odd organisation. Our entire HR department is two people for 2500 people so it is a slightly different structure. but I know what you are saying. Another thing, very often you find that top management espouses these views - we believe in it, we go ahead and do it. But it does not work. What are the barriers?

Respondent 1

Do they do it?

Researcher

I am talking hypothetically and I am talking generically. There are organisations where it has worked.

Respondent 1

What I think what actually happens is that top management never actually spells out their vision within the organisation. What they want to do and have the people at the lower level buying into what top management is saying. The people who start actioning the vision are the people in middle management and they are not buying into it. If you take a classic example - look at the triangle the unions came in at the bottom and top management/companies as soon as they realised that unions are here to stay top management started opening up communication channels between themselves and the workforce and they left out the middle managers there. And the middle managers justifiably started becoming anti unions and they were very angry with top management. They started feeling that top management was talking to the workforce and they have actually bent backwards in terms of what they are saying. A classic example on Monday morning the workforce would arrive at work and the Shop steward would go the Production manager and say "Mr So and So we are going to be working this Saturday for the 16th of June. We have agreed with management." This man here has not actually been informed by management. How do you expect him to feel about this. And I think that is where the problem is. Unless that can be corrected so that you carry everybody. So you have always had business costs conflict between the workforce and middle management.

My feeling is that for a very long time if you look at that pyramid top management will be in place for a very long time. If it does not change for a year or two nothing wrong will happen. But unless we can start working at middle management, the guys at the coalface, allay the fear (I do not like using the word fears because at times I think it is simply sheer resistance to change). But unless we actually show that we are all in it together. And those guys must actually see

that the success of their companies is dependent on them and their subordinates working together for the betterment of their companies then we are going to have a problem. So what I am saying is that top management must start acting - not just preach or talk for publicity but actually do that. Their own subordinates must believe what they are saying first of all if this is going to achieve/succeed.

Researcher

If we look at people in South Africa, are there core values or beliefs that we should be trying to tap into in business. One of which that you have already mentioned is the communal spirit. Are there other issues that we should be trying to tap into?

Respondent 1

I think one of the basic, simple things is if you look at the production line you are rarely have supervisors who are geared to finding out from the guys, at the production line is this working. They need to accept the fact that the operator is the man who is here all the time and I as the supervisor am not here all the time and if anything goes wrong here it makes sense to go and find out from this guy. Not to go and just to shout. But give this guy confidence to come forward and make suggestions. So we need to set up those committees and make people - it goes back to empowerment. If this is your job it is your responsibility to listen. And I think one of the problems is that we are not actually used to it. Once people become senior they do not actually listen, they parade as the know it all and if you treat people like little children they continue to behave like that which is what I think happens in this country.

Researcher

So you are saying - if you take the indaba type situation or the communal decision making is that something we should be looking to put into our businesses where we have committees of people who problem solve and who talk and listen to one another?

Respondent 1

The classic example - I was talking to the guys in the mine who work in a gang. You would have a certain gangs where there would actually be healthy working relationships. So what happens in the mine is that the mineworkers will report to a shiftboss and a miner. These are the more senior people. Then you will have certain gangs where they have what you call the team leader and the gang boss and his gang here. Now once there is a healthy working relationship between the shiftboss and the miner who are white and the gang here, amazing things happen. These guys actually became almost like the disciplinary committee. If a guy did not report to work he knew he was going to get hell from his co-workers. It became so that you were not going to let us down - you are part of a team we are going to work together. It is that communal spirit which needs to be developed. But you can only do that if you make people realise that they matter. Their contribution is valued by management - as a group and as individuals because every individual will start to realise that there is a need for someone to be a senior in the group. Obviously if he is senior he has a job to do, he has to look out for them, he has got to delegate work to them. His personal growth and the growth of the group in monetary terms is based on these workers supporting him and him making sure that the group actually produces. I think business is a little different to where the individual at all costs.

Researcher

Is this any different from the sorts of management theories that are coming out now about participatory management and Just-in-Time management and all those sorts of things where people are working in groups and being responsible? Should we be looking at things which are specifically African or South African in our organisations?

Respondent 1

I think you can argue that you need to modify these. There is a Sotho word Letsema. What is actually meant in the traditional setting is that if a guy in the

neighbourhood wanted to build an additional hut or to go and harvest their fields he would invite the neighbourhood for one day and tell them we have this *letsema* and everybody would come in there and assist in harvesting or building. At the end there will be a party. And for that day they will actually have assisted this family to finish whatever task this family wanted to complete. People tend actually relate to this. Participative management worries me in that the people themselves do not understand what it is all about. Consultants want to shove it down the throats of people. And if you take this example of the letsema - people get involved and they know exactly what they are expected to do for that day. They put aside what they have to do and they come to assist them and he says thank you to them by providing them with meals and beer and what have you. The same thing I think would apply if management/companies can actually have a strategy where everyone must understand why are we doing it.

Researcher

So you are talking about communication and job clarity and role clarity. Does that mean we should have much clearer job descriptions and things like that which are structures and systems which put people in jobs?

Respondent 1

I think we need that. I think one of the dangers we have - you need some form of structuring. If the job is not clearly defined then how do you measure performance. If there is any improvement you can go down and say you were expected to do this and you have actually done that.

Researcher

You talk about Letsema - should we be starting to use the African terms, using the language that people understand rather than the terms that we understand?

Respondent 1

I think there is no harm in trying that. What we have to do is go to the people and

tell them that this is what we want to do and if we use the word letsema and people are Sotho I think they are going to understand. It will appeal to their emotions. But the important thing is that we are talking of the job situation so whoever is driving this has to have an understanding of how business itself works so you can see the cutoff line - we are not just going in a broad base of what we are doing - we still have an objective, we need to have work done and whatever we have has to be adapted to the job here which is what everybody is here about.

Researcher

Are there positive qualities and features about our workforce that we should be tapping into?

Respondent 1

We blacks tend to be very loyal. I think it is more than lack of opportunity -it is more than that even at the highest level. People on a project I was working on saw the company as their home and they symbolise the CE almost like our father. On that basis I think that there is a great amount of loyalty and willingness to learn. But we have a history of these people have always been so loyal but they have always been very cheap to get and we have not invested any training or educational money into them. So to me it is not even a miracle. If we can understand that some of these people have to stay in a hostel - they have come from their homes very far to stay in a hostel and if the organisation can understand that and structure their long weekends and holidays so that a guy can go home no-one would have a problem. They are keen to learn, they become committed. But organisations have not been keen on developing their own people. There is a very high level of illiteracy among these people. I was talking to one client even to this day there are people who said that they were employed at the gate. They have been there for 10-15 years and no-one has actually checked to see what these people can do - what level of education and what actually can they do. We also have to take into account that example I made where they guys sort of regard the Chief Executive as almost like a father. And a father is a parent and

is expected to look after his children.

Researcher

There is an expectation then that the firm - the business - will be paternalistic in some way in a non-judgemental form?

Respondent 1

If you compare us with the Americans in some way, South African companies are still expect that to be the case. We still expect the father figure. The company still has to play that role. "We are the children and we are our father's responsibility and the company is there to look after us" I think somebody already made the example of the East, that outlook. And this is based on our culture.

INTERVIEW NUMBER 2

Researcher

Are the positive features that need to be identified in the people who enter our businesses and how do we use those features to make our businesses and our people more successful?

Respondent 2

That feature of looking at the strengths of people is a crucial issue. We have so many cultures and it would be impossible to look at say the Afrikaans culture, the English culture, the European culture, the different tribal cultures, the Coloured culture and the Indian culture. When they talk about culture they usually talk about the black culture being one dominant culture and the white culture being another dominant type of culture and the Indian and Coloured cultures possibly forming more towards the white culture than the black culture. So there seem to be two dominant cultures that you are talking to. One which is not European, but is certainly first world western and has a similarity to a European culture and the other is more third world at it is not that western. I think a large part of our education programme and upgrading the black adults is changing them into sophisticated, not only literate people, but sophisticated people who have a concept of western culture. Because a lot of their problems area that they have an unsophisticated, uneducated background. But more so than that, they have a background that does not feel it knows or is in common with western culture.

A large part of our part of our literacy programme is trying to incorporate these uneducated people into a sophisticated western culture. When I told a friend that she was horrified. She stated that their culture is so beautiful and questioned how we can take that away and 10-20 years down the line all the black people are going to be just like us. They will have a sophisticated western culture. So that

sad to loose that tribal culture. And I do not think they will ever loose their tribal culture in the sense of their roots but I definitely think more and more of them are acting and living in very a sophisticated way which is very much more a western cultured way. More and more of them are living in suburbs, want to own BMW's, want to send their kids to nice schools and only speak English to each other. You will never hear Black businessmen talking to each other in their own language.

So the way I see it, you spoke about a business culture, there seems to be a universal culture coming out which is very dominated by a business culture. Because companies are trying to educate their staff to conform that company culture, to understand their company culture. More and more people in order to survive, and it is about survival - it has got nothing to do with what is a better culture or a deeper culture or more spiritual culture, more advanced culture - it has got nothing to do with that. It has got to do with what have we got to do to survive in the meantime. And what you have to do to survive in the meantime is to fit in with the accepted business culture. And in order to fit in with the accepted business culture we have decided to move all the people, black culture, more into our western way. Because our business culture is eurocentric, it is more of a western, white orientated culture and black people are all moving into that culture.

The beauty about their culture and the experience we can use from their culture is their teamwork, their love of working together. They have this big thing about the family sticks together, the family does this and that, the mother does this and that, the brother supports the father. It is very much a team based culture. And I think that team work emphasis is one of the biggest things that we should be utilising and are not. A lot of companies are tuning into this, Management by participation, from the bottom up and trying to build in all sorts of bonuses and incentives so that the company works together as a family and as a team. And if the company does well then everybody benefits. But companies are miles and miles away from achieving that. But from my instincts the strengths of the black

culture which I think we should utilise is this working together as a family where everybody has their way and everyone plays a part and if we all work together we are all going to benefit. And that is one of the areas that nobody's even touching on of.

The other area which I think is a problem, and I do not know if it is a strength or a weakness, is they are used to a very dictatorial, authoritarian type of culture. What the father says goes, no arguments - what the chief says goes, and the woman's place is in the home and the woman must listen to what the man says. And a lot of them are still very dominated by that culture. And that is a very difficult thing to overcome in a business environment where you are trying to have a democratic, management by active participation type of atmosphere. One of the areas that the Human Resource people I deal with have told me is that they take a guy, a black into supervisory level and one, he finds it very difficult to be a leader rather than part of the group and he does not want to hold power over the group because they do not want to accept his authority and two, if he steps out of line they can burn his house or kill him on the way home. There is no understanding of this; you are in a position of authority as a black. You deserve to be there, you need to be respected and need to have others listen to you. There is a problem with that. A white man they seem to accept. They are used to the fact that there is a chief there - patriarchal type society and they are quite used to that and they can accept it if there is a white man there, or the father of the house or the chief of the tribe, but everybody else is equal. So how can somebody who is just one of us come and tell us what to do.

Researcher

You talked earlier about your training, that it is very participative and such. Is that a function of the people who are being trained? How did it evolve and how does it fit with what you are now saying about the authoritarian nature of the culture?

Respondent 2

How I train my facilitators is in line with the whole androgogic approach. They are a guide and a friend rather than someone in authority, it is the whole team work thing and it is very much we are all in this together that is so crucially important. And I think the black culture has so much sense in that area. Those are the things we should be working on. Because that they can identify with, that they can work with. Where we are together as a team, we are all working together, everybody in this classroom is as important as everybody else. There is nobody in this classroom who is more important. I am your teacher so you must respect me but I am not better than you or greater than you. The only reason why I am teaching you is that I have the advantage of an education and you did not. In the learning process we allow them to - first of all it is learner centred so they have to teach themselves, we do not teach them. They are treated as adults, the responsibility is placed on them and it is their choice to succeed or not.

So there is a behavioural change that happens in the classroom which is an attitudinal change. Which is "I have the choice of my own destiny. I am empowered to choose my own destiny. I have ownership and it is up to me to make my life." So the whole attitudinal change there is that there are no free handouts. You as an individual have potential, we are going to try help you develop that potential but it is up to you to make it work. So that is the sort of attitude that comes across in the classroom. But because of that, because you are adults, because we give you responsibility, because you own the course procedure, you are entitled to tell us how you feel we like you to tell us what you like, we like you to tell us what you do not like, we like you to tell us what you think we could improve on, we like you to tell us if you do not feel you are happy. We have a very open democratic type of environment in our classroom. And the way that the facilitator comes across has to be very strongly like that.

Researcher

How does that react when they go back into a work environment which is not

necessarily democratic?

Respondent 2

Strangely enough it has not clashed. And I think the reason why it has not clashed it has positive spinoffs. They have gone back into the working environment with a raised self-esteem. And if there is anything that you can do to create a good working environment it is giving the people a raised self-esteem. The minute someone has a raised self-esteem his attitude towards everything is good. Their confidence is good and their belief in themselves is good. The only time we get conflict, and this is something I keep telling all the Human Resource people that I go and visit, is when people are insecure about themselves and therefore their environment. If somebody is insecure about themselves that is when they feel threatened and that is when they feel fear and that is when they start doing all sorts of things to survive and to protect themselves. That is when they start lashing out and being uncooperative and seeing everything as a threat to them. But if someone has a got a belief in their own personal advancement, then they have a belief in themselves, a confidence in themselves and because of that they work ten times better. The irony is that we have had a positive spin off because the people have it drummed into them that it is nobody's fault that you are where you are. Do not blame it on your foreman, your supervisor or everyone around you. It is not your fault but it is your position in life. And if you want that to change you have to do something about it.

Researcher

There is a fair amount written about the fact that the black culture is almost a fatalistic one. If I am a sweeper, that is my lot in life and there is nothing I can do to change that.

Respondent 2

Very much so. They accept their lot. They accept that this is what I have been given and part of the whole personal advancement process is making them realise

that there is more and that they can achieve more. And they have got the ability to achieve more. And what it does is that it opens a whole world out to them. And a part of this is done through education. Someone who is educated does not have a fatalistic attitude, it is the uneducated person who does.

Researcher

Do you think fatalism is a factor of the culture as such because that is historically been the problem or is it a factor of the culture that we have created over the last 40 years?

Respondent 2

I think it is a factor of the culture we have created. I think that we have for so long told them that there is no opportunity and that they have no ability and they now believe it. Then you think of how many have been true individuals. Very few of them have broken out of that culture and said we are going to achieve. We have had other cultures that have broken out of that type of thing, for example the culture that was created out of the concentration camps during the second world war - that was the worst possible culture and that was quite a long time - almost 10 years - yet the people came out of that culture and were able to strive again. Then again many of them came out of that and remembered their past. And if you look at the Indians - they have had as much of that negative indoctrination as the blacks have had, and yet they have strived and they have come out of it. So maybe it is a combination of factors. It has got a lot to do with what we have put onto them but I think they might have it in their culture as well.

Researcher

Should business mirror the society - the cultural society?

Respondent 2

I think at the moment business is definitely mirroring the new South Africa. I think business is one of the biggest role players and pays the biggest price and is

putting the most money into creating a new South Africa. Why are so many businesses interested in voter education. Because it is a selfish thing. Because if the political situation does not go the way it should, their companies are going to crash and everything else in the economy is going to crash. So it is in businesses interest to make sure that the economy and politically this country survives. That is why business is interested in voter education and that is why business is interested in educating the masses. There is no doubt that educated people have a different outlook and attitudes. Educated people are not fatalistic, uneducated people are.

Researcher

Are you saying that the difference is not a black/white issue, it is an education issue?

Respondent 2

Yes. It is not so much an issue of black/white, it is an issue of educated, sophisticated people versus uneducated people. I think that the issue of black/white should be wiped out. I think we should look at a universal culture where everyone has their own specific roots but you have a universal culture. America has created a tremendous universal culture but each group still maintains its own traits. That is what we have got to do here. The problem is that we have segregated everything, now we have got to integrate everything. And the only way we can create this is through business, we must be very dominated by business.

Researcher

What would you see business doing in order to create that?

Respondent 2

Personal advancement. Because if business's aim at what they say they are going to do, and that is finding potential in people, making then grow and bringing out their talents, we are going to get a group of very successful, talented people with

no specific culture but to function in an economic environment. Because let us face it what else are we going to.. spiritually, that is too personal, religiously, too personal. There is only one way you can do a mass personal growth and that is purely through working with the individual to make them reach their full potential so that they can function in a fully.

Researcher

What then do you see as the business priorities to create that?

Respondent 2

They have got to put more of their budget into education and training which they are not. They have got to change the mindset which 50% of them have, I am proud to say. In fact in the last year, you do not know what a turnabout has been. The only thing that I believe that is going to get a person out of the mode of being a victim and not a leader, of being fatalistic is to educate them and to give them incentives so that they can believe that they are the master of their own destiny.

Researcher

You are talking about providing them with a stake in the business?

Respondent 2

Without a doubt. I believe that everybody down to the tealady should have a stake in the business. But on different levels. Management will have one stake and the tealady will have one stake. It is a major thing to organise.

Researcher

In your opinion, do you believe South Africa has the potential to become a major player in world markets?

Respondent 2

Without a doubt. I just have so much belief in this country and I hope that we will

be an example to the rest of the world. I believe that through education and training that we can develop some really talented people. Through the black mass that are going to benefit business and the economy and if our business culture is such that it dominates the culture of the new South Africa that we become an integrated culture rather than a separate people culture then everybody is treated the same. There is no black, there is no white, there is no Indian or coloured. There is no handouts because you are black. There are no token positions because you are black. If business brought about a culture where the best man wins, and those who have not had the education we will get them the accelerated training to acquaint them and where they now have the potential and know that the best man wins. If business brings about a culture such as that you are going to get a very productive group of people because everybody is going to be working towards developing their true potential and achieving the utmost and knowing that they are capable of doing that. If everyone is doing it together, as a mass thing, because of that the energy and attitudes are going to rub off on everybody and I think that sort of universal energy, universal positivity, positivity is going to make this country so special that we can turn around this absolute negative environment and uplift everybody as a mass. It is like a cycle. That mass energy wipes off on everybody.

There is a new South African culture emerging now and it is through education. Its major feature is individual empowerment is the biggest thing. The individual has the power, the talent to do things. Look at the street shops we have. Out of a negative situation where nobody's got work we have developed the most unbelievable entrepreneurial economy from one small business man. Hundreds and hundreds of little shops have opened on our pavements. Just look at the amount of talent that has come out of this negative situation. So the culture that is coming out of this country is purely economic. It is an economic business culture - that you as an individual can do your thing. You can make your life, you have the strength. You do not have the education you can get the education and you can go and do it. And that is the universal culture that is coming out - of the

individual being empowered to discover his own abilities and to achieve. The common denominator, that we are creating a universal culture in South Africa, and it is not black and it is not white. It is educating and developing the individual, it is a culture of education, of developing the individual so that they are independent and economically they can flourish. So it is a culture aimed at flourishing economically.

It is not a black or white thing. More and more blacks that I meet are pure white in every respect. They have adopted our culture - there is nothing black about them.

INTERVIEW NUMBER 3

Researcher

I am trying to identify critical areas of national culture, if there is such a thing, features of our workforce. And to look at those things and say how do we utilise them in our businesses to make them more effective. Are there features which make us different to the rest of the world - which stand out as South Africans and then how do we actually use those.

Respondent 3

My experience has been not so much in the workforce but really working in the community, in Atteridgeville and more recently in the last two years in Mamelodi where my interface with the community has been on education - with looking at the problems of education. I do not think we have come up with any solutions but we have approached it in two ways. One has been through a forum approach and the other has been through working with the schools particularly to look at democratisation. Now I am more involved with voter education within the community again. We have got a team who have identified with the community and who are trainers.

While you were talking I was thinking - and we have broadly two cultures. The European culture and the African culture with different ways of approach and different ways of being and that sort of thing. Looking at the African culture, it is far more human centred culture - it is more sensitive. I am just thinking now of our group, our voter educators. I think I come in a bit like a bull in a china shop, you know I bounce in and I want to get things done. The coordinator is always very sensitive to dynamics. If that is the culture that has got to come, I think it is a very good thing to be looking at. How do we value people in our business culture? How do we change the culture from one which looks at people

as units, which looks just at productivity - at what people produce and loads values on people that way? I am not saying that is not important because it is important. But how do you then bring a balance in? We have talked in this country about productivity and yet our productivity is going down and down and down. Why and why have we not stopped to look at why our people are not being productive? What is missing? My sense says we need not to sort of say the business culture is the only one that needs to go. I think that we need some sort of creative and open mindedness to bring our two cultures together and really explore what are the positives of African culture that create a sense of teamwork, that create commitment and how does and how does one bring them to the workplace. How do you do that in terms of working conditions, induction into a company, the sense that people must have a say in what is happening, the form of decision making? It is a whole democratisation thing. It is how to democratise your workforce not for the sake of democracy. Democracy is not the end. Democracy is the means to the end and democracy is a means to a country which has a workforce which has ownership, is committed and is productive, but it is not on a sort of unit basis.

Researcher

You said one of the things that struck you was the sensitivity, the humanity. Are there other features which strike you as critical or important that we are perhaps familiar with, but which are perhaps a different way of operating or a different a world view?

Respondent 3

From an outsider's point of view - there is actually quite a sophisticated way of resolving conflict. It appears to the outsider tedious and very subtle and people who are caught up in it often do not know what is going on. Subtle messages are sent out, I have seen it in the forum work that I have done. It takes a long time and nothing is rushed which I think drives business crazy. The two may have to come together. But there is that sense that you need to bring everybody on board.

That is a very good value and it is a very hard value to keep in place. But there is always that underlying value, everyone must be brought on board and that can make processes quite slow and open to manipulation. But it is a good thing. And in the black community it is always a case of when you have a meeting are you representative, are the people here who must be involved in the decision making. And that is one of your most important aspects of decision making. If you are going to take a decision then the people who are going to be affected by the decision have to be part of the process. I think that in business and in South Africa that has been a value that has not been applied and is now almost the cardinal rule if you are going to talk about process and democratic process. That is the sort of thing that business must come to grips with. It is not a few white men controlling and dictating any longer. You have to go this route and this route is much harder because it is not an authoritarian route. It is not "I say, you do". Everything is now negotiated and it is hard. But I think it is the way that we have to go. And I think new experience has to be brought into the workplace.

That is another thing, in terms of business, we need to be re-looking at our society and saying what sort of skills need to be in this company, what sort of training. I think managers should not just be trained about how to talk about productivity etc. What about conflict resolution, mediation, negotiation. That is Human Resource management. And those are the values that have to come in. Quite strongly. Conflict resolution and mediation are all about problem solving. But it is problem solving in a collaborative way. That is a really important value that we need to be nurturing.

Researcher

You said about conflict resolution, earlier, that it is a very different way of doing things and that everyone's got to be brought on board. How does this actually operate?

Respondent 3

One of the most important thing in conflict resolution is actually just getting people to the table. That in itself involves immense negotiation. But you can ask yourself what is the cost effect of not doing this - what if they are not there? What is going to win in the end? What is going to be the best solution? It is getting people to the table is terribly important. Yet on the other hand, as much as one is critical of business, I think that the trade union movement is one of the most exciting developments and nas the most potential in this country to change our corporate and business values. They have gone a tremendous way to putting the worker's interests much more to the forefront, to giving management alternative ways of operating. It is not just the white guys at the top making decisions, but the trade unions are now working with them doing joint problem solving. The trade unions are part of ushering in that new culture and that probably is how that new culture is going to come in. It cannot be done by individuals. It has to be done in terms of solidarity and people together moving in and making a difference. So the trade union movement and business together can go a long way to creatively resolving a lot of our problems economically, to ensuring that jobs stay and that one looks at increased productivity and increased commitment, skills training - there has to be so much more of that.

People in the community are hungry for skills. The negative of that is that there is the perception that when you have a workshop and the people will have skills. You do not transfer skills like that. You can have a workshop and alert people to perhaps the enhanced skills they have and how they can build on them and what is involved in those skills, leadership skills whatever. The transfer of skills is ideally located in the workplace because you are giving people training and then they are going out and applying it. There is a tremendous hunger in the community for self improvement and for new skills and there is a for business to make use of that. I am very idealistic and not very into the business world.

Researcher

You talked about solidarity and that individuals cannot make a different. A couple of the people I have spoken to have said that the power of the group is so important in this culture that we develop. It is not the individual but the group that has the power. Do you find this?

Respondent 3

I think it is and that is not to say that individuals are not important because we are all unique as individuals. If you want to change anything but you as one person you do not have much impact. But the group is more powerful. Within groups there are leaders and there are followers and so one is not saying that everybody is equal. But if you are a visionary you can still inspire and motivate the group of people who can then put this into action. Often as individuals we think things and along comes a leader who actually says what you have been thinking and it is that person who has the ability to know what people are thinking on the ground and who has the leadership and the capacity to say that this is where we can take it. And together the group takes it. There is space for individual leadership within groups because a whole massive group cannot just move as an amorphous mob. There are very different roles that one has in groups. But I think that is where the trade union movement has made such a difference. The power of the group has both its good side and its bad side. Everything has its good side and bad side.

The community has been mythologised

In business one has to build in a culture of understanding and compassion as well as productivity and everything else. How do we create community? It is through your benefits, it is through the way you treat people in the workplace. It is how you consider that the person who comes to work is not just an isolated person but is also part of a community back there, part of a family back there. Is business's responsibility just to its market place and the people or has it got those community responsibilities? I think it has. So that value of community is important. Also

because of apartheid. As whites we have judged people and their worth according to their position in the business place and where they live. In the black community everyone has been forced to live together, so there has been this equalising. People have been seen for themselves, in a different way. They are seen for who they really are. People respect the older people. People are not just judged by those outward trappings but how you live your life and your wisdom and your experience in that community. Living cheek by jowl has equalised. In a way I can see that changing now. It will be a pity if they loose that now. How does one use that in a positive sense? How do you transfer that sense of community which has been so strong in the townships because it is been a survival thing? What happens to it when it comes into the white areas where we are much more individualistic - where we live behind our walls? How do we bring that community into the office area? How do we give time for one another? How do we care for people so that they do not only see their lives here as the only reality but their lives elsewhere? I battle with that? How do we create that teamwork?

Researcher

Do you think these features are unique to South Africa or are they shades of things you will find elsewhere?

Respondent 3

I actually think South Africa is pretty unique. I do not think we have begun to grasp how unique we are. And that is unique in a very positive sense. I think the process of revaluing black culture has only just started. I think that can create a really unique place. There are basic universal values, there always will be. And what I have been talking about are basic universal values which are played out in particular ways in particular communities. We come with our particular histories. There is both the same and particularity.

Researcher

Do you think our businesses actually allow anyone to succeed - regardless of colour? It is been said that our businesses do not really let any of us succeed.

Respondent 3

I do not know. I have not been in business for a long time. I was in public relations for 7 years quite a number of years ago and I hated it. I hated the white, male business culture. It was ruthless, it was inhuman, it was sexist and I found that it gave no room for vulnerability. There was this old boys network and if you as a woman were going to make it you had to be pretty tough. I found that as a oung woman it was very sexist. And that is my concern for the future because we are a very, very sexist society. It is no good talking about democracy and liberation if we are not prepared to address the issue of sexism. Because that underpins everything. It underpins the black community and white community. They are both incredibly patriarchal. If you are not going to treat women justly then you must not talk about justice. That I think we have a long struggle and that is a big struggle that has to happen in the business world as well. It is still white, male dominated and it may become black, male dominated. And that is just as bad. I know that from black women friends I have. That makes me angry.

We have to do some pretty hard educating, of analysing our society, seeing how both men and women collaborate in that. Women are just as bad. We oppress ourselves and we oppress other women and we collaborate with men in oppressing other women. And we fear successful women and we break them down. As a society we need to be really addressing that and business must as well. We battling to get good role models for women in business. But I think the women who are going to provide the role models for women in business are going to be black women not white women. I have seen some very strong black women coming up. And they are the ones to take seriously. And if business also is going to look at changing its culture it has got to pay attention to black women. They are very powerful or potentially very good women out there who I think can come

in and make a real difference to the business culture.

Researcher

What particular qualities do you see black women having which are different from white women?

Respondent 3

Black women are rooted much more in their community. They still have, much more than the men, a sense of community. Whereas white women I do not think always have that. Within the black community, I have experienced the strongest people as being the women because they have kept the community going. Many of them have not been acknowledged for their leadership abilities but there is a strength there because they have had to keep their children going, they have had to keep their men going. The men have gone off into the bush to fight and they have had to keep going. They have had to keep their families together and the communities together. That has forged something particular in black women that has made them strong people, resilient people, has made them angry often. But they have directed their anger in life giving ways. Whereas the men have gone off and killed each other, the women are not. The women are trying to keep the communities together. It is those values that come up in the women. Because they have this very strong ubuntu - "I am through other people" - they are literally able to share the credit, to build teams.

I think that we as white people are still grappling with that Ubuntu. We have come out of a very high individualistic culture, we see ourselves as self-made people which is nonsense because we have never done it only on our own. I think we are learning to become team players but I think in black women there is much more of an ability to build teams, to be team players, to be sensitive to what are the needs of people. And because they carry with them the history of the struggle and they carry with them the concern for the youth, for their children, and wanting the youth, their children, to have a role to play in the future. They have

a very broad sweep in terms of their sense of social responsibility.

Researcher

You talked earlier about the group and leadership and that relationship. Do leaders lead differently in an African culture? Are the relationships between leaders and their followers different?

Respondent 3

That is really hard. I would be hesitant as a white outsider to comment because I probably only see 40-50% of what is really going on. There are many styles of leadership. I have seen some people very authoritarian. I have seen other people very wonderfully being able to lead in a more collaborative way. I have seen some people being able to lead through the way they can resolve conflict. We have a cultural content to us and we also have a uniquely human content to us. It is hard to generalise because there are very many different of leaders. We are an authoritarian society. Leadership under pressure tends to come down on the side of authoritarianism. I have seen that in both the black and the white community because that is the model we have had. I think we are struggling to get new models of leadership. And hopefully negotiations will begin to change that.

We need to have transformation of our structures. We are not just talking about replacing white faces with black faces. We are talking about whole structures. Transformation is not just putting in a black guy there. It is looking at the structures and saying this is not an empowering way to run an organisation. There is going to be a challenge for everyone to look at leadership styles and not just how that authoritarian style. Because I do think that we tend to fall into that. We need to be exploring different types of leadership because one leadership style is not appropriate all the time. There may be in times of crisis the need for authoritarian leadership. All the different qualities are constantly at play. Within business let us recognise the different qualities of leadership and use them when they come. It is not just one type of leader. And that is where I think women can

come in and balance out the leadership equation. Where men have been used to operating a certain way, and using that way while they have been trying to change, but let women come in and bring a different style of leadership. Let us have shared leadership with different types at different times for different needs.

Researcher

Do you find that we in South Africa have a culture of compliance - that we do not take decisions, that we follow the lead of other in that we wait for others to make decisions?

Respondent 3

Absolutely. This is the authoritarian society that I have been talking about. That is the only model we have had. People have told us and we have done. It happens in our homes, in our schools, in church, on television, political leaders. We are a very compliant society. And that is where it is interesting to see in the black community the contradictions. People are still very compliant in the black community and yet you look at the struggle where people have said "Enough, I am not going to stand for it." There has been this move against it, this questioning. In the black community, the young people, more than the young white people, have learnt how to question. The young black people may not have formal education, but in many cases they have pretty good life skills. I see many of the young people at the school where I worked who have an ability to deal with the horrors in their lives which perhaps white kids do not have. I would like to see how do we utilise these life skills. They have learnt these in student politics, in their schools and in the community. So in one way the community has equipped young black people, if they are given the opportunities, to really make a difference in this country. Young white kids have had the privilege, they have had the abilities, and they have had a lot of suffering and pain which they have not recognises because they have been living in a very uneasy society and it has manifested itself in how they act - their utterly destructive behaviour and their apathy as well.

The passive society, the compliant society is perhaps our biggest threat to democracy because it can mean that another oppressive system can come in, another dictator can come in, because we do not actually stand up and challenge it. One has to create mechanisms within a company where one can challenge that authoritarianism.

Researcher

Are you saying that whites are as much victims of apartheid as blacks, in a different way?

Respondent 3

Yes, very much so. We have had to lose our humanity to maintain an inhuman system. We had to shut our eyes to peoples' suffering. We had to deny the humanity of other people to perpetrate what we have done to them. And in the process of denying another person's humanity, you have to lose some of your own humanity. We have suffered in that we have grown up all our lives holding on to things that we think we are going to lose. The denying, and the future is not mine. Apartheid has made a tremendous impact on all of us. We all need a bit of psychological rebooting, whatever. We need to learn how to revalue each other, each other's cultures. Even though we recognise it we are still very polarised. Our lives are not integrated yet. In South Africa we are still schizophrenic.

Researcher

From an economic point of view, do you think we have the time to go through this integration process which is a slow one?

Respondent 3

My sense is that it does not have to take that long. As whites we need to ask ourselves what are we holding onto and what is the cost of holding onto that and how do we start trying to live that new culture. We do not have to start to live that new culture - the most important step is to realise that we want to. If we take

this active decision that things need to change, that is all. And then you start seeing how they are going to change. But that decision is the most important thing. I think things can change quite quickly. The models are, the trade unions have put much in place, the World Trade Centre has put in place, we need to start working on our attitudes. We talked about a time consuming process, but the moment one start on that road things will start to change. We cannot afford to say that we can continue the same way because the same way is not working. How do we take what is good and continue with that? And take what is not so good and change that now. We have to start doing things now, that is for sure.

Researcher

We have changes that are happening in the political sphere, we have changes that are happening in the social sphere but if you go back to the saying that the business of business is business. Should business, in you opinion, be actively trying to mirror the changes happening politically and socially?

Respondent 3

I think it should. If you are going to be talking about an integrated society you cannot have those major contradictions. Nothing is separate. The change in society needs to be reflected in everything. That will happen by degrees. It does not happen in nice formal ways. If peoples' aspirations are going to be met there's to be an opening up of business. And there has to be an encouraging of initiative. What about small business? What about job creation, encouraging people to identify jobs in the market. We have to have big companies, but it is small to medium business how do we do that. The possibilities for expansion exist in small businesses. Small businesses grow. If the political arena is going to have any success, there has to be an economic regeneration as well.

Researcher

Are there other features of our core values and beliefs that are African or South African, that we need to be taking cognisance of?

Respondent 3

The negatives come to mind. One thinks of intolerance. I am worrying about our materialist society. South Africa is supposedly 70% Christian. Those values should be the core ones that drive South Africa? How do those values become real? And to me the core value of Christianity is ubuntu - love your neighbour as yourself. Therefore the church has a tremendous role to play. How does it live out its values? How does it empower people, humanise people? If we could learn how to respect one another, and if we could transfer that respect within racial groups to across racial groups, that is really important. How do you take those core good in people, that commitment, that sense of community, and break down the racism so that those values can be released for everyone? Because I think we are battling with racism and sexism in this country. Those are my biggest fears that we are not going to address either of them. Racism will break dow[illegible]use the structures are going to change, society is going to change. Sexism is a problem. If you are not going to be considering 53% of the population as worthwhile human beings, as equal, we are going to have problems. We come from a society that does not value women, that does not value people, that is discriminatory. But underneath that there are people with a real desire for change and a real desire for peace. And one has to hope that the desire for peace will keep people on the road to discovery and ultimately change.

Researcher

Is there any thing you want to add.

Respondent 3

Where are decisions b[illegible]ng made? Because where decisions are being made is where the power is. In business as long as the decisions are being made by white males, they may say they are empowering women, they are not empowering black people, but where are the decisions being made and who is making them. My problem with women, and I experience it myself and women of my generation - I think the generation behind me is much more courageous, much more go ahead,

much more self-confident - I still have that handmaiden mentality. I can take the lead in many things but ultimately I have a failure of nerve. I am always happier to be the second in command. There is almost a Rubicon that women just cannot get across. Some women have and that is great. We oppress ourselves. Women make mistakes. We apply different rules to ourselves than those applied to and which we apply to men. How do we bring in a new role, new role models - a new way of operating?

In a way my hope is with black women because they have a strength. They can go in there. Maybe the dynamics between white men and black women are somewhat different from those between white women and white men. They can either write off the black woman completely or because she is so different they can actually listen to her. It is a fresh voice. She is talking out of a different context. I am fascinated by how women get into business and how do they make a difference because the rules in business are set by men. If you do not play by those rules, you do not make it. So how do we go in there and play by those rules, but do not buy into those rules and begin to change those rules because they have to change those rules. Women have this need that if they have to make they have to be better than the men. It comes back to solidarity. A single woman is not going to change that culture. How do you then get women as a much more supportive block to start changing that culture? How do you get women in an organisation working together as a team and not get divided? Women get so easily divided. A man just has to infer that a women is not being very sexy by the way she is operating and she will fall out of the block. How to get that solidarity with women so that they do not feel that they lose any of the femininity or their womenness by supporting one another and then, by implication, often being in confrontation with men? How do they hold onto themselves then?

INTERVIEW NUMBER 4

Researcher

From your experience with the community are there features which you identify as predominantly African or South African, or features that stand out as being strong features that need to be utilised and built?

Respondent 4

A lot of our cases are labour. So our way of resolving it is to make contact with the employer. And what one tends to finds is that there is a difference in the how people expect disputes to be resolved. That is led to the problem that the person has. Most of the management are white, you move right from you very authoritarian people, collectively conservative, to more okay people, but of course we come into contact with less of the more progressive employers because that is not where the problems are. There is a very heavy handed top-down approach - that is it, boom - I do not think people question if there is another way, that the people coming with the problem are asking for the space to bring all the parties together to talk about it. To try and gain a common understanding. Or if you are making allegations to say to that person - let us all sort it out together. And I would say that the latter is something that should be encouraged more.

Researcher

So you are saying, it is a process of negotiation and mediation?

Respondent 4

People are prepared to accept, even if it is a decision which is not necessarily in their favour, people want to have understood why. That is the big question, why. And management is not that keen on giving an explanation. I do not think they see the need for it either because they think it is not in the worker's prerogative to

have an explanation or they just want to get on with life. That is the basis of it.

Researcher

How do we get back to basic core beliefs or values that people in community in general have? Does it say something about the way they believe people should operate?

Respondent 4

I do not want to get into the trap of generalising. But I think that it is there in black communities. You will find that family members, a whole group of family members, will come into the advice office to find a solution to a problem. Or if it is a marital problem they are prepared to involve extended family members to try and sort out the dispute before they take steps to get divorced. I think that it is one way of resolving problems is to involve other people. When people are looking for a way to resolve disputes they look for a forum that involves other people and generally most of the parties to that dispute. This is a different way of doing things. From my own white background, we are not inclined to do that. I do not think it is something that developed in the workplace. I think it is something that they bring into the workplace and you see it when people have domestic problems, they want to do the same thing.

Researcher

Does that lead to is a sense of community, a sense of being part of that community?

Respondent 4

I think so. Some things are starting to impact. You are obviously importing some of the more obviously white, western values into traditional black areas. That is occurring across the board.

Researcher

Is the sense of culture being diluted by western, white values and culture?

Respondent 4

Yes, or maybe it is that we are both incorporating bits from each other which is not a bad thing. Maybe we are starting to interface more and people are seeing different ways of doing things. I would hope that we do not lose - because I quite like the greater community involvement, however you involve them, in dispute resolution. You often find when you are dealing with a bureaucracy and it is a black person who has moved into that bureaucracy, that they have adopted that bureaucratic culture.

Researcher

Someone mentioned in a previous interview, that there is a culture of compliance - it is not just a black thing but rather a South African thing?

Respondent 4

It is definitely there. If something has happened to someone seeking advice and they are told to wait and someone will get back to them, they do that. They do exactly that and they come to you 10 months later and tell you that they were told to wait and they will get back to me. And they have not done anything in the interim in the belief that the person told them to wait and they are waiting. I would believe that it is a result of not taking control of your own life. You are used to responding to directives and complying with those directives, which is worrying because people are not owning and controlling their lives.

Researcher

That raises two issues. One is the culture which we have grown up with in South Africa - this dominant, authoritarian, big-brother type culture which is one side of it. The other is something that comes out of some of the reading I have done is the African culture has an external locus of control rather than an internal locus

of control. In your opinion to what extent have either or both of that affected culture of compliance?

Respondent 4

I think it has but I do not know to what extent other factors are playing into it. For example, the fact that the person is completely different from an education point of view, just a life skills point of view. That they have not ever been able to feel good about themselves y do not actually have the skills to have an internal locus of control. And oh ose skills have been denied to them from an infrastructure point of view. It is cause and effect. It is difficult to say which is what. But I do think that there is a reticence on behalf of people to take control of their own lives and to leave the control out there. Sometimes one has to go th gh quite a long process of explaining the consequences of having waited which is an external locus of control completely. Still then it is not easy for people to shift. Now whether that means that they are going to have to go through a whole personal shift and move from an external locus of control.

Researcher

You are talking about skills and life skills and education which obviously are critical to building the personal self esteem which is critical to creating some form of belief that one can control one's own destiny. In terms of what we have to do then in organisations, in business organisations, because we have this whole host of people and we are never going to build an economy on white males, how do we utilise that and tap those resources to make them effective and to become effective?

Respondent 4

People have got to realise that there are different ways of doing things and you have to listen to what some of those other ways are. And we have to allow ourselves to experience things. I do not think that managers in business actually think that there is another way of doing things. And that is going to be the next

step, that you are going to have to start questioning your own set of values and seeing if they are as good as you always just assumed they were. One would have to look at ways that one could allow people to question their own values and allow them to take on new ones. So one has to look at ways to allow that to happen in reality. Some of this is even at the crude level of race awareness training. There are very definitely different sets of expectations about things. A classic one is land ownership. There is a difference between legalistic ownership of property versus occupancy. You do not see it enter into some people's minds that the other option is there. Somehow you have got to make people realise that there are different ways. You have got to unfreeze people and that takes time - probably a touchy-feelly approach.

Researcher

Are these aspects that you have highlighted, unique to Africa or South Africa, or are there elements which are to be found elsewhere in the world?

Respondent 4

I think we have imported certain concepts, we were colonised but I think they have taken on their own South African features. I think that a lot of the advice we are getting - we are using American textbooks, British textbooks - so I think that some of our management style and our management cultures have that bias to them. I think there is a danger in this. I think affirmative action is one of these areas. It is wrong to superimpose something that worked somewhere else, same as the Japanese, they worked because I think that they are tied into other common belief systems in Japan. But trying to fit them in here without looking for the links and the changes that are necessary is quite dangerous.

Researcher

You also mentioned that this whole process of integration - learning and unfreezing - is a slow one. Do we actually have that time?

Respondent 4

I thinks one's got to view these in a short-term/long-term. In the short-term we do not have that time, but in the long-term we have got to have a sustainable economy. So if we do not make the time in the short-run, in the long-run we are going to be doing ourselves a disservice.

Researcher

Something else which someone mentioned to me was the issue of loyalty. He was amazed that despite all the injustices of apartheid, the lack of training and development, that employees were, by and large, exceptionally loyal to their firms, despite the fact that of the lack of opportunity and the lack of mobility.

Respondent 4

I would say that one sees that in older people but in younger people I do not believe that they would stay. But younger people are coming in far more wanting to take control of their lives and openly disagreeing with the system and resistant to accepting an explanation for that system. Whereas older people are very loyal. Maybe that is because they have worked for companies for a lot longer and they have had time to develop a sense of loyalty.

Researcher

On the other side, somebody else said that in business, at all levels, managers tend to be more loyal to managers in other businesses and workers more loyal to workers in other businesses rather than to the people working within their own organisations.

Respondent 4

You are wanting to know if I think that is valid? I think it is just common ground though. If I just look at our National Conference, one sticks with one's various strata. One sees this quite clearly inside our organisation because we have nine advice offices and we all get together, then the people with similar job

descriptions tend to gather together. And I think that is because we have issues to discuss with each other. We have a common frame of reference. Maybe that is what makes it easier.

Researcher

At the moment there are incredible changes happening, new solutions and ways of doing things happening in the political sphere, sometimes even in the social sphere. Should business be mirroring those changes?

Respondent 4

The workplace is the one area where we are getting together from all our different life angles and I think that we should be using the work place creatively. That is where people are meeting and that is where people are learning to understand each other. If one looks at businesses who have tried to incorporate things, the bigger businesses have got the money for the training that is needed and so they can do it far more than a small business. But if one takes industrial conflict as an indicator then way in which industrial conflict happens these days is managed - it is usually not confrontational conflict, it is usually around the issue of people are trying to have a say in what is going on. So that to me shows that it is working. Businesses are recognising some of the changes that are happening on the outside.

Researcher

When you said creatively, business should be looking creatively because of the opportunities, what are some of the things that they should be looking at?

Respondent 4

In many instances you really have to start at the bottom, with issues like values sharing - what is my culture, what is your culture. Not that I think they are necessarily that different but I think that we have been alienated from each other, from different people, so that we should be starting at that level. And it takes a

lot of honesty and it takes guts. But that is the level where I would say your average business would have to come in at. My concern is that if you try to come in at another level you missing out on that qualifying datums that you would build through those processes. You are coming in with existing assumptions, you have not done anything to check whether they are common assumptions. And I think it also gives the space for people to create something unique to them as a company which is often what people get excited about and start to feel loyal about.

Researcher

You talked about one of the differences being the approach to conflict resolution. Are there other differences or other issues that we should be addressing?

Respondent 4

I think just human relations is one. I see the way in which you address a problem for example, the way in which you present yourself as a human being can be quite difficult. Allowing someone else their humanity, that is what I mean by human relations.

Researcher

The whole ubuntu principle?

Respondent 4

Yes, in a sense.

Researcher

In a sense? Is it more than?

Respondent 4

I am quite nervous about the word culture anyway and I think something like ubuntu becomes a buzz word and I am more concerned about that than the

concept, than whether we have actually got it together. But it is basically allowing the other person to have their humanity and recognising someone else's humanity. There is a gentleness in that. I would say that is another level where there are often differences.

Another issue links back to loyalty and locus of control. There is definitely an expectation amongst older people that they are going to be looked after by the company right until the time that they die. They are stopping to work for the company but the company still has those sorts of responsibilities to basically provide for them. I do not think many companies try to do that. You find older people, three years, five years later going back to their company to go and ask a manager to help them, to solve a problem for them. So there has to be an understanding of benefits may be more than conditions of employment.

Researcher

Does that imply that there is an expectation that the role of business is not just business but that it has, in the same way that it expects a loyalty from its staff, that it has a relationship with them that should be ongoing? That it becomes part of the community?

Respondent 4

I think one has to be careful that one move back to that patronising - that we are all one big happy family. That is not what I would like to see happening. On the other hand one does not want to see what one sees now once you leave the company that is it, bye-bye. I would try to go for some sort of balance between that. You do have to understand that a person who is running a business is doing it generally for the profit motive not necessarily for the human impact. So one wants to make it such that people still will start businesses because I think we need jobs and they will not be dissuaded just from starting because of this other extra baggage that they have got to take in with it. I would go for it in terms of benefits, but I would not necessarily say because you are employed today you are

your employer's responsibility.

Researcher

How does this impact on work as we see it, social responsibility. This whole issue of being involved in the community and being socially responsible?

Respondent 4

I think there have been very different responses to social responsibility and I think some of them have been to just throw money at it. I think that there is a danger of social responsibility being left in the hands of business, because I believe that the State has a strong responsibility. I think often in South Africa business has done a lot of things which should actually be the State's responsibility. I think we have to be careful not to allow the state not to get off to easily. But I think depending on the type of social responsibility programmes business chooses they can stand to gain a great deal. If you are dong literacy and numeracy training with your workers as your social responsibility programme then obviously you are going to reap the benefits. It does not necessarily have to be a one-sided affair and maybe it should not be. I am not sure all social responsibility should be the responsibility of business.

Researcher

Given the state of government finances and the backlog of spending, is it realistic to expect that business stands back and falls back on the State's responsibility.

Respondent 4

I do not think that it is realistic but I think that already you are getting a working elite and the gap that is increasing between paid wage earners and the many poor people which only grows if business is only doing it for wage earners. I think one gains a lot more than just a wage from working. There is a middle stratum of people who tend to end up with temporary jobs just now and then but that often has an eroding and corroding effect on a person's self esteem. They are just

starting to earn money, make plans and because they are into debt because that is the way most people get things and then they are just turfed out - and it is often just a turfing out. This affects how you feel about yourself and all the other decisions you have made in order to start taking control of your life. They often have consequences. The people who are secure wage earners tend to be the ones getting training, getting a secure, regular income. They are in a position to plan on a regular basis because they are getting a regular wage. They are getting a lot that is reinforced in themselves. I think that employment does engender a sense of worth even if you are not getting a stunning salary. Just the fact of organised activity which is what work is. I am not suggesting that they do not feel the effect of low wages over a long time - it does. But the organised activity of work does quite a lot for them.

Researcher

We were talking about other issues, other points of difference between the dominating cultures in South Africa?

Respondent 4

The age at which children stop becoming so-called dependent and therefore have access to benefits. I think that a lot of the legislation around benefits is based on the belief the by the age of 16, and certainly by the age of 18, a child is finished schooling and is in a position to [illegible] independent. That is not actually the case. Given the crisis in black educ[illegible] kids, or adults, are still at school at 24/25 and are still dependent on their parents. It is quite a hassle to get your tax rebate, for example. Your pension fund starts getting difficult about the age at which kids are dependent. If a person on pension dies, a child over 18 is not entitled to a dependent's pension or workmen's compensation. There is an age cut-off and you then have to start negotiating and producing all sorts of documentary proof. There are a lot of ways that this affects the working situation. Children are not going to become employed overnight and you are not recognised as a dependent on the basis of your age.

Researcher

There are structural factors which have created some of this situation, but is there a factor of co-dependency within communities?

Respondent 4

I think often there has to be just on the basis of need. For example when an old age pensioner supports a whole family on the basis of that old age pension and when that pension stops often that pensioner is kicked out of the house. They are only allowed to be part of that household because they are economically viable. That is the exact opposite. There is dependency but it is not necessarily on a human level. But on the other hand one still sees that dependency - they say I have got children to feed, or I want to feed, I want to do that for my children. And then one sees people who want to do things for their parents - whether it is around getting a UIF cheque to be able to erect a tombstone for their parents or build a house for their parents. Also the fact that people often bring family members to the advise office or people coming to ask on behalf of family members. Sometimes it is not even family members. Sometimes there are people in the community who will help on behalf of the community because they stand out as a leader, community members are bringing problems to them as a strong figure in the community. And that person will often bring them to the advice office to get advice for those people. There are instances where people are doing this to gain economically and one has to be aware of th.. out we try and monitor and be sensitive to this. But that tends to be the exception rather than the rule.

Researcher

That brings us to another point - the role of women and the whole authoritarian, paternalistic society which we have, whether white or black, which is one where the standing of women is not that important. Is that changing and does one have to work with that or against it?

Respondent 4

I think we have to take it into account, but right across all groups. Women get left with the responsibility of everything, usually the children are there which they need food, housing, clothing, schooling and women are realising that it just does not work to try and rely on a man for that and when they do have a man it is , in fact, more problems because he will get money and just spend it or just start dictating the activities and the life.

Researcher

Has this created a culture where family is going to break down?

Respondent 4

I would argue that the strict nuclear family and the way we often live that out is very isolating. We should look to both that. There are very few positive male role models and a lot of women are actually on their own at the end of the day. There never has been a father of the child, they have never actually lived in the same household and they have never experienced a father role model for that child. Women are realising this and they are doing it on their own and I think when they go back into a relationship with a man that they realise how much they have actually been doing by themselves and that coming into contact with a man and in a relationship again just serves to reaffirm how strong and able they were. And maybe once they realise that they realise that they have some choices.

Researcher

What role do black women have to play in business?

Respondent 4

A lot of black women are managing so much in their daily lives under very adverse circumstances and often with a sense of incredible strength. They are doing it so why not allow them to do it in business.

Researcher

Someone else said to me that the future and some of the biggest changes are coming through black women. That there are incredibly powerful black women doing some amazing things.

Respondent 4

I think there are. To me they seem to have this incredible stature about them. It is a very unspoken kind of force that they have, a kind of presence that they bring. It is funny because even though you might find that women are not granted any kind of status, an older women people will be hesitant in terms of challenging her or how they may be challenged. Some of these women have a presence, and often they tend to be big physically - they are much more comfortable with the way they look and less prone to being judged or criticised for how they look.

INTERVIEW NUMBER 5

Researcher

In your opinion, is there such a thing as a South African or African culture?

Respondent 5

The question of drawing in the majority of people, or people from the majority, was not a question. The markets and also the ethos, if you like, that which was directly linked to the markets converged. With the changes in political environment and what everyone tritely calls the transitional period companies are becoming more aware of that there is a need to be more sensitive in terms of employment strategies. The question of a eurocentracism, it almost infers that there is something unique about the types of people that come into business and I am certainly not an expert on arguments for and against that. I think that for any employer, they are looking for the effective utilisation of their human resources and their physical resources and obviously they want to use strategies which can ensure that can happen. What has tended to happen, and I am skirting the question, is that a lot of business is really on a roller coaster in certain key areas, certainly for black middle management and senior management you are seeing wage inflation, inabilities to retain, fringe benefits getting out of hand as they desperately claw to a rather small pool of skilled black workers both in middle and senior management. Now what is interesting about a large number of those people, that small pool, is that in terms of their ethoses and in so their backgrounds, you could say that the majority of them have quite clearly assimilated either because of their historical background - they almost invariably come from middle class families, they have been trained at schools like Waterford for example or outside of the country and in many ways, my personal view is, they bear very little identity with the majority of people in South Africa. So they have assimilated, if you like, the values of the existing South African corporate

identity quite successfully. Now, the real question one has to ask is why is business looking at this at the moment and why is it important to business. There is an emerging middle class within the black population. There is a reorientation in longer term marketing strategies to try and tailor products and identify segments within that emerging middle class strata who, in fact, would sustain the markets for those industries. Again the question has to be raised, how much do those people who are in the emerging middle class assimilate what some people may identify as traditional African values. The workforce question is slightly different if you look at say skilled/semi-skilled employees and certainly unskilled employees, and there are efforts in terms of pressure from the trade union movement and also pressure internally within organisations for upgrading. There is a skilled labour shortage in this country, perversely, in certain clear areas. So again it is market driven. But I think that is the real area where employers are running into problems. Because if you are going to adapt human resource management in unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled without a change in the whole corporate ethos then in fact you are going to run into conflicts in the way that you manage within an organisation your workforce as a whole.

Researcher

In terms of what you have said, somebody else mentioned to me that we actually starting to get in this country a tremendous gap even in the general population between those in work and those out of work and we are creating almost this work elite who have access to work and, because of that, money and able to improve themselves and their standard of living. There is a whole chunk of the population which has no access to work and will never have access to work. That is creating a tension and a gap within our population.

Respondent 5

In many ways that is absolutely true, but that has always existed to a certain degree. Even if one goes back to the seventies and earlier that existed. The problem is, in terms of the corporate sector, in terms of managing its own staff

that is not a problem, because if people have not got the ability to purchase from the corporate sector and are not entering the labour market because of blockages, then of course the corporate sector is not going to deal directly with that problem. So really there are two problems: the first problem is an internal problem in terms of how you manage human resources within the firm; the second area is to do with corporate strategies with communities, social upliftment, is a recognition that if you have a society where people have very little to lose it raises questions - one of the long-term sustainability of markets on the one hand, and the dangers of in fact social upheaval which would threaten that company. I am not sure which area you want to talk about. In my view there are different strategies. There are areas where there is a high debate about using labour intensive - there are a whole range of debates in the public sector and also the private sector of looking at labour intensive strategies where you do not change the labour-capital ratio because it threatens the internal markets. There is self-interest there. You have the problem of instability and also if you move people out of where they can effectively demand goods, then because of the lack of competitiveness and the reliance on the internal markets, you are actually damaging your ability, you are pushing your costs up because you have got this capacity and all the other things associated with it.

Researcher

If we come back to the issue of companies having to change their ethos to take that unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled labour force and make it a more effective force, utilise the values or cultural beliefs if there are such things. What changes do you believe have to be made to corporate ethos?

Respondent 5

I think one has to go back a little bit. If you look at the industrial revolution, how it affected Europe and the UK for example, then you got rapid urbanisation, then you got people moving off the land into industry, there were a lot of problems. Now one could say that because of where people were historically located their

training and everything else which was not defined by the wristwatch or the clock, there were real problems -labour tended not to be very productive but because it was cheap more labour was thrown at it. I do not want to overestimate the similarities but the South African economy has developed on cheap labour, you throw labour at the problem, you do not look at the effective utilisation of that labour, you do not notice in fact if it does not impact significantly on your costs. So I would not say that it is a unique thing to Africa. I do not know if my example was very good or not, it just sprang to mind. What we are seeing in fact is people moving into the labour market who have not had the experience either historically or because they have not worked in formal employment previously who find it difficult to adapt to the constraints of a standard working day and the expectations.

I would think that it is unlikely that adapting to where people are coming from is going to make industry more efficient and more productive. I think that what we are really looking at is a sympathetic approach in terms of personnel management and also the development of individuals and as teams so that they can sustain themselves and so that they can be useful and productive within the work environment.

I think that companies are very amateurish when it comes to what is sometimes called affirmative action programmes or positive action programmes or most of the programmes that are in place either called affirmative action or positive action. In my own experience what it tends to be is that you throw people into an environment where there is a theoretical support infrastructure, but that support infrastructure does not enhance the relations between different groups within society - it actually exacerbates them. I have seen that in a number of organisations that I have worked with. The way that you understand where people are coming from and also what their own personal needs are in terms of career pathways and how you balance that with the needs of your own company is very difficult. And I think it has not been thought out within different companies within

this country. I mean even companies that have quite good human resource development strategies are actually losing senior staff because they are more mobile and because there are labour shortages in those areas.

Researcher

Some of the issues that other people have said that companies or corporate environment can learn from or adapt, and two issues that spring to mind are: one the issue of communal spirit that appears to be a facet of the way most of our population tend to operate; the other one, and I think it is linked, is the problem solving techniques which tend to be used in those environments or those cultures. Are those issues that companies should be taking cognisance of, because we talk about team work a lot in management theory and it tends to be participative management, just-in-time type theory, should we be using those or should we be adapting those?

Respondent 5

I think that if you look at management theory there has been a recognition that the way that manufacturing has been structured, the way that other companies have been structured does build in inefficiencies and does not utilise personnel very effectively. Where there has been an assimilation of team work or problem solving it has not always worked unless there has been a change in the ethos, but I do not think that is particular to the workforce in South Africa. I think that has been a general problem with industry. You do not get more production by throwing meetings at people and you do not get more production by allowing people to participate in decisions which are outside of their terms of reference. There is always a tension in large organisations from where a person is located at the point of production and the national management. It is not a question of everybody being involved in every decision because everyone would just sit round having meetings. That is a gross over-simplification, but some people do believe that. I think that one has to recognise that internal tension.

There are two levels. First of all a person has to be aware, to a lesser or greater degree, of what their organisation is doing - what is its role in society, what is it producing. I know that sounds ridiculous, but a lot of people do not. A lot of people do not know the business their organisation is in, what types of services are actually given - it does not have to be detailed. That reinforces a sense of belonging to the organisation. The second thing is that within their own job it is given a level of autonomy and decision making where that is relevant - and one has to be very careful of the level of decisions and responsibilities that are given to people - people are not interested in making decisions if they do not see the benefits of it, if it is not related to their own job. It is nice in theory but it does not work in practice. One can overstate the importance of a person's role within a job, but I think at the end of the day they have got bills to pay and that is why they go to work. So I think that yes to participation where that is relevant to that individual's position and to production. But if you are in the business of making cars you are not interested in the complexities of after sales service or in the marketing strategies of your company. You are interested in where you are in the production - I am not just talking about line. Again I do not think that is a uniquely South African phenomenon, I think that is a general problem internationally given the way that industry tended to develop.

Researcher

Just moving back to something you said quite early on, that the black middle management, senior management, have tended to assimilate the corporate ethos.

Respondent 5

I did not say that they have assimilated the corporate ethos, if I did I am incorrect. What I was saying was because of their background, because of their education, it allows them to adapt more readily. They are used to a consumer orientated society. They live it and peer groups are people who are engaged in production, are engaged in management, are doctors, etcetera, etcetera.

Researcher

Are you also then saying that what we need to be doing is providing that form of background to the rest of our workforce, that the rest of our workforce needs to adapt to that environment as opposed to business adapting to other factors? Or is it a combination of those?

Respondent 5

One cannot look at this mechanistically, that everything is going to remain the same if only the workforce took on the ethos of the company in fact all the problems would go away. I am certainly not saying that. I think that in terms of the way that companies have been organised they have to look at their own needs in terms of the changing markets and they also have to look at their responsibilities. It is cheaper in the short term to buy somebody in. It is gives the illusion of cheapness - somebody else has done the development, and somebody else has had a reasonable affirmative action programme. You buy that person in, you have inflation in that area, but then you do not care because you can turn round in the new South Africa and say that we have X number of blacks sitting on our board. In many ways that is meaningless. It is having a sensitivity in terms of your employment strategies, it is having a sensitivity in the way you make decisions about investment in human resources as opposed to or in conjunction with investment in capital equipment, it is having a sensitivity about the way that people are actually developed. If you are going to talk about participation, people have to be enabled to participate. There is nothing genetically inherent in any of us that makes us more productive because we have participation. It has to be in a structured environment.

Researcher

You talked about a sympathetic approach. Sympathy specifically to what? What are the issues that companies need to be sympathetic towards - to have their ear to the ground to?

Respondent 5

Some organisations are aware of this, but they are aware of this only in their own workforce. One can talk about the male dominated workforce and they do not utilise their women - their female staff - effe..ely. They lose all of their investment because they do not have a strategy for bringing people back, and having flexible working hours for people who have had children. That is one example. Where one is talking about unskilled and semi-skilled employees who are living in townships, one has to be sympathetic to the environment that those people are operatir.. in. And be aware of some of the problems that those people are facing at mor..nt. But that has to be contextualised with a general strategy, and I think this may link up with what you were saying earlier on about a company's responsibility to the environment in which they operate and in which their workforce operates and how, in fact, they can perhaps be upgraded. I am a firm believer that companies that are located in communities have a responsibility to those communities, not just in terms of informing but in the wider sense. And that does not mean a paternalistic approach. It means a real negotiation both through the trade union movement but also with the emerging civic organisations. Because one must not always assume that there are convergent interests. There are not.

Researcher

That responsibility to the community - what does it actually entail? Very often business people will argue that the business of business is business - its profit and its community is us and our product and our workforce and our customers.

Respondent 5

There is convergence. I mean one does live within a society that is dominated by the profit motive and it is in the interests of industry to ensure that they have a workforce that is productive. If you are worried about your environment, you are worried about a situation in the township, you are not going to be productive because your mind is not on the work. So it is in the interests of industry and the

corporate sector to ensure that the environment outside of the workplace. There is nothing new about this but I think it has tended to be ignored until quite recently. Obviously, where you have older industries - mining and industries associated with mining - I mean theoretically they should be more sensitive because of where their workforce is located and because of what they can see within the environment in which they operate. Service industries where they are more geographically mobile, they still face some of the problems especially in their semi-skilled and unskilled cell. And I think there has to be a sympathy to the needs of those people - catching a train is not a pleasurable business in South Africa.

Researcher

Something that comes out of a certain amount of the literature is that the culture - certainly the black culture - is that there is an element of fatalism, that this is my lot in life and there is nothing I can do about it.

Respondent 5

With due respect, that is not an African phenomena. If one looks at development of religion, look at the way that the working class population in almost all of the world operate it is very much a fatalistic approach - societies are fatalistic. They do feel disempowered and that is not just the structure of individual industries. It is the structure of society as a whole with religion reinforcing it. It is not an industrialist or an industrialisation process. It predates industry as well. I do not know that some of the top people in the corporate sector are not somewhat fatalists as well. Again, I do not think that that is unique. I think that one can place too much emphasis on a uniqueness culture - obviously one needs to separate culture from tradition, culture changes all the time. I do not think that there is anything particularly unique. I think it is the nature perhaps of the way this economy in particular has industrialised. But fatalism one can find in any workforce.

Researcher

How does one address that issue of fatalism or perhaps not address but change it? Are there strategies organisations can use to change that? You talked about empowerment?

Respondent 5

A marxist would believe that a dictatorship of the proletariat would empower the masses. Again is the function of fatalism in the interests or the disinterests of the company? How many independent persons do you want within a society? If it is in the interests of the company then the company may want to respond. Let me throw the question back at you - why do you want to move away from people who have a fatalist approach?

Researcher

From a personal perspective, people who do not have a fatalist approach see that they have an ability to change their world - moving the locus of control from the external to the internal and there is a release of potential and talent that is latent.

Respondent 5

What are we all in the business of, whether you are in industry or whether in fact you are trying to maximise the potential of the individual in the interests of the organisation? And I would argue quite strongly in the interests of the individual. If you can develop career paths for people that utilise the latent potential even if that person moves out, you are developing a society which is mobile. A mobile society is very good.

Researcher

In your opinion, and it is only an opinion and probably a generalisation at that, are companies actually concerned with creating and releasing that potential in people?

Respondent 5

I think that if you look internationally, companies want to manage the development of individuals in the interests of the company. You have got to look for the convergence between the interests of the individual - I do not like the term human resource management, I prefer the term human resource development - and in the interests of the organisation. Sometimes it is in the interests of the organisation where you develop people when they move out of your organisation into other organisations. Others try to develop potential to such an extent that the person can be retained and controlled and therefore they are losing out on a significant amount of productive capacity within those individuals. You cannot all have middle managers.

Researcher

Just another issue that tends to come out from the literature a fair amount is another category/classification of African culture as being extremely paternalistic and autocratic.

Respondent 5

Autocratic to a certain degree, and it has changed significantly. Again I do not think that this is unique. I think that it is the way that there has been the way that there has been cultural development in this country. Paternalistic - I am not too sure what is meant by this.

Researcher

Paternalistic is probably not the right word - it is an element of ultimately the word of the chief or the parent goes and that is what you follow and listen to.

Respondent 5

There is to a degree a deference to authority and in many ways that has been reinforced in industry by the local patronising, paternalism especially towards the black workforce. I think that you find especially within industry. To a degree that is certainly breaking down - you will see that deference to authority breaking

down and being expressed in whole lot of different ways. The question is that is I am correct and that has been reinforced within industry is that the correct way to ensure that the full potential of individuals is developed both in their own interests and in the interests of the company. I would argue that it has not. We have had wholly structured work environments and in many ways you would have to go back quite some years in Europe to find some of the management attitudes that one often sees. And certainly in the workplace, in manufacturing for example.

Researcher

Is that a specifically black phenomenon or is it a general one? Have we tended to treat all our workforce and all our staff that way?

Respondent 5

It is only a few years ago that management in the UK got rid of floor walkers in the clerical only because of changes in the technology and that sort of thing. And no it is not unique. If you look at working class whites, you are looking at a very hierarchical society and it is incredible. The way that you handle the police in this country is completely different to the UK. Here provided you are polite you can tell them what to do and you can get away with murder, because they are used to authority and used to authority figures.

Researcher

Is that something that should change in organisations?

Respondent 5

Yes, because it is unproductive and it does not allow people flexibility or making decisions. People do not like making decisions, and that is not black African, it is the general way that industry has been structured in this country. The whole of the corporate sector and the private and the public sector has been structured. To get a decision out of anyone one has to go to perhaps 15 people. It is unproductive, it wastes the time of the person who is interfacing with the company

and it wastes the time of the people who are involved in not making decisions but following what they perceive to be their very demarcated role within a company. It has definitely got to change and that comes back to participation - giving people more responsibility within their own environment rather than responsibility in the general sense in terms of decision making.

Researcher

In terms of what you are saying, the situation that we have in South Africa is not a unique situation, it is one which we have created but also one that other countries have already gone through.

Respondent 5

There are other similar environments but there is a certain uniqueness in the way that industry and management has developed and apartheid has had a significant impact not just on the way the black workforces relate to authority but in fact to the way white workforces relate to authority. You are coming from a very authoritarian society, you are coming from a society where the authority of a position rather than the individual enables you to exert authority because he or she has leadership ability or potential and can operate that in a sensitive way. The position holds all in this country. I have never known a country where qualifications are so important, everyone wants to know what your qualifications are not whether you are any good at the job. That sends alarm bells to me because one does not achieve because how good you are at the job, one achieves because you have gained certain qualifications or you have done your apprenticeship and gone through a certain channel and have kept your nose clean basically.

Researcher

At the moment we are going through tremendous changes - political and social changes and the way that the political change has taken place is almost a unique process - it is a process that has not really happened in any other country. Should that process in any way be mirrored in the way that business operates?

Respondent 5

I can only overstate the process and again it comes down to interests and a recognition of what those interests are and what the blockages in the performance of those interests are. It depends where you are located within a workforce. There is always a conflict and it is how you manage that so that people can reach compromises and in that sense one may say that you can mirror it to a degree. People who are in a conflict situation want to be able to walk away feeling that they have achieved something and that the conflict has been resolved. Conflict may be expressed through the individual but, in my view, it is usually a systems problem, the way management is structured that creates that conflict. I refer to the way that affirmative action programmes have been implemented and how that has actually caused more conflict rather than less conflict because it has not been managed correctly. It has not been thought through. So one should not really always look at the articulation of that conflict one should look at the root causes of it which very often are a management problem and the way that management is structured. Different organisations have to look at different ways.

Researcher

You talked about human resource development as opposed to human resource management. What is the difference between the two?

Respondent 5

If you are going to utilise skills in the area of development then those people have to be separate from the management of human resources. You cannot actually take the two roles on in an organisation because there is a conflict and that conflict will be quickly picked up by the workforce. If you are going to be in the role of management of the workforce then you are going to run into conflicts. People need someone they can talk to about their own individual needs and their own individual development whilst that person is employed by the company. I think that if you do separate those two out you have gone a long way to break down traditional suspicions to the way that an organisation is managed. Also if the

person is open and honest you also recognise the limitations in terms of human development and in terms of what the organisation can actually do. One has to look at this in terms of the costs involved and weigh these up against the benefits both in the long and short term. If organisations in general move down that route obviously you start to move away from labour shortages in key areas because you can actually pick up people from other organisations.

Researcher

South African organisations in my experience tend to look towards American models and Japanese models. Should we be looking to these models?

Respondent 5

This comes back to your original point about are there special routes. If you look at the American development and the Japanese development you have two completely different developments. It is hard to select one model because as you pointed out there are differences and industry has structured itself in a different way. You cannot just change that. In South Africa trying to follow either model, you would fall flat on your face. What we try and do is recognise that there a certain things that you can pick up from different experiences and see if they can be utilised within your own organisation. There is no model. One has to be sensitive to the environment that you work in. You cannot overstate that because then you start having blockages and start coming up with rarefied theories that have no basis in ensuring profitability and so maintaining the interests of your workforce. If you look at affirmative action people do not think thing through and they implement actions which reinforce the white male dominated workforce. They changes are not corporate changes they are caucused changes and they are not sustainable in my view. If you are going to go for positive role models you have to have a strategy, you have to identify where those positive role models should be, how many there should be, what time frame you are going to talk about, what your labour turnover is, is it possible. Those sort of basic things are not thought out at all. If you are talking about human development, changing the

ethos of the company, one has to take that all into account and it has got to be open. People have got to be aware of that because otherwise people will feel threatened. One has to show that it is in the interests of all the people in the company in the longer term.

Researcher

You said that one has to take things from the models that one finds overseas and look at the things that are valuable and we should not necessarily be generating off-the-wall South African type things? Do you think we will get to the stage where we will develop effective South African models?

Respondent 5

The way that industry and companies are structured changes all the time and you may find something that is satisfactory for a certain period of time and then you have to change it. Organisations should be changing in a controlled way. One is not looking necessarily for the successful model that will be sustained through all time. One is trying to plan for a very uncertain future, one is trying to work within time frames where you have some control. What one is trying to do is develop something that will be proactive, can make the South African economy more productive, more competitive in an ever opening international market and then look forward and adapt to change. So there is not going to be one perfect model. A lot of the challenges you are not going to be able to sit down and see. You need the ability to pick up the indicators of what is likely to happen and guess reasonably accurately what is going to happen and respond.

Researcher

There is a lot of talk about South Africa's potential to become the powerhouse of Africa and Southern Africa. In your opinion, do you see that as a feasible option in the foreseeable future?

Respondent 5

South Africa has been very closed, it has been isolated even to traditional markets to a lesser or greater degree. Because of the way it is structured, because of its protectionism, and because of other factors like management it is highly uncompetitive. What is clear is that South Africa is reliant on the world economy. Everybody has been saying for a number of years that we are moving towards a growth phase internationally. I am cynical about that. South Africa cannot sustain large rates of growth without an upturn in the world economy. That is fact number one. Secondly one has to ask what sort of growth which starts to throw up questions of your capital-labour ratio and all those sorts of issues. There are two points. There are large numbers of people who never entered formal employment and likely never will within this country. Then you have the whole international trend of core and periphery, where you have core workers and temporary workers who are called in when it is required so that you are pushing a lot of the cost out of the company which allows you to be more flexible. So you have a problem with the world economy not growing, you have a problem because nobody is really sure about the growth patterns you should take, you have a problem that you cannot grow unless the world economy takes off and you have a problem because outside of the corporate sector is a low level of education. The South African economy is not poised to take advantage of the world upturn, in fact exactly the opposite and how you turn that round is a very long question. In terms of organisations, some organisations, if they develop good strategies in terms of their own workforce and in terms of the way they draw people in could be poised to take advantage of a world upturn.

South Africa has always overrated its abilities. It is strategically positioned to take some advantage if it re-orientated itself towards sub-Sahara or even the front line state. But one has to have effective demand in those countries to be able to buy the product and some of the products that are being produced are not necessarily the ones that will be demanded. In a longer term perspective over ten years or more, if you have a good education strategy, if companies do not knee jerk and

maintain low wage structures in an economy where those in employment are low paid relative to other countries, then there are some opportunities.

Researcher

If I were to summarise what you have said it would be that South Africa is not necessarily unique. It is a function of structure and structural problems we have created for ourselves or developed historically, and where we are in our development as a nation as opposed to inherent cultural factors. That because of that we really need to be looking at developing people and looking at what has been happening overseas but also looking at our own inherent conflicts and adapting to those.

Respondent 5

There are organisations which given the right strategies will be relatively successful in international markets. But there is a long way to go. Most of the problems are located in senior management and where they have come from and there has to be quite a change in the mindset before things are going to happen.

Researcher

What sort of change?

Respondent 5

The whole question of an authoritarian approach for example. What I am seeing with a lot of organisations is really opportunist strategic positioning where you get into bed with the new masters. It does not mean that because they are realigning themselves that they are realigning their relationship with the workforce and realigning the way that they operate within the business community. In fact, if one were cynical one would say that some of the worst practices of business are now becoming more explicit rather than less so as one moves through the transitional phase.

I think the trade union movement has quite a significant role to play but it is a rather small movement in terms of the number of people who are organised. It has the interest of people and members at heart, I do see a healthy awareness of community needs as well. The trade union interest in eduction strategies and its discussions, mainly with manufacturing, around training and in-house education is quite good. I do not think people should be complacent about the political process and what they are doing within their own organisations. I think that they have got to recognise that there is a lot to be done and it has to be done professionally, it cannot be done in an ad-hoc way.

I think that apartheid and the way it was perceived by the outside world was unique. But I think there is a danger in seeking the unique and try and reinvent the wheel at every turn. It is really looking at the way that organisations are different, and they are unique to a [illegible], in the way that they have developed and taking the best things in the int[illegible] - and it is the small things that can have an impact rather than grand schemes. When one is looking at the management of change in an organisation, then it has got to be driven from the top and it has got to be disseminated in a way that does not threaten the workforce where they can participate where it is relevant to participate.

INTERVIEW NUMBER 6

Researcher

From your experience with people in the communities, and I believe you are now very involved with Voter Education and things like that, do you see business as a whole allowing people to succeed, the way business is structured at the moment?

Respondent 6

Well, at the moment it is difficult to say as to whether you see people succeed. But what you see happening right now, there is a lot of a move to getting more and more people involved in business. In particular by providing them with management skills on business irrespective of what type of a business is. That move is there, at different levels and it has different approaches.

Researcher

Do you think that there are unique features of African or South African culture? Are we different from the rest of the world?

Respondent 6

If we are looking at business I do not think we are so different to the other world. We might have our different approaches and styles towards business and probably would come as a result of our cultural backgrounds and our traditional backgrounds on how we go about doing things. Each and every nation or group of people have its own way of doing things but when it comes to business if we maintain it, organised business, there are certain procedures one has to follow. But in following those procedures you get a lot of influence coming from our cultural background into that business. Hence, today we find it very difficult especially in grass roots organisations to try and orientate the leadership in accepting a new type of management style or skills in their grassroots operations or whatever small

project or problem they are involved in. Most of the time you find them willing to say we want training or, let us say, maybe management, and then you give them that training on management but now that culture which comes with that training is completely different to some of the values and the cultures they grew up in. And from time to time they seem to having some sense of being detached from their culture and they do not want to lose that.

Hence in most cases you get people saying, if I maintain it, black business always fails. Because most of the time you try to bring in as much of our culture and value into the business and it ends up having some conflict or clashes with the so-called white business culture. Then as soon as that clash happens there is definitely going to be one part which is going to fall or to go down a bit. In most cases you find that the black business people would like to see business run along family lines which is really how business is run. But with strong emphasis on the respect culture which is there in the black community. As a result certain things which have to be done, when they are not done, we do not even look at going into disciplinary procedures there and then, even if they exist in our institutions, we try to bring in that culture of sitting down, talking and saying look while you are the elder, you are this, can we solve this thing. And then when that is done we do not even have reports. Whereas in the white business culture says that you must have records and keep these things. So we do not believe in those things. We believe that once you have spoken to a person, he is human, he will understand. He does not need to be treated like a person who is being monitored in such a way that each and every thing he or she does is not in line with business, that person will have to be punished. That is the other thing. So we will end up losing a lot of other procedures which has to go with business.

Researcher

That is exactly my problem. I am saying when you get the two cultures clashing in business it is usually the black culture which has to disappear because the white business culture is so strong. But because of that, people themselves do not

function well and business itself does not function well. How do we build a situation in, or try and get to a point where our business culture can use those things. Rather than seeing them as negative, seeing them as positive, and saying how do we use those to make both our people and our business more effective.

Respondent 6

I would start by saying to people who are in a position to use those cultures or those values one has first to understand them, their roots. So if you do not understand the roots and values of that culture you are bound to make mistakes. You are bound to be referring to whatever will be coming out of that culture as something which will not work in business. But if you have a better understanding of how black people operate in their culture and business then that makes it easier for you. Then you can start saying this is how we run the white culture business and this are the skills we might have imparted to the black business community on how to run business, but seeing that, like you say they have those values and cultures which are those that we can now integrate. But that you can only do in constant consultation with the very people who are going to be affected. Because the black people are having a problem of losing their identity, being swallowed into this so-called European or white culture. And to safeguard that and to eradicate whatever mistrust could come in it is better to have more consultation, more talking like we do about these things.

Probably the other thing is try and have some sort of formal recognition of these things. What I am trying to say here is like for instance, if I come to you I have got a certificate from maybe one of the big institutions along business lines. But I have some form of background on how to run things which is based normally on cultural values. I must have something which could be recognised to that extent to say this man has this type of ethic. Once I get recognition of that I am now in a better position to accept this other new one. But that can also happen once you also understand that this which I bring in there can be of value and where you feel it lacks you must also be open to say, as far as your culture is concerned and on

this it will lack. But say it openly, do not sort of kill it indirectly. Say it openly to me that it will not work because of reason number one, two and three. But this which you are bringing in, probably let us say respect for positions in companies - because we have a problem in this instance. Like for instance, I have to come in in a managerial position and age wise there is somebody I am junior to who is under my what you call, and I have that conflict. But once we make people to understand that when it comes to questions of position respect will still be there, because respect has to be two ways. So that this one who is my so-to-call subordinate, not age wise but position wise, he has to respect the positions and responsibilities I am holding. And the two can work together. That is the only time when we can get people now coming to have some form of understanding.

I am literally having that type of a problem right now. I have just been given a promotion and somebody very senior to me age wise and socially, and probably academic but he lacks some other things, he has to report to me. But he is not taking it lightly. All I am trying to do is to come closer to him, try and show him why this was done, and how the two of us with those differences can work together to bring about what is the main objectives or the policies or the aims of the organisation or the department w' 'in the organisation. To some extent I think that I am winning because he is starting to realise no v, and from time to time he comes back to refer to me.

The other thing is that people have to learn to give credit. Most of the time we find that we do not give credit for whatever comes from other people. It is not a standardised or an accepted way of doing things. So if we can give credit for those type of things it will help. So in South Africa what we will need to do is to give credit for this informal type of training which gives people some form of experience which they bring into companies or into businesses. Until such time as that recognition is formally done it will keep on having that conflict. Openness about accepting and getting into knowing other people's cultures and values that would help.

As of now we are still hooked in that situation where we are still separated, where black people - even right now, even when we are going for election next year - they are still suspicious. And people have realised that they have lost quite a lot and that is why right now you get more talk which is so racial, as though we are in 1958. It should not be that way when we are getting to the new thing, but it is so because of suspicions, mistrust and all that which we are still bringing into whether people have been made to lose a lot of their cultures and traditions. For example, in companies when we talk funerals, somebody dies in my family, I have to take a week or two weeks off to attend to that thing. Now business will say we do not have much time to give away for that type of thing. But if that is recognised one way or the other and people are made to understand that if you take that much of your time off this is how business suffers. We lose you within the company, we lose your contribution for that period of time. Much as we sympathise with your situation but can we have another way that we can be in a position to pay back in kind that time which we lost, that absence which came as a result of something really beyond our control. If people can be made to understand such basic things they might help to bring about closer cooperation between the two worlds apart.

Researcher

If I try to put that into some term for myself, and correct me, you are talking a lot about recognising humanity the humanity of each person, and respecting that humanity. Also the conflict between positional power and social and cultural power. But in reconciling that again recognising the humanity and the contribution each person has to make. The last issue you were saying that our systems and structures are designed for a white society, somebody dies in the family you take off two hours to go to the funeral and you come back, and our structures are designed for that culture instead of the broader sense of having to be involved over a long period, and we need flexibility in our structures to be able to take account of that.

Respondent 6

But on the other hand not losing the value that has to be attached to contribution in your workplace or whatever you are engaged in. So that has to come into the minds of a lot of people. Other people feel that if I have been given two weeks off I deserve it, I can take it if my leave which is there and that is the end. That divorces you away from your commitment of being part of the institution. So for you to feel part of the institution, be made to understand that whatever has made you to stay off that loss of a family member has also affected that place where you earn a living. Much as you will go through the procedure of burial and all that, come back and say let me make up for that.

Researcher

What you are saying is that the worker - a lot of the terms that you have been using like contribution - there is a sense of community with the business - the person is part of a community which is part of the business and we should somehow be recognising and making him feel part of that.

Respondent 6

That institution and that business. That recognition will be that factor which makes him to feel part and parcel of this business or to make him to feel obliged to contribute to that business - even if it is his own business, let him feel that whatever he uses up, he or she must put back in one way or the other to cover up that and that will be good business. But unless such time as people are made to realise the value of any establishment or any business without giving yourself more into that, you definitely stand to lose and you will in the long run lose that business.

Researcher

Just coming back to something you said right at the beginning. You talked about the core values and beliefs of the people which they have and which are not really recognised by business. Some of them you have already talked about, like the

recognition of each man's humanity, the sense of community, are there others you think are important values and beliefs that we should be aware of if we are going to get to know each other.

Respondent 6

I suppose that I am looking at the question of also the man and wife relationship, which also is viewed differently from the white culture. Black people still hold the view that as a man I have to provide for the wife. And we are moving into some stages whereby people are starting to talk about things like woman's lib, rights for women and all that, as though those things never existed in some cultures. They used to be there. We used to have rights for black women and the way we treat them as part of our culture, which goes probably with their rights, when we bring this into the workplace people must understand that. That the relationship which I have with the sexes will differ. That is not understood, they affect business very strongly. You will have a lot of conflict on the question of gender which is so much spoken about. But if you only have gender without taking into account the cultural background of it, that is another thing we have to look into the value of gender issue being brought into companies and coming from a different grouping of people. And those different beliefs of women, men and, like I have said, age. That is another thing that should be looked into.

Researcher

In the same way you said that you are promoted above somebody who is socially and culturally your senior and you have to find a way of working together and respecting each other's ability, in the gender issue can it work the same way?

Respondent 6

Yes it can work. But the problem here is that some of these things are being imposed on people, disregarding what they have. That causes a problem. But if we are man and wife and we work in the same institution, people must understand that we are man and wife and there are certain ways that we behave in our own

culture and let them allow that flexibility of me being in the position to say sometimes, let us sit in that office and talk about other things. Please I do not like you doing one, two, three, four. Let them respect my feeling, for example like hugging, and let them do that. In some cases you find people taking it up and saying, now Joe you are becoming an oppressor of women. But it is true that one has to accept that now we are in a changing environment and we be have to be given a chance to adapt to this new environment. Now my problem is that I see things as being imposed because we are not given enough chance to adapt to situations as and when they come or as and when we find ourselves in certain situations. It is like we are being expected to change immediately and that will not work. So we have to be given a chance to adapt to that situation with some understanding and then that would solve the problem a bit.

Researcher

You are again talking about cooperative change and having some input into how that change takes place, which again brings out the point of people sitting and talking a lot and listening to each other. Is that an important aspect of the sort of culture we are dealing with.

Respondent 6

Of talking and listening? There is not much of that. If we may put it in the South African context, because we are still miles apart. Every time when we meet it is in places like this. As long as we still have our Soweto there, our Sandton there, that chance of sitting and talking is not going to happen. The problem is that it will work here at the workplace but it is sort of a controlled environment. When we move out there it is something different. If I meet you in Soweto or I meet you in Houghton we will realise that the things that we do when we are here we will not be in a position to do when we are out there. But if we are together from there, coming here, that would not be a problem. But we are still far apart.

But the talking part is very important and that is what is killing our country. The

talking right now is fast talking. The World Trade Centre - it is fast. As soon as those people part there, they go to their own different whatever and they still then remain what they are. Which comes also to the question of black children being brought into white schools. We understand because of the situation, there is no schooling there but that child spends most of the time at school, comes back, the rest of his/her life is in Soweto and he finds it difficult now to communicate, talk to these other people. Even in their own language, it is creating a problem. Instead of closing the gap, we are bridging it further and further, directly or indirectly. Maybe consciously or unconsciously we are doing that so these are the things which need to be addressed by talking more frequently together.

By getting closer, socialising together more frequently, and in different situations not only work situations or in secluded places where we go to meet the business end and that is the end of it. So the more we move to each other the faster and the closer we get to know each other the better. People are trying to rush. Those people have something also which they feel they want to see it being phased out. But the process for them is so fast that they feel like pulling out and being there for a moment and see how things work. Now that is because of this long period of being separated and we are trying to say in three years time let us come together and forget the past. It will not work that way. It is like expecting the communists to forget completely about communism. And people are saying it has been there for forty or so many years. So has apartheid here. And you cannot immediately expect those people to make a 180 degree turn and say we accept this which has come in. It will not happen that way. We are also rushing it - for other reasons that I know we are rushing this thing. The talking business is good. But if it is rushed and under a controlled environment it is not going to bear fruit. Let this thing come out naturally.

Researcher

The problem I have is how do you let it happen. If you have had these separate units for so long, each group distrusts the other, each group undervalues the other,

and unless you almost force people into certain situations where they have got to change, where their suspicions and mistrust start breaking down, where they start developing respect for each other, I do not know how it works?

Respondent 6

That is our biggest problem. You see the problem that I am trying to highlight is that this talking and mixing should not come from one side only. And this has been my belief, and probably common to most of the black people, to say why should it always be us seen going there to the whites to be accommodated. We must also see the white counterparts coming in without us inviting them, because I do not want to believe that there is no white person who does not know and realise the damage caused by our so-called apartheid system. And there is nothing which stops them from saying, let us move out of the white group into those areas and mix with those people. They never move out and say, let us go where these people are not working for us and see how that works.

Researcher

What you are saying is that all the mixing is happening on our terms. And we are saying, yes we are going to make adjustments, but we are bringing people into a white world, and we are saying that we will adjust the white world but you adjust. Instead of us going into a black world where we have to make the bigger adjustment.

Respondent 6

Exactly. And also saying what is there to learn. Because we have been learning a lot about the white world. The white world is not learning from us save for these few moments where we meet in this controlled environment. If we could see that happening, definitely people would move closer. For example, if one looks at what is happening with the education crisis in the black areas. The students went out rioting for something which we believe is real. But we have never seen white schools, or white teachers, or white community workers saying in support

of what is happening to those human beings - they are also staying and saying the system must die. So those suspicions are still there caused by these things. They have never seen them coming in - we have never heard them say, today we are celebrating or commemorating say the death of Steve Biko - it has never been done. It must be us coming in, and even then when we have a memorial service, they want it in the white cathedral in town and all that type of thing. Only a few whites venture to come into Soweto. Until such time as we have this white force coming in, showing that willingness to integrate, things will not work out as we wish. Right now we are doing temporary or cosmetic type of things. The same in business. What we see right now. People are talking of affirmative action and it is being done - like let us take those blacks and put them into positions. That is not my belief. I have to be put in a position if I deserve it. Because right now with affirmative action, people are becoming suspicious of it because it is like, let us use blacks again to camouflage that we are a company which is doing this. And that is not going to work.

Researcher

We are trying to take these black people and make them white people with black skins.

Respondent 6

Yes. And black people are realising that. And as soon as they start revolting against that - of being used - people will start telling them. So this should not only be seen in terms of white wanting to dominate. Maybe when blacks get the chance they might do that. But let us minimise the chances of doing that right now. A lot of black people want to get into business but they are still suspicious of the white world.

These things will keep on occurring unless we sit down and become honest. I know it is difficult to be honest in business and in politics. And to be open and say, alright we have been doing this, you can come in. It is not as easy as all that.

But let us agree that we allow you to come in at your own pace and that is it. The same thing has happened in black business. There are a lot of black people who have done well in business, but they have balked at their own black fellows. So it is happening both sides. And they also have to learn to break, and open up so they can also allow some white business to come in.

But the whole thing becomes political because you say, we have not been allowed to build our own shops in the white areas but we see Pick 'n Pay, Checkers, coming into the black areas and all the small business people are not being given a chance to grow. And at the same time those very small businesses in Soweto are trying to get some help, especially in skills from the Wits Business School and others. But they have a problem because as a small business man if I have to go to a course for one week how do I survive. Because that business is for survival. So all those things are still a big problem. But unless the people who are dealing with small businesses encourage partnership we will have this problem.

The question of partnership is totally neglected in the black business. It is not being encouraged. Hence you will find people running the same things, little, little. It is all split up. Whereas if they could come together, build up their little conglomerates it could help. Because we can then release you and me to attend the course. We are in charge of business here and whatever comes we will share and we will come back into the organisation and the other people will go out there. So nobody seems to be coming to those people to say, how about doing this.

Researcher

From what I have been told and read, a number of people talk about almost the co-operative, communal nature of black values. That if you go back to the rural areas, if I have something that needs doing the community will come in and help me. Yet it seems in the urban setting, as far as business is concerned there is not that.

Respondent 6

I think it has been affected by this question of profit coming in. What we are talking about is what we call in Sotho, Letsema. In the rural setting, at the end of the day the field is still mine but I make it that each and everyone who contributed gets something back in turn. It is not determined how much. But when it comes to the urban situation we are talking profits and we are talking money. It is that problem that when we talk money, it has certain implications. That spirit of working together is still there. That is why you find that when you open even a small business, you go to get some of your relatives who are a bit down to raise them up. But we have this aim of saying I must get more as an individual and keep it to myself. This concept of profit has come into the black community but it has come in the wrong way which killed that value which we are talking about. If it could have been brought in and allowed to intermingle with business it would probably have encouraged this spirit of partnership to the extent of building empires like the Premiers and all those sorts of businesses. But that has been discarded completely, nobody is encouraged to link this system to the modern business which will suit the urban situation.

Researcher

How do we link it? Can we make it part of the way we conduct our business?

Respondent 6

Well we could. But the biggest problem is that with the white or European business there is a lot of training which has to come with it. There is a need for a lot of upgrading processes amongst the people. That has been made difficult by the question of lack of educational opportunities. People have been robbed of them. And you find that even those very small business people, some of them are not educated. They are illiterate people. They are doing it for survival. So for them to be in the position to start thinking in those bigger terms they have to get this foundation of education. If you can give them those skills which will build them to have those understanding of running this co-operative different from that

Letsema effect, then that would help. Because the spirit of working with others is still there. But the skills which come with working in an urban situation are still lacking. So if we explore that spirit of working together, bring in the skills of the urban situation, of modern business skills. Definitely we will be in a position where these people can now start to develop that spirit further into the new modern type of running business. But that is not being given a chance. There is really a lot which our people have still to be exposed to before they can progress in a different way.

Researcher

You are saying that you cannot just take the values and beliefs and cultural traditions and say, these are them, let us use them. You have got to compliment them with the other side. Do you see then that if we do this right, that we will one day have a culture which is not white, eurocentric culture and not black, but something that is new, that has grown from that which is a South African culture or something different?

Respondent 6

We have the chance for building that type of thing. But we seem to be playing around and wanting to miss this chance. If you take, for example, what happens with the boers or farmers and how they relate with the people there. Despite the harshness they treat them with, the two people relate so well that they impart some knowledge to them, agricultural knowledge, they gain a lot. Get an African person who has worked on a farm for a very long time and bring him to run a farm. He will do exactly what he learnt from that person. So in the process of the harshness of the relationship, people learn something. That type of situation is also being seen here. That people have been made to do certain work and not been exposed, especially in industry, to certain things. Now if we can now say a situation like the boers where these people have come together and produced together despite the conditions, often farmers go out of the business and leave those people to literally run and manage the farm, they may not be aware that they

are imparting some skills to them. If that type of situation can be experienced and brought into a different environment it could still work and build in a chance of a closer working relationship. A lot of those people have white farmers learning their languages, teaching them their languages which brings in a closer understanding. At the end that person develops some pride in knowing the language of these people. He can talk to them in their language and people who talk the same language get to understand each other better. In the urban situation that is not happening. If people are made to talk the languages of the other people they get to know them better, understand them better and they work closer because of that.

Black people have some gifts, or characters which are amazing - always being willing to accept other people. We develop some pride and begin to accept a person when he or she talks our language. If white people can learn to talk these languages they will be accepted and we can then have a better chance of getting closer to each other. Blacks build some form of their own language so that they can talk to each other and the purpose is to get closer to each other. Language can be used to bring people closer. So that is not a chance we should miss. If we can get to know each other, to talk and understand each other's languages the better chance we stand.

Researcher

We need to start learning and using a black language if we are to understand people?

Respondent 6

There is a short-coming to using African languages in business. They have not been given the chance to develop to that level of using business terms. If you go into a black run business in Soweto and you start talking Sotho or Setswana you are in a better position to do business than if you come in speaking English or Afrikaans.

Researcher

Yet you find that a lot of blacks in business will only speak English or Afrikaans to each other.

Respondent 6

That is another thing. They have been taught in English in courses they attend. But if they had a choice, if the African languages were developed there would be no need for them to talk in English. So it is because of the situation they find themselves to be in, they are taught these things in English, for us to understand each other we have to talk in English. There are certain concepts which have never been developed in African languages. It is not that we look down on our languages. I strongly believe that given the chance African languages can be developed to have those concepts in them. It has also to do with colonisation where people were made to feel that if you talk English you were more acceptable, you are educated and all that. That was part of the oppression which our people had to fight.

There is a chance for us to build something that is South African but it will take time and we need to bridge the gap between the two people who have been separated for too long. Not only in terms of language but also in terms of staying together, socialising together. So the more opportunities we have for people to be together, work together, talk together, we still stand a chance of coming up with something which is South African. I strongly believe that white business, the white world has a lot to offer to us the black people. And we also have a lot to offer. We all need each other to make something different. Our chance is there and it is in our hands.

Researcher

The process of negotiating a political settlement that is happening in South Africa at the moment, do you think this is a particularly South African/African approach?

Respondent 6

What is coming out is that process of black people always willing to accept and accommodate and tolerate. The leaders must display this African concept of sitting down and talking to the people. It is part of black culture - that process of accepting one another.

We have this thing in our culture of sitting and talking. And everything has to come back to the community. People come together to sort out problems, talking which involves everybody. The people who are concerned with decision must be there, everybody must be there to contribute towards the institution and towards the decision making. It is very important. But people, because of lack of education and other factors, become confused to see how structures operate within companies - why we have these positions, how they operate and how they link to you as a man on the ground. People become confused about how the person on the ground can come to have something to say directly to the person at the top. That link is there but the process people miss out. So if people can be made to understand that process, that by having these structures you are not actually blocking them from reaching that person but you can reach the person at the top through this way.

Researcher

You are not just talking about giving people the skills to do their jobs but also giving people education in the way business operates.

Respondent 6

People must have an understanding of how each part of the business operates so that they know what is happening. The process of discussing things starts at staff meetings and this is sent up while production is still continuing. That needs to be emphasised.

INTERVIEW NUMBER 7

Researcher

Do you think that there are features which one can say are South African culture? Is there something that makes us different from other people?

Respondent 7

I think so. There is definitely a sense of humour in this country. I think that is emerged out of the total misery, the struggle in the country and so people have to develop a sense of humour just to give themselves a break. That is quite unique, I think.

Researcher

That is a very interesting point. When you say sense of humour, how does it come across?

Respondent 7

It is just that people can laugh at themselves. People definitely laugh at themselves and there is a sense of fun while at the same time there is this heavy burden, the struggle and now the uncertainty. That, I would say is definitely one of the features. The other thing is if you have ever asked a South African how he is, they will tell you exactly how they are. They do not say fine and talk about the weather They will tell you my grandmother just had a heart attack and my brother owes me so much money, I am in serious debt. They will tell you exactly how they are.

Researcher

Is that an openness to other people?

Respondent 7

Yes, it is . The reason I pick it up is because my brother is married to a Canadian and she finds it quite strange that we are so open. We just talk about how we feel exactly. And people, if they go into a beautiful house, will talk about how nice it is . And they will ask you how much something cost. They do not expect you to shy away from this.

Researcher

Are there other things that come to mind?

Respondent 7

I think musically as well. South African music is a mixture of western and African music that emerged during the period of sanctions when we could not access all the music from overseas. So it actually helped the local music industry.

Researcher

Is music an important part of our lives? Do you think it plays an important part in the way people live their lives?

Respondent 7

I think so.

Researcher

If you look at rallies, at marches, at any gathering of people, as an outsider it appears to me that music and singing and dance is a very important part of that expression.

Respondent 7

And it changes with the kind of political times we are going through. I went to a rally the other day, a people's forum, and the last time I went to a rally was the Chris Hani thing. And you can sense in the chanting, the music even the toyi-

toying that people were feeling very angry. And it comes through in the chants and the toyi-toying. At the people's forum there was a different kind of toyi-toying. One would say that they were celebrating. When Mandela walked in there was this chant that comes from the ZCC tradition and people were toyi-toying, it is kind of a welcoming thing. But at the same time there was not that excitement

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Researcher

There has been a fair amount, not a lot, that we should be using those things somehow in our businesses. How does that strike you as a statement.

Respondent 7

It is interesting. The problem is that a lot of this stuff is not actually recorded. My brother is working on film at the moment. He was working on a documentary on the history of the ANC and he was looking for music around the period of 74-76 and because it was very angry there was nothing he could find that was written down or recorded. You just find it at the rallies or so, there is nothing really that you can actually go and use for a documentary. He could not find anything other that Miriam Makeba.

Researcher

If organisations are Eurocentric, if they do tend to alienate the majority of their workers because there is that clash, should they be trying to use song and dance in trying to create some form of joint identity? Should that be part of the way organisations bring people into, and mould those cultures?

Respondent 7

I am not sure how it will work in business. I know that in literacy, in the rural

areas there is a project which uses drama and song and dance a lot in their literacy programmes. And they have learnt this technique from projects in South America. They have taught the local people and they can just interpret anything through drama and you learn from that. I can see it working in education - in business, I am not sure.

Researcher

You have still got to carry on with business and it becomes almost an artificial situation. We talked about culture, but do you find in your dealings with people that there are any core values or beliefs that you think are important?

Respondent 7

You know what I was beginning to express in the beginning - that people are so open in South Africa - but it is also part of the sharing of our misery and our sorrow and our joy as well. There is a sense of sharing that seems to come out in that people can come to you and say that this is my problem and expect you to assist in some way or another. So I think that this one of the core things. It may have been ameliorated by living in the city, very industrialised set up. There still is that sense. I think it is a core value that people hold up - that sense of ubuntu. There is something there. It is difficult in these times to hold onto those values in terms of family, economically it is just not viable to hold onto those values. I think that a lot of our values and a lot of our culture stems out the conditions, economic conditions that we come from. The reason why people have extended families and the reason why they share in the first place is for their own survival. It is not because they are different human beings from white people. It is just out of pure survival, to look after the family and so on. But because those conditions are changing those values are changing. But it is very confused. They say consciousness lags behind concrete conditions. So people have that kind of consciousness but the concrete conditions is reality. So it is very confusing.

Researcher

A lot of people have talked the sense of community. Are you saying that is tending to break down to an extent?

Respondent 7

Yes, for the reason that conditions are changing. People have been removed from the rural areas where they were able to sustain themselves in some way. They come to the cities and they lose touch with their children, they lose touch with the people at home. I went to Botswana and there were these huge trucks on the road loaded to capacity. And it is people going home. They save up every penny for this time of the year. It is live chickens and mattresses. So people still have that. And it is something to admire in people that they still go back home, and they save up their little bits of money to buy these necessities and they go home to the rural areas and take this. There is that tension between that kind of life, the third world and first world tension. It is how many people, if you get into a very urbanised culture, think about your mother and father and you have to save up all this stuff. But people have that. They have to support the family. It is that sense of community still there.

Researcher

Linked with that do you think that people who come into the business world want an extension of that community to that environment?

Respondent 7

I think people do. We have tried to develop that in our organisation, but we are a non government organisation and we are very small so we can do that.

Researcher

How do you do that in your organisation? How do you try and do that?

Respondent 7

In a small organisation I can see that working. You can have a sense of a family. If you take decisions democratically - when I say democratically I do not mean that you have a meeting to discuss whether to buy a teaspoon - where major decisions are concerned you seriously consult with the members of staff. And we have gone through this with them at the moment. In the literacy field there are moves to form one national NGO. The thing that concerned people most, apart from their job security, was are we going to lose our organisational culture, are we going to lose the environment that we have. It works in small organisations were we all know each other but I think it is difficult in huge corporations where people have to have line responsibility. Although I have heard that even in big companies they are moving away from that, they are trying to develop smaller units where people can have a sense of being part of a team and so forth. There is that sense in the business world.

Researcher

You talked specifically about an example here. How did you actually go about that democratic process in discussing that issue of a national literacy body in you organisation?

Respondent 7

I gave a report after the strategic planning of this national body and we discussed in the organisation. We looked at the advantages and disadvantages of going in and weighed each against the other.

Researcher

Did you do that in group meetings or in small meetings?

Respondent 7

In group meetings and it is still going on. It is not a one off process. When I came I was very enthusiastic about the whole process and obviously I must have

enthused the rest of the staff. But then about 2 weeks later the reality of what we are trying to do hit us and I became less enthusiastic and people could sense that. But then they pushed me. It is not just the technique it is a way of running an organisation, it is actually to the advantage of everybody else. Even to me. Because if I have the sole responsibility of deciding this thing I would really be having sleepless nights. It is not to defer the responsibility by saying we are all responsible. I am still responsible but I can fall on people, I can talk to people, and really get a sense of what are the pro's and what are the con's and so on.

Researcher

So it is a form of taki esponsibility ultimately but not taking it alone? By using the opinions, the thoughts, the understanding, the experience of other people, their input?

Respondent 7

It was getting their support. It was not just lip service to the idea of democracy. Because there were several times when I was in doubt about this about the whole thing. But discussing it with the rest of the staff and hearing their opinions on the matter, changed the way I was thinking about it as well. So it is a genuine process in that sense. Especially because it involves something so serious, our jobs, our work, our lifes' work that we have put into this thing. So that is the point of democracy.

Researcher

So there is a sense of delegating responsibility and delegating authority to people to continue?

Respondent 7

It did not happen consciously. We did not have a policy. It is just the way it has evolved over years and through our own experience. Because I was involved in another organisation before we started this project and that is where this whole

idea of democracy was taken to its negative extremes. Where the person who is coordinating the project never actually took the responsibility and we did not want to give that person the responsibility because for our own ends. So nobody ever took responsibility for anything in the organisation. It just developed. We were all equal and things just then happened.

I think that industry and government should try and operate in some way like the NGO's do. They should try and decentralise to meets the needs of the country.

Researcher

You are saying that in the way NGO's operate, business or corporations can learn from to an extent the creativity and the autonomy which the smallness gives you?

Respondent 7

Absolutely. The NGO's in this country also have a long history of negative things that were associated with the conditions at the time, a lot of them were anti-apartheid organisations - not even NGO's - so people were not very professional in the way that they ran their organisations and looked after their resources and things like that. So there is that legacy as well. And it was misused in the way that nobody took responsibility. I think our organisation, because it was formed after the 90's, it was formed in 1990 actually, we sensed that these days are over now of NGO's operating the way they did. And when we formed ourselves into this organisation we were looking very far ahead in terms of how we were going to organise ourselves, how we were going to get resources and how we would professionalise the place. A lot of organisations now are moving into that direction. I think in the way we manage the place we have gone quite far in that direction. It is not to say that we have the answer to it, there are still problems. I am just giving you the other side of the picture as well. But that was to our advantage that we actually started afresh. We were very enthusiastic and wanted to keep the best things of where we came from, the way we work, the team spirit and so on.

Researcher

You were talking about democracy and yet, at the same time, there is talk that our society is a highly autocratic society. If you go into the tribal situation people talk about the chief making all the decisions, what the chief says goes, what the father says goes. How does that balance with this element of democracy? Are they contradictory terms or do they compliment each other?

Respondent 7

As far as the males are concerned, they are very democratic, they sit in the kraal and make their decisions. But when it comes to women there is a problem. I have experienced it with my father. He is a typical African male, and I have had huge battles with him around that and he will never change, I have given up. There is simply nothing one can do about it. My mother has to get up in the morning and make breakfast, do the lunch, and she works as well. She cannot escape from it. Yes, at the same time there is that very autocratic system, but then when it comes to serious decisions that have to be made then people do actually come round and sit round the table and look at the best ways out. So the day to day running is very autocratic, but I think that where major decisions are involved, people do come together and discuss these things. It is a negative thing especially in relation to women. It is terrible actually.

Researcher

How does it fit in again with something that I have read about that it is something, these are not necessarily black features they are white as well - whites in some ways are just as autocratic and perhaps even more so, perhaps apartheid, probably even more autocratic than the people. But there is a culture compliance that we cannot kow-tow to authority, that we are reluctant to make decisions. We go with the flow, we go with groups. Is that changing?

Respondent 7

I do not know if you read this article in the Weekly Mail about three months ago.

It was about political organisations, labour organisations, even NGO's, that the decision makers the policy makers were all white and Indian. And that the Africans were just happy to do the work and allow other people to make the decisions. And that is true to an extent that they allow other people to make decisions - maybe blacks and women.

Researcher

I am not too sure that it is a black thing. In white organisations, whites have allowed things to happen for the last 30 years. I am not too sure it is a black thing, I do not know. Is it a function of the fact that we have had apartheid for 40 years, that we have had whites in charge, that the laws have really given people very few opportunities to make decisions, to take control? Or is it do you think simply that, the two are linked up, history creates culture and culture creates history, or is it part of our makeup as people. Do you think we would throw off the shackles of that?

Respondent 7

Yes, absolutely. I think if people are given the opportunity that they will take the responsibility. Just from my own personal experience, and I can see this happening now, and I try to consciously fight against it. I fear of becoming this national entity. I have played quite a key role in this national organisation. Then we employed somebody that we thought needs to be really dynamic, somebody who is not only popular but has all the skilled qualifications to do the job. I do not know why we thought that, but anyway we employed somebody like that. Since we have got this person we have built this network into this very successful network. There are problems obviously, but we are still a loose network, that is our strength at the same time. But now we are moving into this thing, we are focusing this network into this thing. And this person we have employed is a male and this network is mainly women actually that were running it. It is almost like we built something, now we are passing it on to someone who is going to take the glory of running this big national organisation, and that happens. Especially in

relation to women. When it comes to the final thing, we are not prepared to accept the blame and be finally responsible, to make the decisions up there. We are afraid. But we have been working on this thing for so long, building it and so on, but when it comes to the crunch we withdraw. So maybe that happens throughout the country. But I see that in a lot of situations with women, and in this particular instance. Even in terms of the political situation. Look at the whole way that the political situation is played out, that people have just left those people of CODESA to do their own thing. There have not been any strikes, there have not been any stayaways, there has been nothing this year, and even last year. People have been quite happy to leave these people to do their own thing, and they do not even believe in it. I mean there is a huge sense of demoralisation in the country because they can see that the settlement is a bit of a compromise. There is still a high level of expectation. But people have a sense that things are not going to change fundamentally actually. But they have been prepared to leave them sitting at CODESA to work out the compromise.

Researcher

If we look at CODESA, if we look at what is happened politically. In a sense it is a very different way of resolving political problems. Nowhere else in the world have major political problem of the magnitude that we have had been resolved through negotiation. Whatever the result of that negotiation, there has been a new way of solving a problem. And I think there is also some changes happening socially. Do you think the business world should be learning from that and try to mirror those changes in the way things have happened, the process?

Respondent 7

Well I suppose there is some merit in people sitting down and working out solutions to problems. But there are certain fundamental differences between a man who is running the company for profit and the workers in that factory. At the end of the day the manager or the boss has to make a profit, and he wants to make it as quickly as possible. Now maybe they can come to negotiate around

issues in the industrial scene, but in the long run it is better to give the workers decent wages and contribute towards social responsibility so that the workers' children can go to school and be educated so that you raise the standard of living for the whole of society and so that you empower people economically to buy back the goods that you produce that you have to make a profit for. But that is very long term thinking. So it is better for somebody sitting there trying to weight up these profits and losses to think of it in that way. And I think that that is one of the problems of South African businesses that they want to make big profits and the whole legacy of the economy has to do with that. They never invested in technology and education, that they are out to make a quick profit and so they use cheap labour, you know that you did not have to invest in education. So it was very shortsighted, because what is happening today is that they cannot compete with the rest of the world which has moved in that direction. So it has created their grave digger in the sense where economy is in serious difficulty because of that now. So now they have to start thinking of education again and investing, and it is going to take a long time to get people educated to a level where you can actually see the advantages in the economy. How long does it take to put somebody through school? And even if you run Adult Literacy programmes for the people according to COSATU now and even the ANC, they foresee education in four levels. They say it will take four years to get through the equivalent of Standard 8 which is the general education certificate. It would take four years full time. Those adults would have to give up work to go through those four years. And if they work the way that they do work on these programmes it is going to take nine years. So how long will it take the economy to recover from this predicament that it is in.

So as far as negotiations are concerned, it is almost like we have to educate these people as well to think more long term. But in the end you know, if you look at what is happening in Britain at the moment they are also cutting down on a lot of social programmes and so on, education as well. And yet they are used to huge trade deficits and they used to be the biggest trading nation in the world, and the

only way that they can compete with the rest of the world is by increasing the level of education. It is like a vicious circle.

Researcher

A lot of people have talked about South Africa becoming the power house of Africa, becoming a new tiger. We are not talking in the next five years we are talking long term, do you see that possibility on the horizon?

Respondent 7

I think it will affect the whole of Africa what happens in this country. But then again you cannot not link South Africa with the rest of the world, and if you look at what is happening economically in the rest of the world, it is not very prosperous. So as far as things change internationally, South Africa will obviously benefit from that and I think that in that way it will benefit the rest of Africa. And yes, it will become quite a powerful player. I mean it is the main country in Africa and the other thing is, is that the rest of Africa is looking to South Africa hoping to learn from and to gain from this country economically. But I think that the improvements will be very slow. And if you look at growth rates, South Africa does not have an astronomically high population growth. Our economic growth rate is slow.

Researcher

Something someone else said to me was that she seems to hope, or she sees the future in the women. Where do the women fit in? We have talked about the fact that we have a patriarchal society which sees women in a specific way. You said that women tend to do all the hard work and move back to let a man take all the glory. Where are women going to fit into the scenario?

Respondent 7

I think you definitely need a kind of women's movement to affirm women's role in society. But you almost need a social movement to raise the consciousness that

will affirm women in their own society I do not think it is going to emerge spontaneously. It is very discouraging if you look at women's organisations in this country. They have not always been supported by the political organisations. They have not really asserted their rights. In the ANC, for example, women are not even coming through on fundamental principles to do with women's rights, you know the right to vote things like that.

Politically that is been the problem with black women in this country, that they have always seen - you know let us first solve the political questions, the national political question and then we will look at the rights of women. And that does actually affect the whole women movement in this country. You almost need a women's movement. The Women's League conference of the ANC actually discussed dis-aligning itself from the ANC. It is an option.

If you can have a kind of working environment where people understand each other and can work together and actually consciously take each other's opinions into consideration, and not just pay lip service to then you actually can learn and become more innovative and so on. When it comes to creating things, sometimes it is not just one persons effort, it is a collective effort and it is just so much more better than if one person had just done it. I feel that women work like that a lot of the time. It is a democratic way of working, far more democratic.

You need to know how to deal with the emotions women bring to the task and you can find ways of dealing with it. We had problems like that here, and I am not sure if it is solved or the people have fallen out. I suppose it is the leadership in the case as well. If people have a sense that somebody is going to intervene and they trust that person then it can work. Nothing is perfect but the people can work together in a way they could not before. On a personal level they hold each other at a distance, but they can work together. I think women have to be taught to resolve these kinds of differences in a way that things can move forward. But I think that if they have enough of a sense of responsibility for things outside of that

then they will not do that.

Researcher

Just moving back a little bit. Are there aspects of our culture, national culture, African culture, if there is such a thing, that organisations should take into account the way they are structured or the way they run or the way they treat people?

Respondent 7

Apart from saying broadly that the best way to run an organisation I think is to actually run it from this culture what I say seems to be disappearing and to try and bring that in your management of work. But if you try and translate that into practical specific things, it is hard. Apart for being more democratic. And besides that, you know, I think culture is a thing that you cannot consciously make it. People will bring it into their organisations. It becomes part of the culture in the organisation if people are given enough space to do that. I think by the way of imposing what you think is the culture and allow people the space to bring in what will help to reflect the broader society out there.

Researcher

There is an element of respecting other people and again coming back to what you were saying, listening to other people, rather than imposing what is neither doing things to my way of thinking. Is that part of the whole ubuntu concept?

Respondent 7

I think so. It is very interesting. I have to go back to this reorganisation because it is very interesting. Somebody should be doing research on it. Because the organisations that are involved are so diverse. The reason why NGO's are NGO's is they are different because of whatever differences they have - so they are all different. And what adds to it more with this network, is that since 1990 the organisations that have become part of it, do not look on the same traditions. So some more and more conservative organisations you know that collaborated with

the State in the days when it was kosher to collaborate with the State. They had a totally different culture and tradition. And when it comes to this whole process of reorganisation they do have a different way of thinking how these things should be done. And one of the things - and it is the white organisations that expect that the National Director of the network, should give them a blueprint of how we are going to form this national organisation. Work out all the technical details, get a consultant, get a lawyer, get a person with technical expertise. Yes, we need consultants and all that type of thing. But the way we would operate is we would discuss it ourselves and say how are we going to do this thing? What is the best way of doing this thing? We do not rush out to outside expertise. Then a lot of the guys come in with ideas and methods that just would not work. So this is how we work, we try and work it out ourselves and then we get the experts to come in. But they just cannot understand that way of working. They are not going to get into this merger or integration or whatever we are going to do until they see that blueprint. We are saying we do not want a blueprint. We want to shape this thing into the form that we want it to take. We are not going to accept this National Director to come and give us a blueprint of how we should operate in the future. We would not want to go into something like that if we did not have a say of how it should be done. So it is two different ways of thinking. They have fears so they do not want to commit themselves to this process unless they see the blueprint so that they can then accept it or reject it, and we are saying we are committed to this thing in principle and depending on the outcome of how we come to shape this thing then we will go in. So we go in fully committed to work at it.

Researcher

In fact it is a mirror of what is happening nationally. You are committed to an idea and you will shape the idea as you need, whereas other people are saying this is what is going to happen. We can only commit when we know what the outcome is going to look like. And it is a difference between willing to live with an uncertain outcome but committing to a process and people committing to an

outcome and not a process necessarily.

Respondent 7

So I do not know, how do you solve a thing like that?

Researcher

Is there anything else you would like to add to what we have been talking about?

Respondent 7

The thing about mind sets, I mean the example I gave you of this reorganisation process. It is also an example of a mind set that we like to work in this way. But it is one thing to have a sense that this is the future way of working, something that the whole country should try and emulate, and if we are moving towards a democratic situation there is a lot you can learn from the practices of organisations that experimented with new ideas and so on. But it is also difficult to look at it from an organisational point of view. We are also trying to traditionalise the organisation and we are trying to run this advertising campaign to raise the image of the network and so on. The images that we use. There was a very white advertising company and the image that they wanted to use was to have somebody in the room, like Robinson Crasoe type of thing on the beach. And this person wakes up on the beach and he goes to this telephone booth and there is a telephone directory and he cannot read. This is our advertising. And it just will not work. We do not have to be so obvious. People do not want to look at very direct images. We have to make a little bit of a transference. So it is difficult to separate the two issues. This is just a white way of looking at it, it is a eurocentric view of looking at the whole question of literacy, but then there is also the artistic thing involved as well, so how do you translate these.

INTERVIEW NUMBER 8

Researcher

What do you think are the most positive features of people in South Africa, are there positive features that we should be taking note of?

Respondent 8

Behaviours?

Researcher

Yes

Respondent 8

I do not know whether you want it politically or just generally.

Researcher

I do not mind if is politically or if it is just generally. I think people are complex animals, they are not just social people, they have got different sides and behaviours comes out in all ways.

Respondent 8

Their behaviour is not the same. If you get African behaviour and Western behaviour they differ a lot, because there are certain values and traditions that we carry out as Africans whereas we find that in the Western culture they do not believe in those values. They only follow certain traditions which in most cases we as Africans intend adopting the Western culture rather than in our culture. In South Africa we all know that our education and apartheid system that the government introduced made our people not believe in themselves. So whatever which is of value to them they see as not very good anymore. But we believe that

something from the Western culture is always better, because they believe that a white man is better than a black man, so anything that a white man does, even if it is wrong, you have to follow it, so I will start by saying that. That is one of the problems that we encountered.

Researcher

I think that is one of the problems I see that makes me want to look at what I am looking at.

Respondent 8

Yes, and going further into that, like I say 80% of the black people, especially those living in the urban areas, do not follow their cultures anymore. And a culture is nothing else but a behaviour that a certain ethnic group grows up with as a family and at the end of the day they make it their culture, because it is something that they practice on a daily basis or on special occasions. They practice it as a family and they believe that every member of the family should practice such an act, and that is what we call a culture. Even amongst us blacks our cultures differ, because we have Zulus, Tswanas, Pedis and the rest.

But there is one common ground which is respect - respect is number 1 we believe that we should respect one another. It is unlike in the western culture it is a respect even to them, but if a young couple is in love, they will take it very easily. They can easily go and introduce their affair to their parents. They can hold one another's hands, they can kiss one another in front of their parents which is something normal according to their culture, but we blacks take it as an insult. If something like that happened in front of me, I would go crazy, in a sense that I could kill my daughter or my son. It is an insult. We believe that you are not only insulting the parents but are also insulting their ancestors. The ancestors are the forefathers who passed away. We believe that they are also insulting them, whereas the western culture believes that they have to express their feelings and not suppress them. We believe that we have to suppress our feelings in front of

the adults.

Researcher

You mean suppress or just hide them, not show them openly? Because suppressing them means keeping them bottled up or keeping them within yourself which is not showing them.

Respondent 8

Yes, not showing them at all, even if they know that you are in love, but you do not have to show them.

Researcher

You need to keep your feelings within yourself.

Respondent 8

Yes, not suppressing them, you need to hide them but to keep them within yourself.

Researcher

Not display them for everybody to see.

Respondent 8

What else?

Researcher

You were talking about respect as being one of the major things. Any others that you see as core values?

Respondent 8

Yes, the lifestyle falls under that. You know, it is still not the same. Our lifestyle was not as fast as your lifestyle, but when the time changes and the situation

changes in the country, we ended having the same lifestyles. Like now, I have the same lifestyle as you. I drive the same car, stay in the same house, we do the same things but unlike before we are not used to doing things together. Not simply because of the apartheid system, but also because of our cultural values which were not the same from the beginning. Your cultural value then helps you to lead your lifestyle, it will lead you in a certain direction. You know what I mean. Because you need to take many things into account. For argument sake, I will not allow my daughter or my son after high school to go and stay in a flat in town and be independent, but with your culture you do that. To you it is normal, your child has to start socialising and doing things on their own. With me, I am very possessive that I must take care of my child until he is married. So that sense of responsibility lies within the parents for a much longer period, unlike you. At the age of 15 I am sure most of you become independent.

Researcher

Some parents want to get them out of the house.

Respondent 8

With us we cannot let them out. But it is happening now because there are a lot of changes as I said. We are living the same lifestyle, because we are living our culture and following your culture even if it is wrong, but the apartheid system needed for us not to respect ourselves

Researcher

If we look again at those cultural values. We spoke about respect and responsibility to your children. Are there other important cultural values that are part of the African view - that are important?

Respondent 8

I do not know ..... Like I said respect is number one.

Researcher

How would that link up with something like Ubuntu?

Respondent 8

Ubuntu goes with respect. Ubuntu means you must have yourself with respect. Like I say the word respect or the word Ubuntu means a lot of things, unlike in English, when you say respect you mean respect, good behaviour.

Researcher

One of those untranslatable words

Respondent 8

Yes, but to an African Ubuntu means a lot of things. It means you must be yourself, you must respect, it means everything good. Like if you watched Malcolm X when he defined black and white, when he defined whites he mean everything beautiful, everything appreciative in the word, and when he defined blacks he meant everything bad and things unacceptable, so it goes like that. Ubuntu it is the same word like that, you define many things out of it, but it goes with respect. In most cases when they say Ubuntu they mean you must believe in yourself.

Researcher

There is a lot of talk about the community and how people are linked to the community and that black culture or African culture is a much more communal thing, that it is much closer linked than perhaps a western culture.

Respondent 8

Yes it is closer linked. Like Tswanas, Zulus, Xhosas we do have a common ground. Even if we do not speak the same language but culturally we do share activities together and we do understand our language when we share activities so we do have a common ground. Unlike you, if you had to speak Spanish, I would

not understand anything. But sometimes an African does not understand another western culture. So with us it is different, we do have a common ground.

Researcher

And in terms of how the community affects your lives, is it an important part of the way you live your lives?

Respondent 8

Yes, recently it is like that. I will put it like that. Now it is like that but before it was not like that. We have to look at what is happening now, I think that is what is most important. Yes the community does change your life. If my neighbour is living a western lifestyle, and I am living the African way, obviously my child or their child will adopt one of the two. That is what is happening now, but as we know in 90% of the urban areas we live the western culture. Our community changes the lifestyle of the person. If you are from a rural area and you come into an urban area you would not live a rural area style because people would take you for granted, they will not respect you for it. You have to live within the upliftment, or development of the life within those areas.

Researcher

When people come into organisations, and I mean again....

Respondent 8

Like us?

Researcher

No, going into businesses, rather than organisations like this, they go and get a job in an organisation, and we are all aware of what apartheid has done and what it has done to the education and the disadvantages that people come in. If we ignore that, and it is difficult I know, but if you put that aside, do you think that the way businesses operate allows people to be successful, allows them to give of

their best?

Respondent 8

I would say, when we go in business, I know many successful guys who are my best friends, and the rest. You do not compare yourself with a white man - number one. Number two you do not put apartheid as a justification to what you are doing, but they are successful because they believe that they will be successful in a black market. That is why their business investments are in the black townships.

Researcher

But if you take the average person who walks into an organisation. I mean there are successful people and there will always be successful people. I am not looking for a yes or no answer, do businesses really see the potential in those people to allow them to succeed?

Respondent 8

To grow? Yes there is a potential, a lot of potential. We do have the ability to run a business, but we were never given the chance to expose those abilities in public. For instance, I was never given a chance to own a shop, I was taught I was black and could never own a business until the late 60's.

But still the gap is not the same, the whites are very far. They had the opportunity before they were born. They had an opportunity to be successful and I was deprived before I was born. So we have to look at such things. There will be a gap although we are trying our best to close it, that is why I am sitting here and trying to close the gap. I do not want to be under a white man, that is why I am sitting here. But at the end of the day you must know that they are advanced because of the opportunity that was given them by the South African government. Although we are not comparing ourselves, we are trying our level best to be on our own and be unique. Although at the very same time you have to consider that

the reason why you are here is that someone is behind you or upfront.

Researcher

There are the legal and the political things that are changing and have to change even more to provide opportunities, but what are the things that companies need to do for their workers and for the people they employ to help them release the potential that they have?

Respondent 8

The companies must have social responsibilities. That is point number one. And the social responsibility will start with the employees and it will then grow to the communities. That is the only thing that the company can do. Once they have got a social responsibility in terms of developing the communities where the workers are staying then I am sure that is enough for the company.

Researcher

So the company, you are saying must first start with their employees and do what with them?

Respondent 8

Give them better benefits. You cannot go outside and develop a community, plough a lot of money on the community while the people are not satisfied in the company. You first satisfy your employees. You then exten activities. It is part of an activity to give good benefits to an employee, but you then extend them to the large community, like developing or sponsoring projects that are good, but you start with your workers. I have seen many companies in South Africa - I have done research - most of the companies in South Africa they tend to jump into the community projects or to find out from their companies, the employees are not developed. If you enter the company with a Standard 10 you live and die with that certificate, they do not develop their own employees before they go outside. It is very important to start internally.

Researcher

So what you are really saying is that they have a responsibility inside their organisations but also outside the communities.

Respondent 8

It grows from inside to outside. You cannot start big.

Researcher

The relationship has to exist

Respondent 8

It has to exist between the company, it is employees in-company and the community. But I would say, if the company has a PRO or a marketing department like SAA, things go very smoothly in those departments because they extend their services but from their companies people are developed. So you cannot go outside and develop an NGO while you cannot develop your own employees.

Researcher

So that is where really have got to start.

Respondent 8

That is where you have got to start.

I know it is hard, you cannot give an excuse that you are health workers, you are serving he community you must not strike. Irrespective of your job description you must still be satisfied because you cannot give the best service if you are not. So I saw that guy talking other things on the TV yesterday, I wish I was there, but unfortunately things are unionised in South Africa as their political movements were banned. We had to concentrate on the movement in order to express our feelings.

INTERVIEW NUMBER 9

Researcher

Just in your experience from what David Saffer told me, you were very involved with the nurses and structures in Baragwanath, correct?

Respondent 9

Well I worked for 8 years, most of my medicine has been practised with black patients first of all in rural hospitals, and then when I came to do psychiatry there was a whole training period where there was a mixture, and then since 1985 until last year I was entirely at Baragwanath and obviously worked with black patients and nurses, and the whole thing is the allure of Baragwanath hospital.

Researcher

Do you think that one can turn round and say there is something that is a South African culture, or is it African?

Respondent 9

I have not travelled a lot abroad, but I have lived in Britain for a while and have been back on a number of occasions and I have been to some of the other African countries, and I do not think that there is a South African culture. I think that we have got a number of parallel cultures, almost discrete, and to some extent that is the effect of apartheid. The problem with apartheid is that it actually worked too well and it really kept people separate. Even if you find people who worked as domestics in the home for 20 years they will understand the people that they are working for and it possibly has rubbed off on them, but fundamentally they remain Africans, and their culture is African and their homes are usually not in the suburbs but are somewhere else. And I think that one sees parallel cultures perhaps intertwining, but actually if you untangle them they are discrete. It is

really like a piece of knitting. You put it all together and with the different pieces of wool and that knitting and they look combined and they make composite culture together but in fact they are made up of discrete facets. Now I think perhaps there is a rub off on each other. There must be. But I would hesitate to say that there is a South African culture. I think we have great difficulties in looking at national symbols, for example. What is meaningful? What actually unites us? The white men will go to rugby, the black men will go to soccer. And cricket really has not featured much in black culture and we do not have a national anthem. It will be a long time before there is something that will bring an emotional loyalty. I think that it will probably be more than this generation or get the results of separate development can really be put together. There are just huge differences socially and economically, huge differences in world views, even something like a view towards illness that there are big differences in the way that the African will view it. What I would say is that the African people are closer to each other than they are to caucasians or Europeans. And perhaps there we argue again that we are really caucasian Africans or white Africans, that we are different I think. The English are different from Europeans even though they are European in origin I am not an expert on culture, but I think that is just the way I experience it through my work that one really has to make cultural changes for every person that you see and you have to really understand where a person is coming from a within their culture.

Researcher

You talked about a different world view. What are the characteristics of that world view as you see it that tend to be there in the African culture, and I know the danger of generalising about 30 million people.

Respondent 9

Well, I think that one of the big differences in the way an African person looks at life is, what is logical. Logic is not logic and is not universal. You might be able to train somebody in a particular form of logic, but an untrained person has