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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO CORE BELIEFS  
UNDERLYING THE PROFESSION  
OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

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December, 1999

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## Abstract

The profession of Human Resource Development (HRD) is at a critical stage—growing from its early development to a more mature stage where it has the potential to make great contributions. A central task in continuing to offer quality interventions as well as in advancing HRD as a profession is identifying the core beliefs that form the foundation of the profession's theory and practice. HRD must begin to identify its own system(s) of beliefs as a community of professionals.

The goal of this study was to begin to elucidate core beliefs in HRD by tapping the wisdom of experienced and leading scholars. This qualitative study explored assumptions of ten scholarly leaders in the field using an initial, in-depth interview and involving a second follow-up interview. A rigorous data analysis process was designed and implemented using common word processing and database software.

The result of this study was the emergence of six themes that focused on: (1) the role of HRD, (2) who HRD serves, (3) people, (4) work, (5) organizations, and (6) HRD interventions. The report of the findings offers a descriptive account of the themes and the sub-themes that comprise them, revealing core beliefs underlying HRD. These core beliefs are delineated within the analysis of each theme.

The thematic analysis also outlines important similarities and differences that emerged among the scholarly leaders. Most notable were strong areas of divergence within the themes about the role of HRD and who HRD serves. The most potent differences that were revealed led to the identification of two contrasting systems of beliefs underlying HRD—one focused on serving individuals and the other centered on serving organizations. It is hoped that this investigation of core beliefs will serve as a basis for a longer journey of exploring, identifying, and creating future philosophical systems in HRD.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Human Resource Development (HRD) is “a field in search of itself” (Chalofsky, 1992). While HRD has made great strides in establishing itself in organizations and is beginning to construct a knowledge base to guide its practice, much of the scholarly discussion during the past ten years has focused on definitional or foundational issues which have yet to foster any widespread agreement.

The two most pervasive issues that demonstrate this have been debates about the definition of the field and the purpose of the field. First, on the issue of definition, recent literature reviews conducted by Ruona and Swanson (1998) and Weinberger (1998) uncovered over 20 different definitions of HRD. From Nadler's 1970 HRD definition to today, the field is still unclear of what it is and what it does. The current lack of definition is not for lack of trying. The over 20 definitions uncovered have been by some of HRD's top scholars. Nadler continued to refine his early HRD definition throughout the early 1990's. Malcom Knowles (1978) also defined HRD in his seminal book, *The Adult Learner*. There was also the landmark study led by McLagan (1989) that produced a model of HRD practice, defined it, and delineated its three focus areas as (a) Training and Development (T & D), (b) Organization Development (OD), and (c) Career Development. More recently, there have been definitions offered by scholarly leaders such as Swanson (1995), Watkins (1990), Chalofsky (1996), and Sleezer and Sleezer (1997). However, the controversy over defining HRD continues.

The other issue that has commanded a great deal of attention has been that of the purpose of HRD. Two distinct “camps” have emerged—one argues that HRD is for the ultimate purpose of (a) improving performance (Swanson, 1995) while the other argues that HRD is for the purpose of (b) learning (Bierma, 1996; Watkins and Marsick, 1995). The focus has been on the perceived dualism between these two goals and the issue has taken center-stage at numerous international conferences, dominated entire monographs, and is debated in numerous articles.

Evident in these debates is a fragmentation of the field that threatens its contributions and, ultimately, its sustainability. Brethower (1995), discussing human performance technologists, stated that “we cannot speak with one voice saying to others this is our mission, these are our products, and this is what we know!” (p. 17). The current state of the field finds that these issues of definition and purpose are dominating discussion and supports Chalofsky's 1992 assertion that HRD is “still looking for a unifying base to rally around” (p. 176).

Issues such as the two discussed above are quickly becoming examples of “conversations having us” (Topp, 1998). That is, of conversations going-on and becoming so prominent that little else actually happens except the having of the conversation. Positions are defended, tradition weighs heavy, very few new thoughts are generated, and little progress is made in understanding and creating new meaning.

### Why is Progress in HRD Important?

HRD is at a critical stage—growing from its early development to a more mature stage where it has the potential to make great contributions to organizations and the humans that work in them. Most people that come to HRD are drawn by their desire to

help individuals and organizations in some way. It is that same motivation that draws scholars into thinking about the profession itself and that is the impetus for this study. This study rests on an assumption—that is, *that the capacity of HRD and its professionals to affect change in the world is enhanced by living as a professional community.*

HRD is rooted in the histories of Training and Development which began to be used widely in the United States during the 1940's and Organization Development which came into widespread use only in the early-1960's (for a more detailed review of these histories, see Ruona and Swanson, 1998). Since these humble beginnings, the field has grown astronomically. These statistics provide just a few examples of the extent of this growth:

- In 1997 organizations with more than 100 employees were estimated to have spent \$58.6 billion in direct costs on formal training (Lakewood Research, 1997). American Society for Training and Development's (ASTD) benchmarking survey found that companies they surveyed are each spending between \$2 - 4.1 million on training and related interventions (Bassi and VanBuren, 1999).
- Use of HRD-related systems practices are on the rise. For example, 96% percent of the firms surveyed by ASTD are using problem-solving teams and 79% are implementing TQM (Bassi and Van Buren, 1998).
- ASTD, considered to be the professional organization of HRD, boasts 70,000 members from numerous industries and more than 150 countries across the globe (ASTD, 1999).

From the literature and observation, it is clear that HRD is a busy and growing profession. In what ways, though? How? Along with this kind of growth comes the inherent risk that the work that gets done will not be done *well*—with integrity, for the right reasons, with some measure of effectiveness and efficiency, and within moral and ethical bounds.

Growth of the field of HRD should be a conscious process facilitated by HRD's community. This requires an active commitment to grow well. There is no "right" answer as to how to do this and there is no end state to reach. Rather, this must be an on-going process of critical examination of the field, its activities and impact, and reflection and dialogue about its past, present, and future.

Shepard (1983) identified a natural development pattern that many failed professions progress through: (a) learning and market differentiation, (b) legitimization, (c) monopolization and exploitation, (d) defensiveness, a phase in which clients begin to rebel. No humane profession aspires to reach the last two phases. It is reasonable to assume that HRD does not aspire to monopolize human development or exploit its clients or the recipients of its services. However, monopolization and exploitation have been identified as common phases in professions that have not embraced growth as an active, conscious process.

### Beliefs and Progress in HRD

A central task in advancing HRD as a profession and continuing to offer excellence to those it serves is identifying the core beliefs that form its foundation. Many key leaders in the field have repeatedly called for clarifying the various assumptions that underlie HRD as a way to move the field past definitional issues such as those discussed above. Kuchinke (1996) points out that underlying these issues are “different assumptions about the rights and responsibilities of organizations, the relationship between employees and organizations, and the role of organizations within society” (p. 56). These different views are rooted in different belief systems. Chalofsky (1992) said that the core of a field “is comprised of philosophy and mission, theory and concepts, and roles and competencies” and discussed how interrelated these aspects are—feeding one another and needing to be aligned to create a coherent system.

While Chalofsky’s (1992) language could sound as if there can only be one system that forms the core of HRD, this would be an overstatement. There most certainly can be multiple belief systems or “cores” in HRD. However, belief systems should be articulated and made explicit to the HRD community as well as its clients. It should be clear what the belief systems are, how systems vary from each other, and how different belief systems impact the practice of HRD.

#### Problem Statement and Purpose of this Study

As a relatively young and growing profession, HRD has yet to systematically identify its core beliefs. Underlying every facet of HRD are beliefs with philosophic components that form the foundation of its practice. These foundations can be individually or commonly held. History is characterized by phases where different prominent philosophies influenced current conditions, actions, and events. In education, for example, the philosophical schools of thought forwarded by Dewey (1859-1952) and Snedden (1868-1951) are consistently contrasted and analyzed for their varied impacts on schools in America. In business, Taylor’s (1856-1915) scientific management philosophy is being replaced by more organic views of how organizations function and professions like HRD are helping organizations cope with the far-reaching implications of this change.

HRD must begin to identify its own system(s) of beliefs as a community of professionals. The purpose of this study, then, is to uncover core beliefs of the profession of HRD. In order to do this, the inquiry will explore assumptions and beliefs of scholarly leaders in the field. Specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Explore the core beliefs that are underlying and driving participants’ ideas of excellencies to be produced by the HRD profession.
2. Analyze the findings to identify common and divergent core beliefs across participants of this study.

#### Significance of the Problem/Importance of this Inquiry

HRD has seen no attempt to create a systematic philosophy (or philosophies) for the profession. Many have called for such activity and a few have attempted



investigations of isolated issues in a philosophic manner, but efforts to rigorously address the issue have been limited. This study will begin to address this lack of systematically analyzed beliefs in HRD. It will contribute to HRD in at least five interdependent ways: (a) work towards maturation and professionalization of HRD, (b) further the evolution of the profession, (c) affect practice, (d) affect theory, and (e) contribute to the on-going journey of critical reflection in HRD.

#### HRD as an Emerging and Maturing Profession

Whether or not HRD even qualifies as a profession is a perennial issue that is debated. Indeed, the definition of “profession” is in and of itself hotly contested. Sociologists have long studied professions, professionalism, and professionalization. Extensive databases can be found on the topic. Leitch and Fennel (1997) describe how sociologist’s long-term interest in professional work can be traced to its founders in their discussions of authority, bureaucracy, and class conflict. Much of the newer work uncovered in that literature is exploring the rapidly changing relationship between professions and complex organizations.

Forsyth and Danisiewicz (1985) state that “the terms ‘profession’ and ‘professionalization’ are virtual non-concepts, since there is so little consensus about their meaning” (p. 59). However, three prominent approaches to theorizing about professions have been identified by these authors. They are:

1. **Process:** The idea that professions travel a path toward full professional status, starting at different points, progressing through distinct phases, and traveling at different speeds. The assumption here is that all occupations will or can become professionalized. An example of a scholar in this tradition is evolutionist Wilensky (1964).
2. **Trait:** The notion that professions share traits or characteristics in common, and that occupations reach professional status when they achieve specific characteristics. This tradition is one of the most common, so there are literally dozens of people who could be cited here. Just one historically-grounded example is Goode (1969).
3. **Power:** Power approaches to professionalization focus on the power and autonomy held by practitioners in their social exchanges with society and individual clients. Most notable in this tradition are Forsyth and Danisiewicz (1985) who attempted to build and begin to test a theory of professionalization based on control of clients and autonomy from employing organizations.

#### Characteristics of Professions

The trait or characteristics approach has been the most commonly discussed in literature related to applied professions and, in particular, HRD and related fields. This is a bit problematic as this approach is critiqued because those who employ it often use characteristics that argue the case for their particular occupational group. This is a

definite area of concern and should be an issue of further study as HRD continues to pursue the concept of professionalization.

To guard against some of that bias of choosing characteristics that will build a case for HRD as a profession, four separate lists of characteristics of professions have been synthesized in Table 1.1. This was accomplished by sorting through these four lists and retaining characteristics that were the same or highly similar in at least 2 of the 4 lists. Other characteristics that were only identified in single lists were deleted for this survey.

Table 1.1. Synthesis of Characteristics of a Profession

CHARACTERISTIC	CUTLIP, CENTER AND BROOM (1985)	SWANSON (1982)	PACE, SMITH AND MILLS (1991)	GELLERMANN, FRANKEL AND LANDENSON (1990)
Provides a unique and essential service that is recognized as such by the community	✓		✓	
Develops organized and specialized body of knowledge, based on a theory and research.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Defined area of competence		✓	✓	
Articulated and shared values	✓	✓	✓	✓
Standards of Ethics and Practice (values are interpreted and enforced)	✓	✓		✓
Monitors the practice and its practitioners		✓		✓
Educates and trains professionals	✓		✓	✓

These characteristics should be thought of as starting places by which to define a profession as well as part of a “dynamic process involving a high degree of interaction among the elements within the profession’s boundaries and between the profession and its environment” (Gellermann et al., 1990, p. 16).

HRD as a Profession

Strict interpretation of the criteria may preclude calling HRD, as well as many other fields, a “profession”. Many HRD practitioners, on the other hand, certainly qualify as “professionals” on most or all of the criteria listed above. There is little guidance as to when a field of study actually qualifies as a profession. This is complicated by the proliferation of new fields of study that have arisen in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as a result of “an urban-industrial society that sought to accommodate greater complexity and interdependence by relying on the knowledge of new expert

groups” (Lipartito and Miranti, 1998, p. 301). A further complication in HRD is that HRD is considered to be comprised of three strands that some see as processes and others see as discrete fields of study. They are (a) Training and Development (T & D), (b) Organization Development (OD), and (c) Career Development (CD) (McLagan, 1989). Each of these communities are taking steps towards professionalization. For instance, Gellermann et al. (1990) reports the results of an extensive study of values and ethics in OD. Finally, as briefly mentioned above, there is some reorientation of the term “profession” in the sociological literature. Lipartito and Miranti (1998), for instance, propose to define professionals as purveyors (and creators) of expertise rather than stressing the classical characteristics models. This focus appears to lead a new trend in the professionalization literature—one that focuses on expertise and expert groups within organizational contexts. In summary, then, one can see how difficult it is to say definitively whether HRD is or is not a profession.

However, it is undoubtedly true that HRD is undergoing efforts to professionalize the field. Professionalization was the topic of an AHRD symposium in 1998 (Chalofsky, 1998; Ellinger, 1998; Mott, 1998; Rowden, 1998). Furthermore, marked progress (summarized in Table 1.2) can be seen in almost all of the characteristics identified above.

Progress in each of these areas is highly interdependent—strides in one of the criteria influences strides that can be made in others. However, it seems appropriate to call HRD an emerging profession that holds professionalism as an important goal. For this study, the word “profession” has this meaning.

#### The Role of Core Beliefs in Professionalization

One of the criteria for professionalization set forth above was the articulation and sharing of values. In fact, this is the only criteria that was consistently listed in the literature identifying characteristics of professions. This is also an area in which HRD has done very little work. In fact, no work can be cited as directly addressing this area.

Indirectly, there are some things that may qualify as beginning to contribute to this issue. First, various scholars have mentioned the issue as it relates to other topics of primary interest to them. Second, the on-going debate of “performance vs. learning” in HRD has been characterized as the possible birthing of two schools of thought with distinctly different beliefs and values. Finally, some would argue that the assumptions and ideas underlying the Academy of Human Resource Development statement of standards and ethics are indicative of the profession’s beliefs (Burns et al., 1999).

While these three indirect activities do provide data about core beliefs underlying the profession, it is best to tackle the core beliefs directly and to differentiate core beliefs from other related terms. Although there are many definitions for these terms, the following definitions will be used during this study.

- **Beliefs:** A mental state taking a proposition that something is either true or false (Honderich, 1995). Beliefs involve the deployment of concepts. To believe something, one has to have a concept of it and place confidence in that understanding (typically in the absence of proof).

Table 1.2. An Overview of HRD's Progress Towards Professionalization

CHARACTERISTIC	HRD'S PROGRESS
Provides a unique and essential service that is recognized as such by the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has been no attempt to evaluate this directly, however a 1999 State of The Industry Report (Bassi and Van Buren, 1999) completed by ASTD indicates that in the years between their 1997 and 1998 surveys there was a marked increase in, among other things, the (a) amount of spending on training, (b) proportions of people trained, and (c) introduction of integrated and systemic set of human performance policies and practices. This is certainly indicative that organizations are looking to HRD for unique and essential services.</li> </ul>
Develops organized and specialized body of knowledge, based on a theory and research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) was established in 1993 with a vision to lead the profession through research.</li> <li>• Two research-based journals have been established during the last five years: (a) Human Resource Development Quarterly, and (b) Human Resource Development International.</li> <li>• The extent to which the body of knowledge that HRD draws upon is specialized and grounded in theory is currently an issue of much debate (Jacobs, 1990; Watkins, 1990; Brethower, 1995; Swanson, 1999; McLean, 1999). However, the fact that this is such a vital issue can be considered indicative of some progress in this area.</li> </ul>
Defined area of competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many competency models have been produced, most notable include McLagan (1989) and Rothwell (1996).</li> </ul>
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is the only area in which no marked progress can be seen in HRD. See below for more discussion.</li> </ul>
Standards of Practice and Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The AHRD introduced a first draft of a Standard of Ethics and Integrity in March, 1999 (Burns, Dean, Hatcher, Otte, Preskill and Russ-Eft, 1999).</li> <li>• OD, an emerging profession in its own right and considered to be part of the tripartite that comprise HRD, has recently published its 22<sup>nd</sup> revision of its International Code of Ethics (Organizational Development Institute, 1999).</li> </ul>
Monitors the practice and its practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The same AHRD committee that is drafting a Code of Ethics for HRD is discussing issues of enforcement.</li> </ul>
Educates and trains professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are numerous academic programs in HRD and closely related topic areas nationally and internationally. A 1998 ASTD directory of academic programs listed over 280 programs in the United States (White, 1999).</li> <li>• ASTD recently began offering certificate programs all over the United States in an effort to educate on specific competencies.</li> </ul>

- Core beliefs: Beliefs that are central to the issue being considered. In this instance, HRD would need to identify the beliefs that are most central to its beingness.
- Values: "A principle, standard, or quality considered worthwhile or desirable" (Berube et al., 1985) and used as the basis for making judgments.
- Morals: Universal prescriptions for action.

- Ethics: Standards of behavior grounded in values. Principles and guidelines that provide guidance for action that is less prescriptive than morals and more focused on unique conditions of life (Gellerman et al, 1990).

In a review of these terms in the philosophical literature, there does not seem to be a prescribed hierarchy surrounding them. However, it does seem logical that one must have a belief to even be able to make a value judgment, and thus to have an ethic around that issue. Beliefs, then, provide a context for values and ethics, and are of central importance to HRD and its maturation.

This study will contribute towards beginning a more scholarly dialogue about the core beliefs that may serve as grounding for HRD, as well as further enrichment to processes already underway such as the development of standards and codes of ethics. It is a necessary step for the profession and its members. Although, in the ultimate sense, individuals go through an intensely personal journey of clarifying and refining their own beliefs, values, and ethics, Gellerman et al. (1990) point out that:

For a person to belong to a “profession”, in the sense that he or she “professes” or stands for something in common with all those who belong to the same profession, a substantial consensus about values and ethics is necessary among all members of that community. At the same time, for such a consensus truly to exist...it must be based on a process that allows for each professional to freely align his or her personal values and ethics with those of the profession and the professional position to be open to change in order to allow such individual alignment. (p. 88-89)

Without attempts to begin to identify and articulate core beliefs, the HRD community will not be able to fully embrace the values and ethics aspects of its work. And, until HRD’s professional community takes this responsibility, individual practitioners are unable to evaluate the fit between their own beliefs and values and those of the profession. This process must begin and we should invest a great deal of energy in it—not for the good of the profession, but rather for the good of the professionals in HRD, and, ultimately, the clients that that are served by HRD.

#### Evolution of the Profession of HRD

This study will clarify and improve understanding of the structure and philosophical components of HRD. It will reemphasize the importance of deep reflection in HRD, which is the “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief...and the further conclusions to which it tends” (Dewey, 1933, p. 9).

Second, it will report on some of these key components and identify core beliefs held in common as well as debated. Magee (1971) tells us that “one of the tasks of philosophy is mapping the logic of...discourse, laying it out, so to speak, so that a person can make his way about it successfully” (p. 45). This study will help to elucidate organizing principles for HRD by tapping the wisdom of experienced and leading scholars.

This will help the field to better navigate through key issues it is facing. Philosophy can provide a framework for articulating the purpose of the field and moving

past the “conversation having us” (Topp, 1998). Instead, HRD professionals need to have the conversations—and a primary way this can happen is if they really begin to explore the deep assumptions that drive the field. It is at this level that generative conversations take place and real change begins (Bohm, 1994;Topp, 1998). Surfacing and clarifying key assumptions provides a set of criteria to guide future discussions of what is and isn’t HRD. It enables people to analyze different schools of thought emerging in HRD to see where they come together and where they do not. Philosophy can be a rigorous backdrop for judging whether and to what extent the field can accommodate multiple definitions and purposes. This same set of criteria can also be used to balance the long- and short-term interests of HRD—helping to do both for the optimization of the field. Philosophy can be an important mechanism to guide the nature of conversations that need to continually be held in HRD. This will ensure that HRD grows well.

Another issue that is increasingly being discussed is that of certification in HRD. The focus of a 1998 AHRD symposium, the issue is multi-faceted and controversial. One of the primary dilemmas is what any kind of credentialing or certification would actually be based on. Reflection, theory-building (Hansen, 1998; Mott, 1998), research, and competencies have been suggested as possible bases, while others have suggested bases that are more philosophically grounded. Ellinger (1998) and Watkins (1990), for instance, have both advocated an integrated vision and values. It is presently unclear where this conversation will lead and how it will impact the future of the field. However, it is increasingly clear that philosophy will factor into it.

Finally, an investigation of core beliefs will serve as the basis for a longer journey of exploring, identifying, and creating future philosophy systems in HRD. The spirit of philosophy demands the quest for wisdom never be fulfilled. The clarification process is never finished—it is a continual process where “new light is always dawning on meaning of concepts at every level, with the consequence that the whole enterprise has to be forever examined” (Magee, 1971, p. 47). Thus, it is hoped that this study will serve as a starting point for future development of philosophical systems.

#### Implications for Practice

Reflection about beliefs ensures that as practitioners we are leading, in Plato’s words (427?-327 B.C.), an “examined life”, acknowledging that beliefs about basic ends and principles lead to concrete conclusions and action. This process can be done unconsciously where it is subject to many hazards. Or, it can be done consciously where one (or an entire field) strives for clarification and alignment. Striving for identification of key beliefs and assumptions and, then, being grounded in those articulated by the profession of HRD, will undoubtedly result in better and more consistent practice. This is especially relevant in HRD, an applied field driven by its practice, where theory sometime lags behind the challenges being faced in organizations. Philosophy provides some structure on which to make decisions when research is not there to support a practice or policy. Magee (1971) identifies the importance of philosophy to complement science when he explains:

Conclusions about what to do are a mixture of judgments about the “excellencies to be produced” combined with empirical or

scientific knowledge about how to produce them. It is important to notice that we cannot derive the list of prescriptions, excellencies, that are a set of value judgments about what to do, from the descriptive, empirical, knowledge accounts of what the facts usually are. It is, in short, not possible to go directly from scientific understanding to policy and practice. Practice is always a combination of prescriptive convictions and descriptive understanding. (p. 46)

The logic of philosophy helps people to engage in thinking that is at once disciplined and imaginatively creative. They are able to apply philosophical methods to practical problems and ascertain what the issues are and how different assumptions affect the problem. In addition, they can use philosophy to analyze and interpret practice. In these ways the idealism of philosophy can be used to improve how people address practical problems. The act of philosophy cultivates the capacity and appetite for reflection, for exchange and debate of ideas, for life-long learning, and for dealing with problems for which there are no easy answers. Strom (1996) states that “philosophical query asks why practitioners conduct practice in the manner that they do, in order to (a) provoke reflection, (b) systematically analyze and evaluate procedures, and (c) determine the appropriate philosophy or philosophies to drive back to practice” (p. 33).

#### Implications for Research and Theory Building

Theory-building and research are emerging as important critical issues facing HRD. Theory building is defined here as “the process or recurring cycle by which coherent descriptions, explanations, and representations of observed or experienced phenomena are generated, verified, and refined” (Lynham, 1999). Research is defined simply as the “scholarly or scientific investigation or inquiry” (Swanson, 1997, p. 10).

Examples of the prominence of this issue in HRD literature abound, but a few are offered here as demonstrations. First, for example, critical work is being done to encourage and refine research methods and paradigms (Marsick, 1990; Swanson and Holton, 1997). A second example is a punctuated emphasis on the importance and value of theory-building as well as some progress in the actual building of theory in HRD (Chalofsky, 1998; Hansen, 1998; Lynham, in-review; Mott, 1998; Shindell, 1999; Torraco, 1997). The motivation driving these and similar efforts is to undergird HRD with a solid, systematically-acquired knowledge base.

Another important part of the evolutionary process is to acknowledge the philosophical framework in which these discussions are taking place. A worthy debate on paradigms for research and theory-building between Marsick and Passmore in 1990 hinted at connections of research with epistemological concerns and even with notions of worldview, but these connections are rarely made. Many discussions of research and theory-building are happening in a vacuum concerned with only science and methods, or the “how to” of generating new knowledge. For the most part, scholars have agreed that there are two primary ways of doing research (quantitatively and qualitatively) and have urged people in the field to get on with the business of researching.

While this is practical and necessary, there is certainly merit in also placing knowledge-generation in a philosophical framework—put in its place, as it were, and

strive to understand how it is connected with how one sees, thinks about, and acts in the world. Research and theory-building are only parts of an overall context that drives HRD. How one sees the world and what one recognizes as knowledge in HRD fundamentally affects the methodologies used to research and build theory. A too limited view can limit the scope and utility of HRD. A too broad view can lead to a slippery slope of relativism where there are few standards. Philosophy ultimately demands that HRD consider what knowledge and theory really are. When placed within a context of assumptions about reality and nature, existing views of these things may or may not change. Marsick (1990) states:

...if we are to describe accurately and explain the world we research, then, as we work we must test our assumptions about what we view as knowledge, whether our view is compatible with the nature of organizations and the phenomena we are researching, and how we believe we should go about researching these phenomena. (p. 33)

It is important to acknowledge how science and philosophy complement one another and proceed on a journey that demands work in both areas from HRD scholars.

#### Contributing to the On-Going Journey of Critical Reflection in HRD

It cannot be stated enough that this study is only an early mile-marker in a long, winding, and continuous journey. This study is meant to be a scholarly inquiry that will stir serious dialogue about core beliefs underlying the profession. The intent here is not to identify and rally for one set of beliefs, nor is it to serve as the seminal piece of research on this issue. However, the research into core beliefs needs to begin. It is hoped from here that the profession will find additional ways to pursue this issue with vigor.

Once again there is wisdom in Gellerman et al. (1990) who states:

The institutionalization of a process whereby a profession's values and moral commitments are regularly discussed and assessed, in terms of changing conditions both inside and outside the profession, offers a period of critical self-examination both by individual members and by the profession as a whole... This process of self-criticism, codification, and consciousness raising helps reinforce or redefine and realign the profession's collective responsibility, and it is an important learning and maturing experience for both individual professionals and the profession. (p. 7-8)

In addition, there is much research to be done around core beliefs underlying HRD, and the interplay between these core beliefs, HRD theory, and HRD practice. It is hoped that this study will serve as a first systematic inquiry into these beliefs and as a basis on which to stimulate further research on the philosophical components of HRD.



## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to explore core beliefs underlying the profession of HRD, through the views of key and leading scholars in the field. It is hoped that this will stimulate as well as contribute to increasing dialogue about critical issues facing the field. In this sense, then, this study is philosophical in nature. Paul (1993) introduces the idea that there are “three overlapping senses of philosophy: philosophy as a field of study, philosophy as a mode of thinking, and philosophy as a framework for thinking” (p. 405). He goes on to position critical thinking, the focus of his extensive work, in the context of a mode of and framework for thinking. It is in this sense, too, that this study approaches approach the idea of philosophy. Philosophy as a verb, more so than a noun—focusing on critical thinking about HRD.

An introduction to philosophy motivated this study, and it is philosophy that forms its literary foundations. The first part of this chapter will:

- Overview what philosophy is, emphasizing that it is an activity;
- Introduce the main foci of philosophy;
- Discuss three basic types of philosophy;

The second part of this chapter will:

- Overview philosophical activity that has been done in fields close to HRD. These include: Education, Adult Education, Vocational Education.
- Describe philosophical activity that can be traced in HRD.

The chapter ends with a summary of the primary benefits of philosophy and the reiteration of key points discussed throughout this chapter.

### Overview of Philosophy

Philosophy is an amorphous concept that is difficult to introduce in an efficient and effective way. Figure 2.1 visually displays the issues discussed in the first part of this chapter which serves as an overview of philosophy.

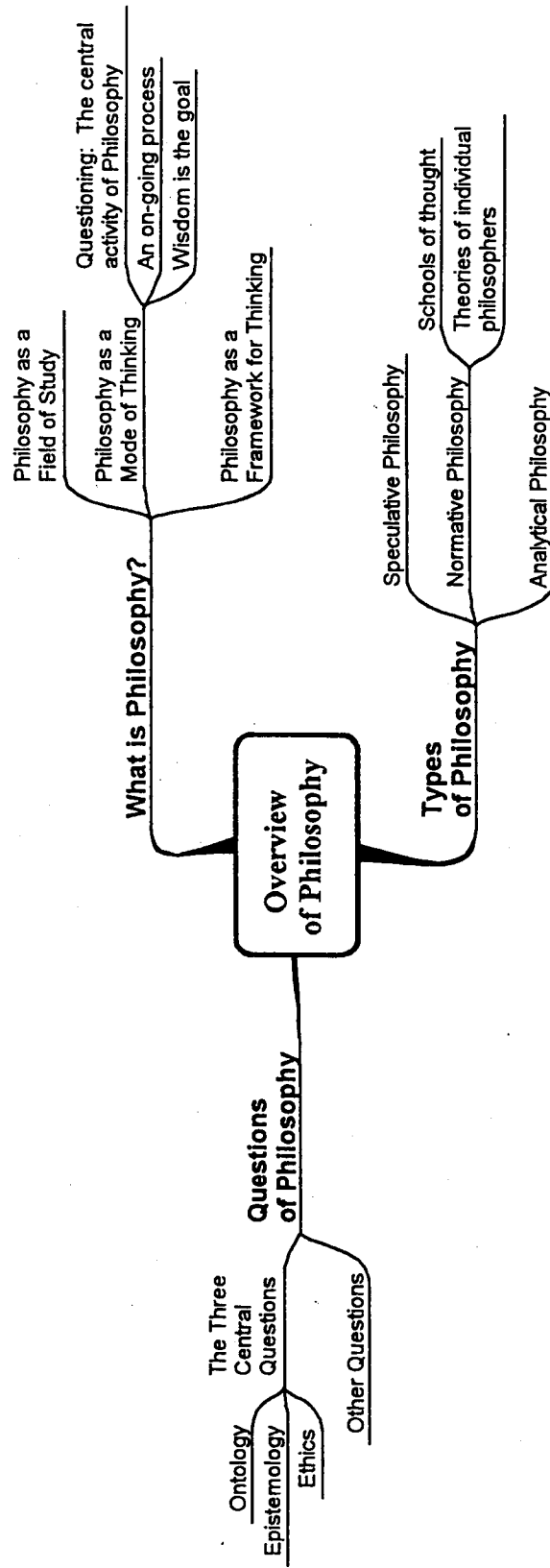
#### What is Philosophy?

Hundreds of definitions of philosophy have been forwarded by scholars throughout the long history of the field. Commonly characterized as the love of wisdom, what it “is” has changed over time. In earlier traditions, it was largely concerned with various subjects (like God, nature, etc...). In more recent past, its primary focus has been on methods. Across time, though, it has consistently been characterized by the formation of beliefs and claims to knowledge. This characterization, however, is still insufficient to define philosophy. The following section will serve to clarify this issue by recognizing philosophy as a (a) field of study, (b) mode of thinking, and (c) framework for thinking.

#### Philosophy as a Field of Study

A traditional view of philosophy is that it is the field of ideas and thinking about life and everything in it. It is often characterized as the immortal conversation that explores a host of fundamental, eternal questions (Paul, 1993). Philosophy is a discipline in and of itself. A discipline is distinguished by (a) its ability to define the content of its domain, (b) conceptually organize its content, and (c) identify and utilize principles of

Figure 2.1. Overview of Philosophy.



discovery and verification that constitute ground rules for creating and testing knowledge in its field. Philosophy, as a field of study, continues to achieve these things as it evolves.

The discipline of Philosophy has traditionally been divided into four, primary sub-disciplines or branches (Elias and Merriam, 1995; Heslep, 1997; Honderich, 1995).

- Metaphysics: searches for the most general principles of reality;
- Epistemology: investigates rules for determining what is true, false, or opinion;
- Ethics: investigating rules and principles of moral reasoning and conduct;
- Logic: concerned with rules for reasoning, thinking, and argumentation.

### Philosophy as a Mode of Thinking

A philosophy professor consulted for this project advised to not even use the “p” word (referring to philosophy)—“just do it!”, he said. This wisdom encapsulates the essence of philosophy. Although there are many definitions of philosophy, some of them more controversial than others, *The Oxford Companion of Philosophy* states that “philosophy is thinking about thinking” (Honderich, 1995, p. 666). It is an attempt to “understand the world and everything in it in an active and constructive manner” (Elias and Merriam, 1995, p. 3). It is, at its core, disciplined reflection.

To get a sense of the potential utility of philosophy one must consider philosophy as a system of thought and action (Bohm, 1994). That is, as an activity or process of inquiry that is concerned with disciplined reflection, ways of thinking about certain questions, interpreting texts, trying out ideas and thinking of possible arguments for and against them, and wondering about how concepts really work. Philosophy stretches the limits of our understanding and our responses (Lawson, 1991).

Questioning: The central activity of philosophy. Greeks took the quest for philosophical understanding to be a consideration of questions, in recognition that they lacked understanding about the general and abstract matters. Questioning is *the* central activity when philosophizing. However, it is not done in just any manner deemed appropriate by a given individual. The hallmark of philosophy is that the process is rooted in rationality. “Philosophy seeks wisdom strictly through reason” (Heslep, 1997, p. 11). The questioning process must be grounded in rational methods—building logical arguments or theories, avoiding contradictions in answers, and trying to give good reasons for answers. In this sense, Heslep (1997) notes that philosophy is different from *theology* which accepts answers based on faith, *rhetoric* which seeks acceptance of answers based on linguistic devices, *tradition* which maintains that answers must be based on what is customary, and *exercise of power* which gets answers through institutional control, intimidation, or threat. Critical thinking, from a philosophical viewpoint, “is a matter of rationality, or believing and acting on the basis of reason; it is seeking reasons on which to ground judgments and actions” (Heslep, 1997, p. 11).

The methods of philosophy are critical discussion, rational cross-examination, and dialectical exchange. Key activities include (a) clarification of concepts, arguments,

theories and language and (b) analysis of those theories or arguments—sometimes enhancing them and sometimes raising powerful objections that lead to a revision or abandonment of them (Noddings, 1995). Heslep (1997) would add the skill of judgment, as it is judgment that lies at the heart of choice that then guides action.

Paul (1993) recommends that the key to approaching issues from a philosophical point of view is orchestrating any or all of the following macro-processes:

- Socratic questioning: questioning ourselves or others so as to make explicit the salient features of our thinking;
- Conceptual analysis: analyzing problematic concepts and uses of terms to assess their basic logic;
- Analysis of the question-at-issue: analyzing the question to actually understand what type of question it is and what mode of settlement will be best address it;
- Reconstructing alternative viewpoints in their strongest form: identifying and reconstructing the most relevant points embedded in the conceptual framework from which the issue at hand is being addressed;
- Reasoning dialogically and dialectically: reasoning from a variety of points of view (when relevant) and rationally identifying and considering strengths and weaknesses of these points of view as a result of the process.

An ongoing process. Given this conception of philosophy as a mode of thinking, one also must understand it as an *ongoing process*. Answers that philosophers give depend on (a) social and historical contexts and (b) principles and methods they hold and use (which change and develop over time). Thus their answers rarely settle questions once and for all. Additionally, questions that one philosopher answers based on their own views and methods get recursively asked and answered by others with their own set of views and methods.

Also, one answer usually raises other questions. Philosophers do not count an answer as “justified” until all questions originated by that answer have been justifiably answered. Answers are not considered justified until philosophers offer fundamental ideas that fill in gaps in understanding. Then this new knowledge must withstand rigorous evaluation. There are various theories by which to evaluate a philosophical theory, the three main ones that Honderich (1995) summarizes are:

- Foundationalism: a theory about structure of justification that affirms that some beliefs are basic and not based upon other beliefs;
- Coherentism: a theory which denies that any beliefs are foundational and claims that justification is always a matter of the degree to which a belief coheres with ones’ other beliefs;
- Reliabilism: a theory that holds the view that a belief is justified when it is the result of a permissible process or

method (measured by the methods reliability and the extent to which a produced belief is true).

All of this questioning takes place at multiple levels (individually, groups, and in a profession) and happens in a historical context. So, the questioning goes on and on.

Wisdom is the goal. Questioning is the key activity, and it must be an on-going process. The goal is not to get to an answer, but rather to gain more understanding and wisdom in the process. Clarity about the issue drives the need for constant probing.

Reagan (1993) states:

all we do, after all, is to try and get clearer about things, to understand better what we are talking about or what we are aiming at, to have a closer look at the concepts that we use when we argue.

The issue is whether we do it sloppily or rigorously. (p. 191)

Carr (1995) describe the process of becoming a philosopher of education as more than a matter of learning technical skills, adhering to an established paradigm, or conforming to sets of methodological rules. Rather, it has been, he says,

more a matter of learning to confront a historical tradition by participating in debates and dialogues which have continued through past generations and which, therefore, have to be conducted not only with the contemporary exponents of the discipline but also with those predecessors whose achievement it was to extend our understanding of this tradition to its present point. (p. 24)

For him, it required not much more than engaging in the conversations and the progressive act of the working out of a historical tradition of intellectual inquiry and educational debate. In that process of working it out, more and more questions arise.

This is not to say that the questioning and theorizing process does not produce answers. It does, but they are temporary and subject to development. In fact, Dewey (1966), a renowned philosopher of education, stated that “whenever philosophy has been taken seriously, it has always been assumed that it signified achieving wisdom which would influence the conduct of life” (p. 324). Johnson (1995) goes on to emphasize that “wisdom so defined is not a fixed entity which once found is to be routinely applied to all of life’s questions, but a disposition or habit of seeking and creating connections” (p. 11).

#### Philosophy as a Framework for Thinking

Elias and Merriam (1995) state that “philosophers deal in theories” (p. 2). Theory is understood here to be “a coherent description, explanation and representation” (adapted from Gioia and Pitre, 1990). In science theory is built about observed or experienced phenomena. In philosophy, theory is built about general and abstract matters around which we lack understanding or that might not even be able to be understood through science. In this sense, we understand that formal knowledge can be created through research, experience, observation, and philosophy (Houle, 1972).

For instance, Schrag (1995) tells a story of asking his students for alternative ways to set-up a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom. Some arrange the chairs in rows with the teacher in front, other put the children in small groups, others choose a large circle. These various

arrangements all carry with them different set of ideas about how children behave and learn and the role of the teacher. Invariably a student will suggest that research can design an experiment to determine which arrangement is best. The author then points out that, while this is partly true, the experiment “will only be persuasive if we can first agree on how we will ascertain which classroom is the most successful, and that’s possible only if we share some definition of educational success” (p. 4).

Philosophy addresses questions that scientists cannot answer by themselves. These have traditionally fallen into two categories. First, is questions that science has been unable to answer. With advances in science and research methods, this category of philosophical purview is decreasing. The second category of questions that philosophy addresses is those that are evaluative and normative matters, what ought to be the case versus what is the case. Controversies of this nature are pure philosophy.

So, philosophers are “interested in the general principles of any phenomenon, object, process, or subject matter...which serve as the foundation or basic structures by which the phenomena, events, and realities are understood” (Elias and Merriam, 1995, p. 3). The science of philosophy is in building and aligning the logic of the answers to questions—in creating whole systems of thought. Philosophy requires learning to think with a clear sense of the

foundations of one’s thinking, of the essential logic of one’s thoughts, and of significant, alternative, competing ways of thinking.... When one engages in philosophical thinking, one thinks within a self-constructed network of assumptions, concepts, defined issues, key inferences, and insights. To think as a liberal, for example, is to think within a different framework of ideas than conservatives do. To know that one is thinking within a different framework of ideas than other thinkers. (Paul, 1993, p. 406)

#### Questions of Philosophy

The last section of this chapter asserted that questioning is the central activity when philosophizing and established rationality as the hallmark of the questioning process. One must wonder, then, what questions are asked in the process of philosophy. The rich tradition of philosophy has typically focused on three central questions, however there are there are no limits to the types of questions that can be asked when using philosophy as a mode of thinking.

#### The Three Central Questions

Philosophy has traditionally been concerned with three basic (and big) issues: being (ontology), knowing (epistemology) and acting (ethics). Through these foci philosophers are interested in answering the following three questions: (a) What is real? (a question of ontology), (b) What is true? (a question of epistemology), and (c) What is good? (a question of ethics).

If one thinks about these foci as separate areas of inquiry, then philosophy does not seem to serve much purpose. However, in actuality, these three areas all work together to make philosophy what it is. In this sense, from a systems perspective, the whole is more than the sum of its parts. A revival of philosophy as a highly practical activity hinges on our capacity to view it as a set of interacting components which, when

viewed as a whole, have properties that do not exist within any of the smaller units (Heylighten and Joslyn, 1992). Systems theory, which has been advocated as a foundational discipline by many in HRD (Gradous, 1989; Ruona, 1998; Swanson, 1994; Willis, 1997;), reminds us to view the multiple tiers and relationships that exist between these components of philosophy.

Ruona and Lynham (1999), after a study of the various components of philosophy and their relevance to HRD, view them as three key, interacting components:

1. Ontology: the component that makes a view of the nature of the world and nature of phenomena of interest to HRD explicit (how we *see* the world);
2. Epistemology: the component that makes the nature of knowledge in HRD, and the necessary and sufficient requirements to hold and claim knowledge in the field explicit (how we *know/think* about the world);
3. Ethics: the component that makes explicit how we ought to act, individually as well as communally in HRD. It outlines espoused aims, ideals and proper methodologies and methods for HRD inquiry and practice (how we should *act* in research and practice). (p.211)

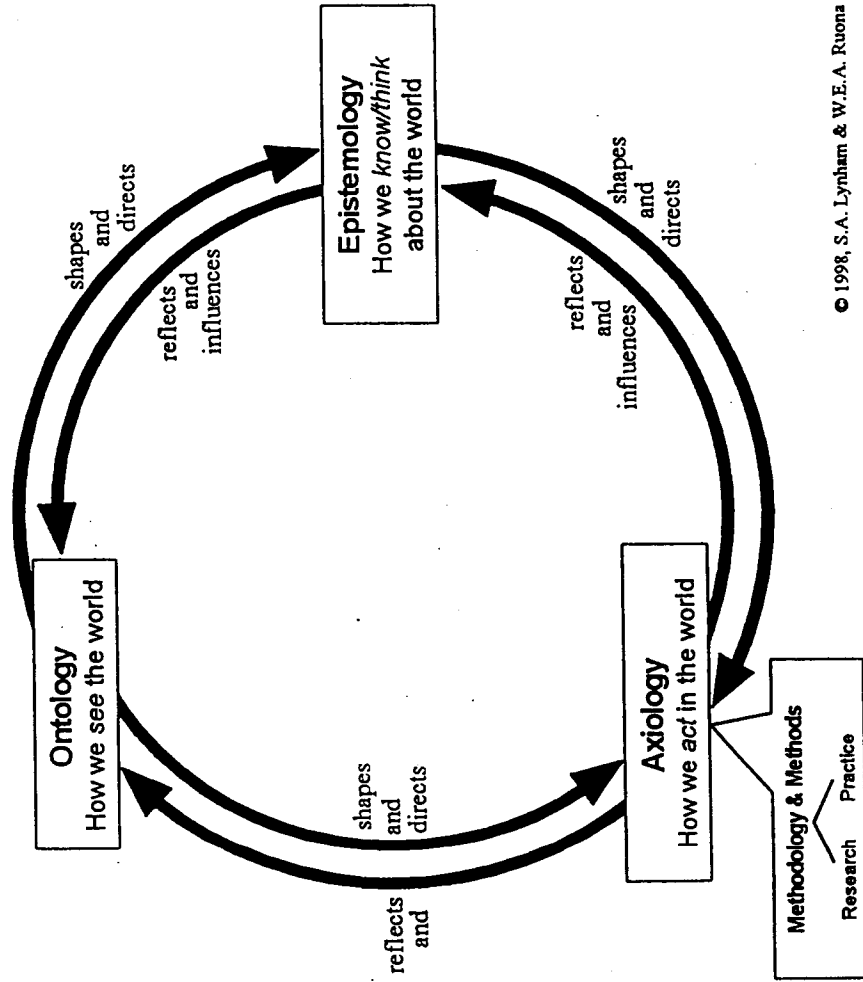
These three components interact in a dynamic and systemic way, together forming a guiding framework for a congruent and coherent system of thought and practice in HRD. Figure 2.2 shows the interactive and dynamic relationship among the key components integral to a sound philosophical framework. It elucidates the connections—demonstrating that how we *see* the world determines how we *think* about the world, how we *think* about the world determines how we *act* in the world, and how we *act* in the world, in turn, reflects how we *think* about and see the world. And, that each of these components reflects and influences the other.

Ontology. Ontology is a branch of metaphysics. Metaphysics (theory of existence) probes beliefs about the world as a whole. It tries to establish the essential character of nature. Ontology is focused on

being in general, embracing issues such as nature of existence and categorical structures of reality. The term also has some special uses in philosophy. In a derivative sense, it is used to refer to the set of things whose existence is acknowledged by a particular theory or system of thought, in this sense speaking of the ‘the ontology of the theory’. (Honderich, 1995, p. 634)

Ontology is concerned with fundamental assumptions about the nature of phenomena (Gioia and Pitre, 1990). It focuses on basic questions and assumptions about the nature of reality—questions like: What is real? What is “there” and what do we mean by “there”? What is the world made of? Is reality ordered in any way? Is reality “out there” or “inside us”, or a combination of both? What are humans? Kuhn (1970) also introduced another way of thinking about ontology in his notion of a paradigm. A paradigm is a worldview, or a way of thinking that reflects fundamental beliefs and

Figure 2.2. A Philosophical Framework for Thought and Practice.



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assumptions about the nature of phenomena. An ontology, ultimately, is how one sees and views “beingness” in the world.

Mapping the ontology of a field involves making explicit the common understandings, beliefs and assumptions of how those in the field see the world, of how they perceive the essences of reality and phenomena that constitute the field's concern and focus. It is about identifying and articulating the core assumptions about reality that drive the thought and practice of a field.

Epistemology. Gioia and Pitre (1990) describe epistemology as “fundamental assumptions about the nature of knowledge about phenomena” (p. 585). Epistemology (also described as theory of knowledge) is the component of philosophy that raises questions about the nature of knowledge and reasonable belief. In so doing, it addresses the following kinds of questions: What is knowledge? How does knowledge differ from mere opinion or belief? How is knowledge acquired? When is a belief justified or reasonable?

Central to epistemology is the Socratic, tripartite equation of knowledge which states that *knowledge = true, justified belief* (Pojman, 1995). Epistemology is therefore concerned with not only the nature of knowledge, but also examines the necessary and sufficient conditions required for these components of knowledge (Root, 1997). Epistemology is about how one knows and thinks about the world.

Examining the epistemology of a field involves articulating the common assumptions, thoughts and understanding of what makes for knowledge of and about phenomena in the field. It also denotes the necessary and sufficient standards for knowledge. It therefore serves a purpose of both clarification of the nature of knowledge and standards for “good” knowledge in a field.

Ethics. Ethics is the critical examination of our thinking about the conduct of life. It is concerned with action, in the sense that action is the result of choice, undertaken in light of desirability. There are two kinds of beliefs involved in action: “1) ordinary, straightforward factual beliefs about what is involved in doing something and what its results will be, and 2) beliefs about the value of those results and the disvalue of what we must do to secure them” (Honderich, 1995, p. 669).

There are two primary components of ethics (Honderich, 1995). First, is *morality* which speaks to issues of what is good (right and wrong) and what ought to be done. Second, is *axiological ethics* which is concerned with values. This component doesn't focus directly on what should be done, but rather on what is worth pursuing or promoting and what should be avoided.

Ethics are normative. In other words, they indicate how one should *act*, and the extent to which this action should be congruent with ontological and epistemological aims and ideals. This alignment question helps to evaluate whether moral convictions have any objective validity, and if so, what kind.

Ethics urge congruence between the ontological and epistemological assumptions and the espoused actions of a field. Thus, it plays an important role in putting the standards and requirements of acceptable methodology and methods for research and practice in a field in place. Making the ethics explicit helps to set and clarify the guiding

tone and rigor for action in HRD. It helps to define desired standards for methodology and methods in both research and practice.

The concept of ethics is broad and includes quite a few things. An in-depth conversation about the expansiveness of this component is beyond the scope of this paper, however, two important elements of ethics would seem to be methodology and methods. Methodology is defined as the system that influences the way things are done—how we choose and use methods, and conceptualize, analyze, collect, and design. Methods are means and manners of procedure.

Due to the applied nature of many fields, methodologies and methods need to be considered in the context of both research and practice. Methodologies in research inform us of ways of studying phenomena (Gioia and Pitre, 1990) while methodologies in practice inform us of ways of carrying-out interventions. Methods in each domain expand the methodologies by offering tools, techniques, and procedures.

Specifying methodology and methods for conducting research and practice enable us to increase the rigor of research and practice. This rigor demands that we judge research and practice against desired standards that are inherent in axiology. Given the rising concern about increasing atheoretical practice and unuseful theory in many applied fields, a framework and criteria for judging the utility of research and theory and the soundness of practice would seem to be both welcome and useful.

#### Other Questions

It should be noted that while ontology, epistemology, and ethics are the three “big” questions that form the stockpile of much philosophical discourse, there is no evident limits to its field of application. Wherever there is a large idea whose meaning is in some ways indeterminate or controversial, so that large statements in which it occurs are hard to support or undermine and stand in unclear logical relations to other beliefs we are comparatively clear about, there is an opportunity and point for philosophical reflection. (Honderich, 1995, p. 670)

Questioning arises when there is a gap in understanding and a discrepancy between two or more ideas. Philosophy is a powerful tool to help in the ongoing working out of these issues.

These are still big questions. Philosophers in various domains (for example in Education and Adult Education) have tended to ask the big questions related to their professions. They tend to “move from an examination of the particular to the specific, from the specific to the general, and from the concrete to the less tangible, and the less tangible to the abstract” (Heslep, 1997, p. 18).

The issue then becomes how related these big questions are to practical matters of the world. The relationship between philosophy and action has been an area of major dispute among philosophers. Some see them as mutually exclusive, others view one’s practice and action as being logically derived from one’s theory and philosophy, while still another approach is to synthesize the two into one view. D’Souza (1992), for instance, states that philosophy is a “worthy end in itself, and of further use if found to be beneficial by practitioners, but it should not judged to be worthy simply by the litmus test

of practicality and applicability” (p. 256). Others such as Carr (1995) have strongly held that philosophy and practice must be very, very closely intertwined.

There appears to be emerging consensus that both philosophy and action are necessary and should be connected. To paraphrase Machiavelli (1469-1527), theory without practice leads to empty idealism, and action without reflection leads to mindless activism. For this researcher, who is also an advocate of a stronger theory and practice link (Ruona, 1999), the key to pursuing other big questions is to connect them with practical matters. The issue is to determine which general and abstract ideas are to be involved in the questioning and indicate how those ideas might apply to the practical world. Heslep (1997) offers criteria by which to make these judgments in recommending that the questions need to (a) be about practice although only in a general and abstract way, thereby being of some general importance to practitioners and (b) ideas that will be justifiable to a wide range of philosophers in the field.

#### Types of Philosophy

There are three different categories of philosophical work—or, to think of it another way, three types of theories that are built in philosophy. It is important to understand them and their role, especially as it relates to philosophy of disciplines which will be discussed later in this chapter.

#### Speculative Philosophy

Traditional philosophy was speculative in nature and grounded in intuition. It was conceived of as a rational investigation of global matters such as the nature of reality, man, and, ideally, all elements of experience. The issues confronted were metaphysical in nature. Magee (1971) states that “philosophers in this tradition believed they were called to construct a world-view that would coherently encompass and illuminate every sphere of human thought and activity” (p. 4).

#### Normative Philosophy

Normative philosophy is concerned with presenting what should be, rather than what is. Philosophers in this tradition focus on creating “standards, rules, principles used to judge or direct human conduct as something to be complied with” (Honderich, 1995, p. 625). Lawson (1991) states that this is “philosophy as prescription” (p. 284). When a philosopher makes recommendations for how they think something should be conceived of and practices, their philosophy is expressed in the models that they prescribe. In this sense, all philosophical claims are normative, especially in philosophy of various professions where the questions they philosophize about are concerned with norms around aims, ethics, standards, etc... and judgments about those norms.

Schools of Thought. The “ism” approach to philosophy is a type of normative philosophy. Especially in Philosophy of Education and Philosophy of Adult Education, it has been traditional to discuss philosophy in terms of various schools or systems. In this tradition, philosophical wisdom consists of the answers that philosophers have given to perennial issues facing their fields. Divergent viewpoints or competing schools of thoughts develop over basic questions about mankind, knowledge, ethics, reality, and other pertinent issues. Many of these systems of thought are contradictory to one another. As these systems develop, more and more normative principles and implications for practice are prescribed.

It is admitted by many philosophers that the “ism” approach to philosophy presents some problems. Critiques of this approach (Heslep, 1997) include that it:

- Does not explain why it classifies philosophical systems according to their responses on some issues and not on others;
- Does not prepare people to critique the different philosophical schools, it simply explains what the features are of the various schools. Thus, they don’t provide a means for rationally choosing among the various schools and their implications;
- Does not prepare people to analyze educational practices and see how they weigh up against educational principles.

Even though these difficulties persist Elias and Merriam (1995) state that “the systematization of the discipline continues and schools of thought develop because similarities and affinities do exist among theorists” (p. 1). They recommend that it is preferable to help to surface these differences, rather than to resolve them, “for they often involve fundamental issues that cannot be submerged” (p. 4).

Theories of Individual Philosophers. Another type of normative philosophy that is quite common in the philosophies of professions is the theories of highly acclaimed individuals. Here the focus is on comparing and contrasting individual’s wisdom with others and regarding the theories as alternative guides to practice. This provides a repertoire of theories from which to choose from to guide action. Which theory to follow is up to the individual’s discretion. Again Heslep (1997) cautions the overuse of these theories because they:

- Do not provide the means by which people should be evaluating various theories, and therefore do not encourage people to question them thoroughly;
- Do not provide a method for applying the theories with rigor and not fostering a disposition to question the faithfulness of their practices to their chosen theories.

### Analytical Philosophy

The speculative nature of philosophy has faded a bit since the early-1900’s and has been replaced by a philosophy that takes a more modest view that its “proper role is the analysis of ordinary language or concepts” (Magee, 1971, p. 5). This kind of philosophy is termed analytical philosophy. Analytical philosophy is rooted in the linguistic tradition. The linguistic method of study analyzes what was said about the phenomena of interest, exploring the use of language in discourse to provide clues to what words and concepts mean. These philosophers start with language, rather than the world (reality) on the grounds that “we cannot give content to the concept of reality without considering the language and the form of discourse in which reality and all other concepts play a part and from which they derive meaning” (Lawson, 1991, p. 287).

They will thus clarify meanings and critique arguments in the field’s discourse. Because philosophical thinking usually has to overcome difficulties in thought and language in order to answer its questions, it is frequently analytic—looking for problems in logic and meaning (Heslep, 1997). For instance, philosophers of adult education in this linguistic tradition analyze “what was said about adult education...what was said

about it told us what it “is”, and then the values of adult education were deduced from the descriptions given it and the practices regarded as valid examples of adult education” (Lawson, 1991, p. 291).

### Philosophy in HRD and Related Professions

The second part of Chapter Two will overview philosophical activity that has been done in fields close to HRD, as well as describe activity within HRD. Philosophy in the professions is somewhat distinct from philosophy as a field of study. The broad discipline of philosophy explores the key components described above (ontology, epistemology, and ethics) and concerns “in the most general sense, what we can know and how, and the most general conditions that must be satisfied by any coherent thought” (Honderich, 1995, p. 928).

Philosophy has also spawned many more specific branches of inquiry. For instance, and because of its close relation to HRD, philosophy of education and philosophy of adult education are both recognized as fields of study in their own right which are quite distinct from the broader discipline of philosophy, although they certainly reach into the broader domain of philosophy. The list of subject areas in which philosophizing is a key activity could “be extended almost indefinitely, since there are usually at least some major philosophical problems attached specifically to each of the special sciences or other major areas of human activity” (Honderich, 1995, p. 929). This is to be expected because, as Paul (1993) explains, “the philosophical mind is most evident in those disciplines working on foundational concepts and problems.” (Paul, 1993, p. 408).

It is important to understand how these sub-branches fit in with Philosophy. Philosophy of specific fields are differentiated from Philosophy (as a field) in that these scholars ask many of the same questions that philosophy asks, but answers those questions in relation to on-going institutional practice. The essence of both philosophy of education and philosophy of adult education is that the discourse of philosophy is informed by and centered on institutional practice (of education or adult education, in these cases). Philosophy in these two fields is no more or less than the above-described basics of philosophy being applied to educational and adult educational systems. It is a reflection on the aims of organizations and practices of institutions involved in education of children (in the case of philosophy of education) and adults (in the case of adult education).

Feinberg (1995) states that it is this emphasis on the applied practice that differentiates philosophy and philosophy of certain fields. He states, for example, that “philosophy of education is somewhat more like scholastic philosophy than it is of metaphysics; and it has a practical goal—the improvement of institutions through which the activity of educating is advanced” (p. 27).

#### Philosophy in Education

Philosophers back to the ancient Greeks debated questions of education: its aims, who should be educated, should it differ depending on natural interests and abilities, the role of education in national affairs and many more perennial questions (Noddings, 1995). All of these are still probed today, and during the 20<sup>th</sup> century Philosophy of

Education has become firmly entrenched and a widely acknowledged branch in the larger world of Philosophy.

This entrenchment is largely due to the contributions of John Dewey (1859-1952). Dewey is a philosopher that has by far made the largest contribution to philosophy in education. His bibliography is reported to be over 150 pages. He reflected and wrote on all almost all branches of philosophy (meta-physics, logic, epistemology, philosophy of science, ontology, ethics, and many more) and insisted “that philosophy of education is the most fundamental and important branch of philosophy because all others, in some sense, depend on it. Philosophy of education, for Dewey, was philosophy of life” (Noddings, 1995, p. 25).

Since the 1930s and 40s when philosophy of education was “officially” established, the field has burgeoned to such an extent that it is impractical in this space to provide a coherent overview of the extent of the activity. There are literally hundreds of books on the topic. Ericson (1997) summarizes that there are a few basic approaches to orienting oneself to philosophy of education. They are by studying the:

- History of the philosophy of education (which spans from early Greek and Roman origins) to today’s post-modern approaches;
- The “isms” in philosophy of education (realism, idealism, empiricism, rationalism, pragmatism, existentialism, and so on) or the study of various schools of thought that have developed around critical issues;
- Problem or concept-oriented approach where one goes to the literature and various philosophies for insight into a specific problem.

Any one of these approaches is justified depending on what one wants to glean from this extensive database. A serious inquiry into this literature is beyond the reach of the literature review necessary for this study, however it is vitally important to acknowledge the rich tradition of philosophy of education, and how it grounds philosophical questioning in HRD.

#### Philosophy in Adult Education

Considerably less philosophical work has been done in Adult Education. However, progress can be seen in the field in terms of delineating and understanding adult education, adulthood, and adult learning (exemplified in the dialogue between Knowles and Houle) and on other key issues specific to Adult Education. Elias and Merriam (1995) have done extensive work in attempting to explore perspectives of various philosophical schools of thought. They identified six philosophies of Adult Education:

- Behaviorist: Behavior modification;
- Liberal: Organized knowledge for intellectual development;
- Analytic: Logical and scientific positivism;
- Progressive: Social reform;
- Humanistic: Personal growth;
- Radical: Radical social change.

According to these authors, Adult Education is heavily influenced by progressive, humanistic, and radical philosophies, although it is acknowledged that the purposes and contexts of specific fields of practice will often determine the philosophic influences. In the 1990s, philosophical foundations in Adult Education are influencing many practitioners in education-for-work. Adult Education philosophy has much to offer education-for-work practitioners in terms of teaching adults and adult learning theories. Many education-for-work practitioners in HRD and vocational education are finding the progressive and humanistic philosophies of Adult Education useful in terms of designing and implementing practice for certain learning situations, like diversity education and training in business and industry and the institutional classroom (Strom, 1996).

#### Philosophy in Vocational Education

Three documented efforts to tackle philosophy and philosophical issues in Vocational Education or education for work were unearthed during this literature review. Strom (1996) provides an excellent overview of a few of these efforts. The first effort was a 1981 piece by Wirth entitled *Alternative Philosophies of Work : Implications for Vocational Educational Research and Development*.

Second, is a 1985 piece by Miller who identified and discussed three primary philosophies of Vocational Education:

- Essentialism: The educator or trainer is the focal point of the learning process; mastery of subject matter is important; development of skills through drills, repetition, conditioning, and development of desirable habits; a desire to influence the behavior of the learner.
- Existentialism: The learner is the focus of the learning process; truth is relative; and personal growth and development are key to the process.
- Pragmatism: The educator and learner are both important to the learning process; reality or real-world situations are stressed; context and experience are important; and the educator is progressive, and open to new ideas. (pp. 196-198)

In a later work, Miller (1994) goes on to advocate for pragmatism as the most effective philosophy for education-for-work.

#### Philosophy in HRD

Philosophy of HRD would be described quite simply as the study of problems related to the development of human resources from a philosophical perspective. As described above, there has been little work in this area. Specifically, two streams of work can be identified.

The first stream has been a consistent call for additional work to be done in this area. Chalofsky (1992) called for the conceptualization of the core of the profession comprised of philosophy and mission, theory and concepts, and roles and competencies. In a later writing, he stated that “the essence of why HRD exists as a profession—its purpose, values, and ethics—provides the foundation for professional practice of the field” (Chalofsky, 1996, p. 180). This call has been echoed by many others throughout the last 10 years, including Marsick (1990), Watkins (1991), Ellinger (1998), and Barrie

and Pace (1998) who stated that “we may need to discover the foundational principles, as opposed to commonsense descriptors, that give HRD its philosophical base” (p. 39).

The second stream of work that has emerged is inquiry into limited aspects of philosophical issues. Marsick (1990) confronted issues of epistemology in exploring what paradigms are correct for studying organizations and HRD and documented the shift from traditional, logical positivism and alternative paradigms, especially naturalistic inquiry. Watkins (1991) outlined six disparate views that have flourished in HRD, primarily focusing on issues of definition and purpose. She cited the breadth of these views as demonstrating the continuing ambivalence of the field and called for “research and theory-building to figure out who we are” (p. 182).

What looks to be one of the more extensive pieces of work cited in the literature is that of Stuckey and Berardinelli (1990). In this piece, the authors provided a conceptual framework for comparing various schools of thought with aims, methods, curriculum, and teacher/learner relationships found in training and development. They identified six philosophic bases:

- Behaviorist: Behavior modification;
- Idealism-Realism: Values ideas and ideal;
- Realism-Analytic: Scientific method;
- Pragmatic-Progressive-Cognitive: Real world or practical;
- Existentialism-Humanistic: Personal growth;
- Reconstructionism-Radical: Social reform.

They suggested that the Reconstructionist-Radical philosophy be used by HRD practitioners. In their view, radical philosophies of training and development will allow changes to be made that will be cutting edge and forward-looking in perspective and will cause educators and workers to act as change agents in the workplace and society. While this piece appears promising in terms of proactively dealing with philosophy of HRD, a closer inspection reveals that it is almost 10 years old, was published in proceedings of the American Society for Training and Development, and further work in this area was not evident in any other literature since 1990.

Kuchinke (1996) described, compared, and contrasted different goals of HRD and their underlying ideologies, focusing solely on the concept of human development to elucidate alternative philosophies of HRD. He identified three dominant approaches to human development: (a) development as self-realization, (b) development as goal-attainment, and (c) development as dynamic problem-solving.

Most recently, Barrie and Pace (1998), conducted a philosophical analysis framed within a liberal education mode to approach and describe the field of HRD. They argued that the key concepts of “learning” and “performance” could be elucidated in much the same way that differences between education and training were explained as part of analyses of philosophy of education. The utility of this kind of analysis, they argued, was that making some progress in analyzing these concepts would ultimately make a preferred model of HRD clearer.

Finally, as mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, the Academy of Human Resource Development has charged a committee to develop standards on ethics and integrity



(Burns et al., 1999). This is the first effort of its kind specifically for HRD, and demonstrates a clear and growing commitment to tending to philosophically-laden issues. It was presented to the constituency in March, 1999 at the national conference and this committee continues their work.

In summary, a review of the HRD literature, as well as the literature in areas close to HRD, shows that very little philosophical attention has been paid to critical issues in HRD. It is only within the last 10 years that we see any attention at all, although the few citations that are available indicate a growing interest in philosophical activity in the profession. The purpose of this study is to explore core beliefs underlying the profession of HRD, through the views of key and leading scholars in the field. It is hoped that this will stimulate as well as contribute to increasing dialogue about critical issues facing the field.

### Summary Of Chapter Two

This chapter has provided an introduction to philosophy, and discussed philosophy in disciplines closely related to HRD (Education, Adult Education, and Vocational Education) as well as philosophical activity in HRD. In summary, a review of the primary benefits of philosophy is offered in Table 2.1.

In addition, it is important to re-emphasize a few key points that have been discussed throughout this chapter.

- Philosophy is an Ongoing Process: Philosophy is not a quick tool by which to obtain answers that apply to all situations or to be considered true over time. The hallmark of philosophy is that is an *activity*—a process of questioning that is grounded in rationality and that is on-going. The goal is increased understanding and insight into tough and relevant questions. Philosophy does provide some guidance for action, however these “answers” are open to interpretation and are considered to be temporary and subject to development.

Johnson (1995) states that “the problem lies not in the quest for a meta-theory, or truth with a capital ‘T’, but in the reification of the products of the quest” (p. 138). The spirit of philosophy demands the quest for wisdom never be fulfilled. If one thought

Table 2.1. Benefits of Philosophy

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Benefits of Philosophy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Questioning and developing wisdom<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Asks “big questions”, in an active and constructive manner</li><li>– Fosters thinking deeply in a clear-headed and rational way so that we can be clearer about issues and concepts</li><li>– Stretches the limits of our understanding and our responses (Lawson, 1991)</li><li>– Gain more understanding and wisdom in the process</li></ul></li> <li>• Involves the community of the profession in dialogue about critical issues facing the field<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Provides a tool that helps to clarify basic philosophic differences, which is vital in conducting many current debates in HRD in a more rational way (Elias and Merriam, 1995)</li><li>– Illuminates alternative ways of thinking (Kuhn, 1970) by providing us with perspectives other than our own</li><li>– Helps us to understand the social and cultural contexts in which issues that we face are embedded (Carr, 1995).</li><li>– Displays a mapping of ideas by which contemporary problems can be judged (D’Souza, 1992)</li></ul></li> <li>• Fosters reflective practice and critical analysis of action, to better guide practice (Miller, 1994)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Offers some clarity on what should be, and what is right and wrong (as the best we can know for the time and context), especially in the absence of scientific research</li><li>– Helps us to make choices wisely, and rationally articulate the reasons for the choice</li></ul></li></ul>

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they had reached “there”, philosophers would believe they had become a victim of their own system of thought. Rather, individuals need to be free to follow the philosophic quest, wherever it may lead. Kircher (1955) recommends having “the faith of a pilgrim which is characterized by a commitment to the unending quest in which one’s way is enlightened by all systems of thought, but not fully directed by any one of them” (p. 139).

- There is Not Just One System of Thought: “There exists no single conceptual framework, no single set of basic assumptions and principles from which all educators view the field...we need to reflect our pluralistic society” (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982, p. 35). There is not one “answer” to these questions, nor is there any need for just one system of thought.

Johnson (1995) advises that we should not lament the absence of *one* system. One of the duties of philosophy is to develop conceptual schemes (wholes that link together disparate ends) to guide action. But, there is not one meta-philosophy of HRD, Adult Education, Education, etc... Divergent viewpoints and competing schools of thoughts will continue to develop over

basic questions. It is preferable to foster that dialogue and the evolution of various schools of thought in HRD—holding them up to rigorous standards to be explicit about their beliefs and the implications of those beliefs for HRD practice.

- Philosophy is an Individual Act: In this chapter, the importance of engaging in philosophy—in dialogical and dialectical thought—has been stressed. Philosophy relies on critical thought and discussion as its primary instruments of learning. The community of professionals in HRD need to engage in this at a professional level, in that it is often published work in a field that stimulates the ongoing process of asking and answering the questions.

However, it must also be stressed that philosophy remains an intensely personal activity. Philosophy requires that all participants think their own way to whatever system of beliefs ultimately constitute their thought within the field... Instead of absorbing philosophy from others, people can, with suitable encouragement and instruction, develop a critical and reflective attitude towards ideas and behaviors. Their outlook and interpretations of themselves and others can be subjected to serious examination. Through this process, our beliefs become more and more our own than the product of our unconscious absorption of others' beliefs" (Paul, 1993, p. 405-6, and p. 428)

It seems a fitting end to this chapter to revisit the study and its purpose, and place it in context of what has been learned while reviewing the literature. The question that remains is: how does the purpose of this study (exploring the core beliefs of the profession of HRD) fit into philosophy? The answer is quite simple—the contribution of this study is in providing additional data that will spur *asking the questions!* The beliefs underlying the ideas of ten leading scholars in HRD have begun to be probed. A report of the themes that emerge about core beliefs is valuable in and of itself. In addition, Chapter 5 describe similarities and differences that emerge out of these conversations. The findings from this study should help point to issues that might benefit from increased philosophical attention, and be a stimulus for that dialogue as well as future research.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Chapter Three begins with a restatement of the problem and purpose of this study. The first part of the Chapter then provides an overview of the organizing framework from which the research question was derived. The second part describes the research design—including the methodology, sample, methods for data collection, data analysis procedures, plans for reporting the outcomes, and provisions taken to ensure trustworthiness of the study.

### Restatement of Problem and Purpose of this Study

As a relatively young and growing profession, HRD has yet to systematically identify its core beliefs. Underlying every facet of HRD are beliefs with philosophic components that form the foundation of practice. HRD must begin to identify its own system(s) of beliefs as a community of professionals. The purpose of this study, then, is to uncover core beliefs of the profession of HRD. In order to do this, the inquiry explored assumptions and beliefs of scholarly leaders in the field. Specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Explore the core beliefs that are underlying and driving participants' ideas of excellencies to be produced by the HRD profession.
2. Analyze the findings to identify common and divergent core beliefs across participants of this study.

### Organizing Framework Underlying the Study

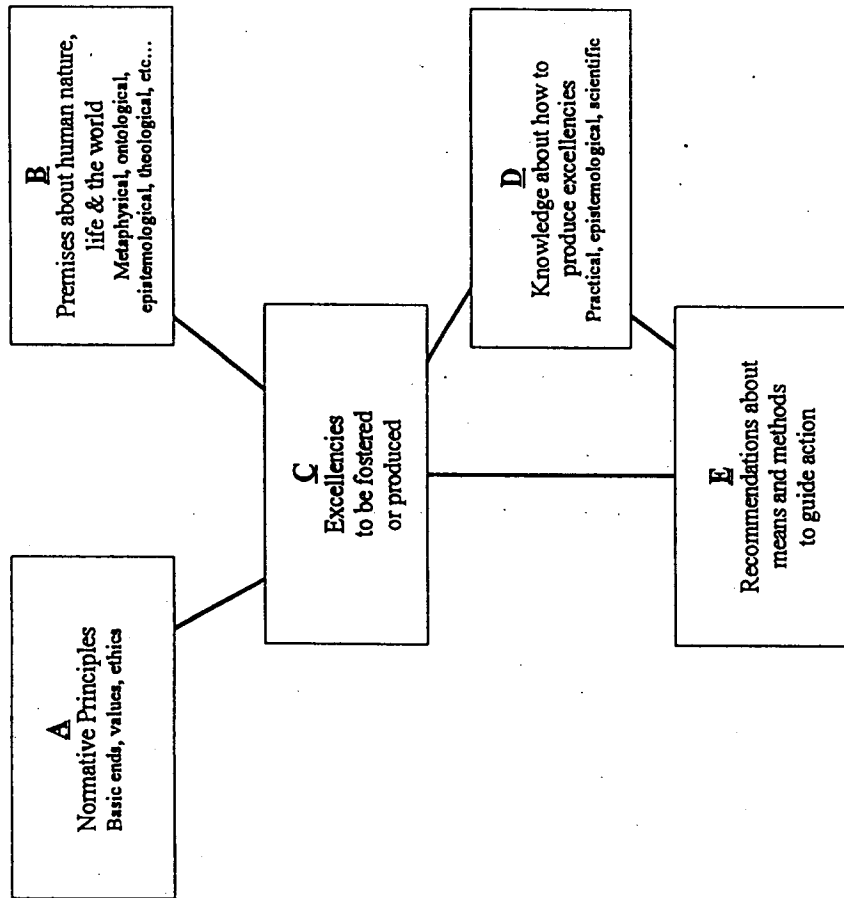
The organizer for this study, “If the profession of HRD was excellent in all ways, what 5-7 things would be true?”, was the guiding question posed to all participants. It originates from an interpretation of Frankena's (1965) framework for analyzing a philosophy (see analytic philosophy in Chapter 2), and Magee's (1971) revision of that framework.

Frankena asserted that “a normative philosophy of education is not a mere conjunction of sentences...to get such a philosophy of education clearly in mind one must fit different kinds of statements into a certain pattern of organization” (p. 7). This pattern proposed by Frankena (1965) and then Magee (1971) is displayed in Figure 3.1. In order to provide this pattern of organization, Frankena (1965) borrowed from the discipline of logic. Accordingly then, Frankena's framework is based on the preposition that

every practical art has as its conclusions a number of practical precepts about what should be done and how it should be done. But, if it is at all philosophical in character, it will also provide a line of reasoning to justify these practical conclusions. To do this it must tell us what excellencies we are to produce, then show us, by appeal to facts, what means etc... we are to use in producing them. (p. 7)

This part of the reasoning is represented in boxes labeled C, D, and E. However, according to Frankena (1965) philosophy must also provide an adequate rationale, not only for the precepts included in E, but for the list of excellencies given in C. This

Figure 3.1. Organizing Framework for the Study.



involves a second level of thinking represented by normative principles (A) and premises (B).

These two components demand that we consider the philosophical components that are driving the excellencies (C). The statement of basic ends or principles of ethics and social thought (A), demonstrates why philosophy underlying HRD is an offshoot of the wider ethics and social philosophy. The empirical and other premises (B), then shows that these ends or principles require us to cultivate abilities, traits, etc.. (C). In summation, then, Frankena (1965) states:

A normative philosophy of education, therefore, has two parts, (1) a comparatively philosophical and theoretical line of questioning involving A, B, and C, to show what excellencies are to be cultivated by education, and (2) a comparatively empirical or scientific and practical line of reasoning, involving C again and D and E, to show how and when they are to be cultivated. The conclusions of the first part become the premises of the second part. (p. 9)

Frankena's framework was again employed in 1971 by John Magee who used it as a frame of reference, to sort out the desired levels of knowledge that function as guides to decision making in practical educational affairs. He explains the framework in the following way:

Conclusions at E (judgments about what to do) are a mixture of judgments about the excellencies to be produced (C) in the beneficiaries of the educational process, combined with empirical or scientific knowledge about how to produce them (D). It is important to notice that we cannot derive the list of prescriptions, excellencies, that are a set of value judgments about what to do, from the descriptive, empirical, knowledge accounts of what the facts actually are.

It is, in short, not possible to go directly from scientific understanding to policy and practice. Practice is always a combination of prescriptive convictions and descriptive understanding. Going back up the ladder, we can see that C, the list of excellencies, is itself a judgment based upon a judicious combination of A, our presuppositions of the basic ends of life and the fundamental principles of right action and right social organization, and B, our presuppositions concerning human nature, life, and the world. This latter concept is itself complex, consisting not only of the empirical or commonsense facts about nature, life, and the world as we believe them to be, but also our ultimate presuppositions about existence, our metaphysical beliefs, and existential commitments. These latter can include such notions as belief in God or a naturalistic rejection of such belief.

We can summarize this ladder by saying that E, our concrete conclusion about what to do, presupposes judgments

about values (C) and empirical claims (D). C in turn presupposes our ultimate convictions about values and moral principles (A) in combination with our presuppositions, empirical and otherwise, about human nature, life, and the world. The analysis of our activities as educators, then, can be made clear only when we have spelled out these various elements presupposed by our activities. (p. 46-47)

Although this framework has been used only in the philosophy of education, it is believed to be a potentially valuable framework to help analyze and map beliefs in the profession of HRD. This is *not*, however, the goal of the current study, as it is too ambitious for a study of this scope.

Rather, the goal of this study is to *begin* to explore core beliefs of key scholars in the field. However, with the work of Frankena (1965) and Magee (1971) in the foreground, this study was designed with the future in mind when this researcher pursues additional work to explore the full framework and attempt to draw linkages between the various components outlined above. Thus, the opening question for all participants focused on excellencies they believed HRD should be pursuing.

It should also be noted that this question was used only as a springboard for conversation during these interviews. The focus was not on the list of excellencies themselves, but rather on the assumptions and beliefs driving those ideas of excellencies.

### Research Design

This is a descriptive study of beliefs in HRD, using qualitative methods. The intent is to discover, understand, describe, and contrast core beliefs. Merriam (1998) would characterize this study as a “basic qualitative study” (p. 11) because it exemplifies the characteristics of qualitative research, which include the following:

- Goal is discovery and understanding;
- Draws on information collected through interviews;
- Employs a flexible and emergent design;
- Sample is non-random and purposeful;
- Researcher is the primary instrument;
- Inductive mode of analysis;
- Findings are a mix of description and analysis, resulting in themes.

The remainder of this chapter describes the research design—including the methodology, sample, methods for data collection, data analysis procedures, plans for reporting the outcomes, and provisions taken to ensure trustworthiness of the study.

### Methodology

A hallmark of qualitative research is emergent design where decisions are made throughout the study. While this is a vital grounding in the spirit of the methodology, it was also important to outline an initial framework that served as a guide for action during the inquiry.

The following steps (which are all elaborated on in the following sections of this chapter) were conceptually based on Kvale’s (1997) seven stages of an interview, and

served as the basis for the methodology of this study (note, Kvale's stages are intact here, with #3 and #4 added for clarity of process):

1. Thematizing. Kvale's first recommendation is thematizing, or the "conceptual clarification and a theoretical analysis of the theme investigated and the formulation of research questions" (p. 88-89).
2. Design. The purpose of this step was to plan the design of the study, taking into consideration all aspects of the study.
3. Research Approval. This study was presented to the major members (from the Department of Work, Community and Family Education) of the Final Oral Examining Committee. It was also submitted to (and later approved by) the Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research for exemption status (as defined by their guidelines).
4. Solicitation of sample. Interviews were scheduled and preparatory work was sent to participants.
5. Interviewing. Initial in-depth, face-to-face, interviews were conducted. These interviews were approximately two hours in-length and were audio tape recorded.
6. Transcribing. Interview materials were transcribed from oral speech to written text. This was done professionally, rather than by the researcher, with instructions provided to the transcriber. In addition, the researcher checked and edited each transcription while listening to the original tape recording to ensure validity and reliability of the transcripts.
7. Analyzing. Data was repeatedly read, organized, and sorted to explore important meanings and identify similarities and differences. A database (in Microsoft Access) was used as a primary tool by which to organize the data.
8. Verifying. Trustworthiness of this study were addressed throughout the steps outlined here (see separate section on these topic below). In addition, member checks (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) were conducted with each of the 10 participants to ensure accurate interpretation and to discuss a few follow-up questions. These were audio taped phone conversations that were then partially transcribed.
9. Reporting. Results of the study were communicated. Each theme outlined in Chapter Four is supported by quotes/interview excerpts, with special attention paid to ensuring an appropriate balance between description and interpretation.

The steps here have been presented as rather linear in nature, however this is only for clarity of presentation. In actuality, there is a recursive nature to the activity described above. This is especially true of steps #6 (interviewing), #7 (transcribing), and #8



(analyzing), and #9 (verifying). The methodology is elaborated on further in the sections below.

### Sample

Qualitative inquiry focuses on in-depth, small, information-rich cases selected purposefully. Patton (1990) states that “information rich cases are those from which we can learn a great deal about issues of central importance” (p. 169). Criterion sampling was used to purposefully select participants.

### Criteria

The pool of people that could have been interviewed for this study was quite extensive. It was necessary, then, to define specific criteria by which to select a manageable number for this study. It was estimated that members of the scholarly community might be well-suited for participation in this study because of (a) their intense and scholarly interest in HRD and (b) the likelihood that this would be a pool of people who are quite familiar with a diverse range of issues facing the field, and have done some serious thinking on these issues. This is not, of course, to say that a pool of practitioners wouldn't have this same interest. In fact, it is currently planned by this researcher to replicate this study in the future with practitioners in HRD. However, it was necessary to begin somewhere, and the scholarly community seemed a logical and fitting place.

All participants were then chosen on the basis that they have served a leadership role in a scholarly association related to HRD. That is, each participant has been either: (a) a current or past president of the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD), or (b) a current or past chair of the American Society for Training and Development's (ASTD) Research Committee. This sampling criteria was chosen because (a) these two associations represent the two primary scholarly associations of the field, (b) leaders of these associations are elected by their membership, (c) these are active scholars who have made marked contributions to the field of HRD.

Five leaders from each of the associations were solicited for this study. This was primarily to ensure inclusion of all past, current, and incoming presidents of the AHRD, which was founded May 7, 1993 and whose presidents serve two-year terms. The potential participants that were solicited are listed (with their permission) in Table 3.1. All participants solicited agreed to participate in the study.

**Table 3.1. Scholarly Leaders Participating in the Study**

<b>AHRD Presidents</b>	<b>ASTD Research Committee Chairs</b>
Gary N. McLean (president-elect)	Victoria J. Marsick (1997-current)
Elwood F. Holton (1998-2000)	Darlene Russ-Eft (1994-1996)
Richard A. Swanson (1996-1998)	Ronald L. Jacobs (1991-1993)
Karen E. Watkins (1994-1996)	Timothy Baldwin (1991)
R. Wayne Pace (1993-1994)	Neal Chalofsky (1989-1990)

### Gaining Access

The participants listed above were contacted by phone or e-mail to provide an initial introduction of myself and the study. They were then sent a four-page summary of the study (Appendix A) accompanied by an Informed Consent Form (Appendix B). Each was offered time to review the materials and decide whether to participate. All, however, agreed immediately to participate. Interviews were then scheduled.

### Protection of Participants

Informed consent is vital to protect the rights of the participant and to ensure voluntary participation in the study. The informed consent form (as per the University of Minnesota's guidelines) is attached in Appendix B. It outlines the overall purpose of the investigation, its main features, any possible risks and/or benefits of participating, and clarifies that involvement in this study is voluntary and the participant has the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Probably the most contentious issue with protection of the participants was that of confidentiality. It was especially important to explicitly deal with this issue in this study due to the high profile of the selected participants. It was not clear to me what the preferences of various individuals would be, thus, I brought the issue to them by offering three different levels of anonymity:

1. **Criteria Only:** Name of those interviewed would not be published. Only criteria for the sample would be published and it would not be made clear who participated and who did not.
2. **Identity-Only Disclosure:** Names of those interviewed would be published. Quotes/excerpts would not be accompanied with a name, and all information that might make it possible to identify the participant would be edited out of any published documents.
3. **Complete Disclosure:** Names of those interviewed would be published and quotes would be attributed to them personally, by name.

Participants had the chance to reflect on their preference of these three levels in my preliminary discussion with them, as well as once they received the Informed Consent Form. It was also made clear that there must be unanimous agreement on the maximum level of disclosure. That is, everyone will be ensured at least Level 1 (Criteria Only Disclosure). If all participants had agreed to Level 2 (Identity-Only Disclosure), then the study would have proceeded in that way. If all participants had agreed to Level 3 (Complete Disclosure), the study would have proceeded accordingly.

Five of the participants agreed to Level 2, and five agreed to Level 3. Thus, this document provides the names of those interviewed, but does not attribute quotes/excerpts to any specific person, and all information that might enable a specific participant to be identified has been edited out of published documents.

### Methods of Data Collection

Two methods were used for data collection in order to achieve a better understanding of the participants beliefs, and to increase the credibility of the findings.

### Researcher's Memos

A database of memos was developed and used throughout this study. It served as a journal of sorts—a place to record insights, beginning understandings, working hunches, recurring words or phrases, ideas, questions, thoughts, concerns and decisions made during the process. Although this served primarily as a reflective tool, it also proved to be a rich source of data as understanding of the information solicited during this study increased. A few examples of memos are provided in Appendix C.

### Initial Interview

Interviewing is undoubtedly the most valuable method of data collection that exists in qualitative research. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) call attention to the difference between a qualitative research interview and a standard one when they state:

At its heart is the proposition that an interview is a form of discourse...shaped and organized by asking and answering questions. An interview is a joint product of what interviewees and researchers make and then use in the work of analysis and interpretation as a representation of that talk. (p. 80)

The task of a qualitative research interview is to find patterns in the words of the participant's. It is rooted in the belief that the participant's words best reflect the understanding of the experience, and that there is some grounding underlying the talk or of the subject (praxis). This results in a double-loop construction where the topic and questions constantly interact and inform each other. Interviewing also contributes to the goal of discovery in that it provides a forum of presenting the results of the on-going research in a manner that participants understand and truly includes them in the discovery of meaning.

The vital principle of qualitative interviewing is that the participant supplies what they want to express. The interviewer cannot predetermine phrases or categories that must be used. The goal is to understand how the participants view the area-of-focus, to learn their terminology and judgments, and to capture the complexities of their perceptions and experiences.

Interview Participant Preparation. The topic of inquiry for this study demands critical reflection on the part of participants. Thus, each participant was provided with a worksheet (Appendix D) to prompt their thinking. Specifically, this worksheet stated the following organizing question: "If the profession of HRD was excellent in all ways, what 5-7 would be true?" This organizing question originates from Frankena (1965) and Magee (1971), and is explained earlier in this chapter. Participants were directed to use this question as a springboard to spur conversation during the interviews. They were instructed that the focus of the interview would not be on their list of excellencies, but rather on the assumptions and beliefs driving those ideas of excellencies.

Structure of the Initial, In-Depth Interview. The initial interview was unstructured—facilitating the aim of qualitative research to have "a conversation with a purpose" (Kahn and Cannell, 1957, p. 149). Rather than impose too much structure that may have impeded the participants discussing beliefs, the interview explored the topics raised by the participant from their preparation worksheet. Choosing to conduct the interviews in this open fashion afforded the opportunity to understand how the

participants themselves structured the topic-at-hand. The downside was that it decreased the likelihood of getting comparable data across participants. Given the exploratory nature of this study, it was believed that the goal of understanding participants beliefs (whatever they deem them to be) was worth that trade-off.

The integrity of the interviews did not lie in the structure, as much as it did in the method. Kvale (1997) states:

It is necessary to go beyond the dichotomy of all method versus no method. I will discuss a craftsmanship approach that bypasses this opposition of rigid formalism or naïve spontaneity. Craftsmanship here includes a shift from method to the person of the researcher.  
(p. 105)

Qualitative interviewing is a craft that is more dependent on the skills of the researcher than on imposed structure. The key to implementing these interviews was to probe beliefs underlying participants' lists of excellencies. Specifically, there were two goals. The first was to ensure clarity of meaning. A strong attempt was made to be as clear as possible about what the participants were saying. Second, once the clarity seemed sufficient, the researcher probed the beliefs and assumptions that were driving that excellency.

Although there is not really a way to objectively evaluate whether or the extent to which the interviews successfully probed deeply held beliefs, the researcher did try to implement the following things to facilitate this goal:

- Create rapport and a comfortable atmosphere;
- Avoid closed-ended questions;
- Listen and focus intensively. Biklen (1992) offers powerful advice when he states that the interviewer should "treat every word as having the potential of unlocking the mystery of the subject's way of viewing the world" (p. 98);
- Solicit examples and stories when appropriate;
- Use clarification questions, such as "what do you mean?", "could you explain that" etc...

In addition, Senge (1990) provides some important guidelines for improved inquiry when attempting to make others' thinking processes more visible. These are summarized in Table 3.2.

Eight of the ten interviews were conducted face-to-face. Two were conducted over the phone. They lasted between 1 ½ to 2 ½ hours each. All interviews were audio taped with the permission of the participant and short notes were taken during the interview.

#### Follow-Up Interview

Guba and Lincoln (1989) recommend member checks to ensure accurate understanding and interpretation. After a review and cursory analysis of the transcribed text of the interview, follow-up interviews took place with all 10 participants. Participants were sent pre-work (Appendix F) and detailed instructions (Appendix G) to prepare for the follow-up interview. These were phone conversations that lasted 30-60 minutes in. Short notes were taken and the interviews were audio taped with their

**Table 3.2. Guidelines for Improved Inquiry**

<b>WHAT TO DO</b>	<b>WHAT TO SAY</b>
Gently find out what data they are operating from.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What leads you to conclude that?</li> <li>• What data do you have to support that?</li> <li>• What causes you to say that?</li> </ul>
Use unaggressive language and ask in a way that does not provoke defensiveness or “lead the witness”.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you help me further understand what your thinking here? (rather than “what do you mean?” Or “what’s your proof?”)</li> </ul>
Draw out their reasoning. Find out as much as you can about why they are saying what they are saying.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the significance of that?</li> <li>• How does that relate to other things you have talked about?</li> <li>• Where does that reasoning go next?</li> </ul>
Explain your reasons for inquiring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I’m asking you about your assumptions here because...</li> </ul>
Test what they say by asking for broader contexts, or for examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would your proposal affect...?</li> <li>• Can you describe a typical example...?</li> </ul>
Inquire at deeper and deeper levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Why?” (Senge recommends asking “why?” five times)</li> </ul>

permission. The interviews were then partially transcribed—focusing only on portions of the interview that were particularly relevant or that added new ideas or to new understanding.

#### Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis for this study was comprised of two separate and distinct aspects—transcription and the actual analysis. Both were carefully designed to ensure rigor and quality. Each is described in detail below.

#### Transcription

While transcriptions are considered “artificial constructions from an oral to a written mode of communication” (Kvale, 1997, p. 163), having audio-taped interviews transcribed into written text is considered to be the most practical way to analyze interviews. A professional was hired to transcribe the interviews.

The researcher worked closely with the transcriber, ensuring the provision of instructions for transcription. Upon the completion of the first transcription, they had a phone conversation discussing the quality of the transcription, HRD-specific terminology, and the extent to which fillers, such as “um”, could be edited out of the transcription. There were additional communications during the course of the study to ensure high quality transcribing.

After receiving the transcription, another vital step was taken to increase reliability of the transcripts. The researcher listened to each interview a second time, while inspecting and editing the transcribed text. Although time-consuming, this proved to be quite beneficial to ensure accurate transcription, understanding in context, as well as to make additional notes.

### Analysis and Analysis Procedure

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) state that “data analysis is the process of organizing and sorting data in light of increasingly sophisticated judgments and interpretations” (p. 130). Data analysis was conducted throughout the research process in order to understand what was being discussed, to reconstruct the data into a recognizable interpretation of the beliefs of those interviewed, and to inform the researcher as the study progressed. Four of the ten interviews were conducted within a three-day period at the 1999 national AHRD conference. This made analysis during that time span very challenging. Some was done during that time period with further reflection soon after.

Qualitative analysis demands a process of inductive reasoning. The purpose of data analysis is to search for important meanings and patterns in what the researcher has heard and seen. The process involves (a) focusing on classifying and categorizing data into major themes and, then, numerous sub-themes, (b) identifying a coding scheme, and (c) ordering the categories into a meaningful sequence.

Additionally, Maykut and Morehouse (1994) discuss the constant comparative method of data analysis in great detail. It includes (a) coding to identify a large array of potentially important experiences, concepts, ideas in the data and then (b) combining the inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all units of meaning obtained. They state that “as each new unit of meaning is selected for analysis, it is compared to all other units of meaning and subsequently grouped (categorized and coded) with similar units of meaning... or a new category is formed” (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p. 134).

These ideas described above provided guidance and grounding the analysis procedure that emerged during this study. An overview of the process is summarized in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3. Overview of Data Analysis

<b>Phase I</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Transcripts read and meaningful segments of the text highlighted and segmented.</li><li>2. Interview text formatted for sorting and coding (described below).</li><li>3. Three interviews analyzed in-depth.</li><li>4. First coding scheme developed and applied to first three interviews.</li><li>5. Peer Review #1</li></ol>
<b>Phase II</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>6. Remaining seven interviews coded. Coding scheme evolved, and interviews re-coded as needed.</li><li>7. Summary sheets created and sent to all participants with their transcript.</li><li>8. Follow-up interviews conducted.</li></ol>
<b>Phase III</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>9. Database created to facilitate further analysis.</li><li>10. Two rounds of analysis and re-coding.</li><li>11. Peer Review #2</li><li>12. Coding scheme finalized.</li><li>13. All codes with supporting data printed to facilitate reporting of outcomes.</li></ol>

Analysis: Phase One. Analysis was done in a series of major steps, that were more recursive than can be described here. First, each transcript was read. During that reading, meaningful segments of the text were highlighted and parceled out in the document (in Microsoft Word), and notes were made.

Second, after a search on the use of computer software to facilitate data analysis and consideration of such tools, a recommendation was found for a method by which to use word processing software in the data analysis process (Carney, Joiner and Tragou, 1997). This process was adapted and used for the next few phases of analysis. All text of the interview transcription was put into table format (using Microsoft Word), according to the key provided in Table 3.4.

**Table 3.4. Table Format for Analysis**

<b>CODE #</b>	<b>TURN NUMBER</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>TEXT</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
Emerging themes coded on master list	Sequencing text in each interview. This helped to quickly locate and track interview information within the original interview to review context etc...	Used name if given permission. If chose 2 <sup>nd</sup> level of anonymity, then participant was assigned a number.	Transcribed text from interviews, divided into meaningful segments.	Space for notes, ideas, hunches, reference to memo number, etc...

The text of the interview was read again for increased understanding as well additional sorting of the data. Meaningful segments of data (a phrase, sentence, paragraph or section identified through the discretion of the researcher) were each given their own row in this format. The “notes” column was used as space to (a) synthesize and paraphrase what the participants were saying, (b) note potential follow-up questions for participants, and to (c) note the researcher’s own ideas, hunches, questions, etc...

For further analysis purposes, the “notes” column was color-coded according to the following key:

- Pink: This identified an “excellency” articulated during the interview;
- Yellow: This was a powerful idea that was articulated during the interview. These were then organized and synthesized into a summary sheet (explained in Phase Two);
- Green: Text highlighted in green were potential questions that were identified for the participant. These questions were then extracted and further analyzed to identify a more limited number of actual follow-up questions for participants. These were then pasted into the summary sheet.

Each row was labeled with the name of the person speaking in the row (or a number, if the participant requested their name not be used). Then, the computer was used to

number all rows (in “turn number” column). A few pages of an interview in this format is provided in Appendix E to serve as an example. All interviews were formatted in this manner.

Third, three interviews were analyzed in-depth—reading and re-reading, segmenting and putting segments back together. Merriam (1998) terms this recursive process “having a conversation with the data” (p. 181). Ideas on emerging themes were noted, often using Post-It™ notes to chart developments and group ideas together.

Once comfortable with the analysis of these first three interviews, an initial coding scheme was developed. This then became a primitive classification system that reflected patterns in the study. The initial three interviews were then coded using this system (in the “code” column). These code categories became the basis on which subsequent interviews were coded and sorted.

At this time, a peer check review was conducted. Three fellow Ph.D. students were recruited to read and analyze one interview (all the same interview). In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument, thus it is important to build-in opportunities for feedback in an effort to fine-tune the instrument. This peer check was designed to provide the researcher feedback on (a) how well the participant’s input was being understood and (b) how effectively meaning of the text was being interpreted, without being too biased.

Analysis: Phase Two. The next phase of analysis involved coding the remaining seven interviews. As each was coded, the coding system itself evolved resulting in much coding and re-coding of all interviews. Eventually, all 10 interviews were thoroughly reviewed and coded.

Summary sheets were then created as a synthesis of many of the important ideas extracted from the interview text. Specifically, the summary sheet included the following three components:

1. List of excellencies the participant had listed during the interview;
2. Beliefs identified in text of interview (in thematic categories);
3. A list of follow-up questions for the participant.

An example of key pages of a summary sheet is provided in Appendix F. These were sent to each participant, along with a complete transcript of their interview (in the table format described above). Instructions sent with these documents are provided in Appendix G.

Follow-up interviews were then conducted with all 10 participants to ensure accurate interpretation and to discuss the follow-up questions (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). These were audio taped phone conversations that lasted 30-60 minutes. Notes were taken during the interview. The audiotapes were then partially transcribed, focusing only on portions of the discussion that enhanced understanding, clarified things, or added new ideas. These second-phase transcriptions were added to the participants’ file, in the same table format as described in Phase One.

Analysis: Phase Three. A database was created in Microsoft Access to be used as a primary tool by which to organize the data. Each of the interviews (i.e., all information in the table format) was converted and imported into the database. This allowed for



queries of specific codes and code categories and for more in-depth analysis. Two rounds of analysis took place, with additional re-coding as necessary.

Finally, all codes with their supporting data were printed (an example is provided in Appendix H) and another peer check review was conducted. The same three colleagues who participated in the first check also participated in this one. Each person was given two-four themes and asked to:

- Review the data supporting each theme and the categorization of that data into sub-themes;
- Provide feedback as to (a) whether the researcher had captured the essence of the quotes (separately, but most importantly together) and (b) whether data was in the “right” place given the coding scheme;
- Serve as a pair of fresh eyes—viewing the data and adding their own ideas, connections, input.

They were thorough in their analysis and provided valuable feedback. The basic message from all three peers was that the data was being interpreted accurately. Each member of the peer review panel was asked to provide short memos describing their process and overall impressions/evaluations. Two of the three memos were received, and both are attached in Appendix I.

Finally, all follow-up interview data, as well as some notes from the peer review panel, was entered into the database. The coding scheme was finalized into six themes, and is provided in Appendix J. A final set of all themes and sub-themes with supporting data was then printed to facilitate the reporting of outcomes.

#### Reporting the Outcomes

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) use the metaphor of an accordion to explain the interpretive process. They refer to a process of:

...pulling apart the data like the bellow of an accordion, identifying each salient category contained within it...formulating a propositional statement (a factual statement conveying meaning of the data categories), synthesizing the connections, finding patterns and relationships across propositions, and bringing the meaning of the data into closer harmony. (p. 158)

The result of this harmony is a set of outcome propositions to be prioritized and communicated. This is accomplished by the author writing their own interpretations and selecting representative excerpts from the data.

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) discuss the role of the reporter as three-fold. First, reporters serve as artists who create and mold the style and shape of the data and form imaginative connections. Second, they serve as translators of culture into meaningful accounts using their own knowledge, dispositions, and data to present their understanding. Third, they serve as transformers or educators that provide accounts that stimulate reflection. The goal of Chapter Four is to fulfill all three roles and provide a creative, descriptive, and interpretive account of the beliefs of the key HRD scholars interviewed for this study, with examples and stories to support them. This is not an attempt to present any one person’s philosophy, as this is not the role of this researcher.

Rather, what has been provided is the researcher's interpretations of participants' beliefs, with quotes/excerpts to support the theme and engage the reader.

Chapter Five provides additional discussion of the results, focusing more on similarities and differences among the beliefs, as well as discussing ideas about the significance of what emerged during the inquiry and what did not. It also includes some guidance as to how the reader might use this study, as well as a reminder to the reader of the study's limitations.

#### Provisions for Trustworthiness

All research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner. The aim is to produce research that is trustworthy. Trustworthiness addresses key questions that the readers should be asking, such as the extent to which they can place confidence in the outcomes of the study and how much they can believe what the researcher has reported.

#### Internal Validity

Internal validity deals with the question of how the research findings match reality. It probes the congruence between findings and reality, ensuring the investigator captures what they think they are capturing. This, of course, is a particular challenge in qualitative research since one of its assumptions is that reality is holistic, multi-dimensional, and ever-changing. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that reality is "a multiple set of mental constructions...made by humans; their constructions are on their minds, and they are, in the main, accessible to the humans who make them" (p. 295).

Merriam (1998), building on that notion, states

...and because human beings are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research, interpretations of reality are accessed directly through observations and interviews. We are thus "closer" to reality than if a data collection instrument had been interjected between us and the participants. Most agree that when reality is viewed in this manner, internal validity is a definite strength of a qualitative study. In this type of research it is important to understand the perspectives of those involved in the phenomenon of interest, to uncover the complexity of human behavior in a contextual framework, and to present a holistic interpretation of what is happening. (p. 203)

Four specific steps were taken to ensure internal validity in this study. A vital first step was for the researcher to surface and clarify her own assumptions and biases prior to and during the research. The researcher can be a threat to internal validity as their own worldview and assumptions can cloud understanding of those of the participants. Thus, before the interviews a personal disclosure statement was written (Appendix K). In addition, a document was established that helped to begin to surface key beliefs about HRD and HRD-related issues in an effort to consciously bracket assumptions and ensure a level of optimal readiness to conduct this study. This document was updated periodically throughout the process.

Second, a memo database was kept throughout the course of the study. This served as a receptacle for ideas, notes, surfacing of assumptions, reflections, etc... Third,

as mentioned above, member checks were conducted through a second, follow-up interview. The data and tentative interpretations resulting from the initial interviews were taken back to the participants, and they were asked if the appropriate meaning had been captured accurately and whether the emerging themes were plausible. Finally, there were two peer check reviews conducted to examine and comment on emerging findings. This facilitated the raising of alternative views on the themes, and was vital in ensuring what Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman (1993) termed the “scientific state of mind” (p. 92).

#### Consistency of the Findings

It is important in qualitative research to focus on “dependability” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 288) and consistency of the results obtained from the data. That is, rather than demanding that other researchers get the same results (as in positivistic inquiry), the standard in qualitative research is that research should be judged based on the extent to which other researchers concur that, given the purpose of the study, its methods, analysis, and the information collected, the results are consistent and dependable.

Kvale (1997) points out that consistency and accuracy must be a goal in every step of the interview investigation—during conception of the study, preparing for the study, interviews, transcription, analysis, and reporting. Each of these steps must be done with the utmost of integrity and awareness to the issue of dependability of the results. This goal was certainly aspired to throughout this inquiry. Specifically, the following list represents specific things the researcher did to enhance the dependability of results:

- Spent ample time with the participants of the study and used that time in a focused-way;
- Evaluated effectiveness of the interviewing on an on-going basis throughout the study;
- Conducted participant checks to have participants evaluate whether the data was being accurately understood and to obtain their judgment of plausibility of the emerging themes;
- Provided clear, detailed information about the study’s purpose, sample, data collection and analysis, and the findings;
- Provided evidence that there were efforts to be continually aware of own biases, preconceptions, subjectivity, etc...

In addition, Merriam (1998) recommends audits of the research “trail” (p. 207) by independent judges who can authenticate the findings by following the evolution of the study. This is a role Dr. R.A. Swanson served throughout the process. In addition, Dr. J. Plihal was consulted on a few specific matters related to this study, most importantly around the analysis plan. Finally, the peer review committee served this important audit function, too.

#### External Validity

External validity in positivistic research pertains to issues of generalizability to other settings, problems, etc... This concept must be reframed to reflect the philosophical assumptions of qualitative research, the most important assumption being that the goal of qualitative research is to understand, not to generalize.

Stake (1994) advocates reframing of the traditional notion of generalization by delineating three types of generalizations. First, *naturalistic generalizability* rests on

personal experience and is derived from tacit knowledge of the individual. Second, *statistical generalization*, are formal and explicit generalizations developed from inferential statistics and a confidence level of generalizing from a sample to the population at large. Finally, *analytical generalization* “involves a reasoned judgment about the extent to which findings from one study can be used as a guide to what might occur in another situation” (Kvale, 1997, p. 233). This judgment is based on logic and a comparison between situations. This final form of generalization is the only form that is possible in qualitative research. The researcher must specify evidence, make arguments explicit, and then allow the readers to judge the soundness of the claims. The burden lies on the reader, more so than on the researcher, to demonstrate the applicability and transfer the findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) to another setting.

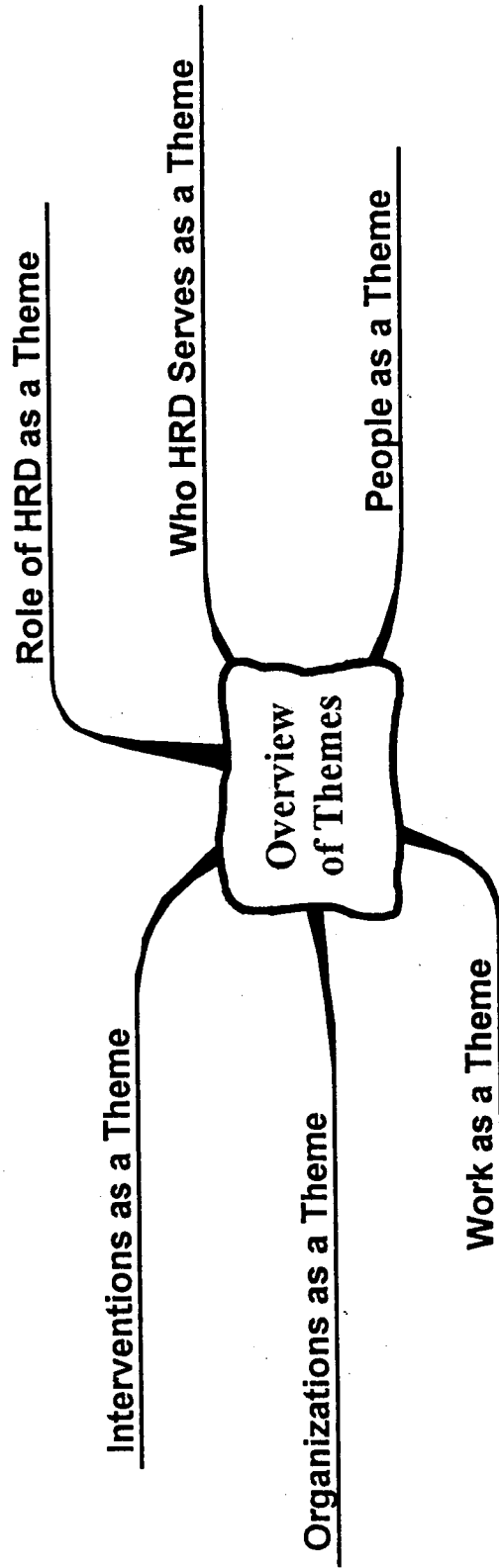
The researcher must, however, take steps that will make it easier for the reader to do so. The action taken to explicitly address external validity, as it has been conceptualized here, was a commitment to providing rich, thick description. Providing readers with ample description of the parameters of the study, any theoretical bases, phases of the study, and an effective report of the findings will help them to better judge whether findings can be transferred. Another important step was to include a section in this final chapter that will help to frame the findings and advise the reader about how to use them. Indeed, this is even more important in this study since the focus of the research is on philosophy and its critical role of fostering critical reflection and dialog in the field of HRD.

## CHAPTER FOUR: REPORT OF THE FINDINGS

The open-ended nature of the interviews conducted for this study resulted in a true plethora of data about a wide variety of topics—all of it interesting and not all of it central to this study. The purpose of this study was to begin to uncover core beliefs underlying the profession of HRD. To accomplish this purpose, participant's list of excellencies were probed to explore their underlying assumptions about the practice of HRD. The excellencies were not the focus here, but rather the emphasis was on the assumptions that were driving them. The result of this study was the emergence of six themes. A theme is then comprised of a number of highly-related sub-themes. Figure 4.1. overviews these themes, and a brief introduction to each themes follows.

- Role of HRD as a Theme. This theme provides some ideas on the role that HRD serves. HRD is classified as a “helping” profession that facilitates improvement of some kind. In addition, a central role emerged that positioned HRD as facilitating learning and development at multiple levels (especially for individuals and systems).
- Who HRD Serves as a Theme. Highly related to the above theme, this theme focuses on who or what HRD serves—for what end does HRD do its work and who should benefit from improvement facilitated by HRD? Two opposing answers emerged. The first asserted that HRD should serve individuals and the second argued that HRD should serve organizations. Furthermore, some participants advocated multiple stakeholders and the notion of “win-win-win”. Finally, some people reflected on HRD’s obligation to serve society as a whole.
- People as a Theme. People, of course, are central to a field entitled “Human Resource Development”. A comparatively smaller theme about people emerged from these interviews. A deep commitment to people was evident, expressed in multiple ways including a debate about how people should be valued. Finally, there were some reflections about people as learners.
- Work as a Theme. Compared to other themes, work actually came up very little. Two sub-themes were identified: (a) what work means to people, and (b) the link between HRD and work.
- Organizations as a Theme. The activities of HRD were characterized in this theme as taking place in some kind of organized setting—but most certainly not only a corporate-setting. There was also some discussion about how to define organizations, their role in society, and about the standards by which organizations should treat people.

Figure 4.1. Overview of Themes.



- HRD Interventions as a Theme. Specific characteristics of effective interventions were identified in this theme. Processes and methodologies used in HRD were discussed, emphasizing the need for systematic ways to do HRD work. In addition, there was interesting discussion about problem-solving and problem-defining.

The goal of this chapter is to provide a creative, descriptive, and interpretive account of the beliefs of key HRD scholars interviewed for this study. The focus is on reporting the themes and sub-themes that emerged, with a heavy emphasis on hearing the voices of the participants of the study through excerpted quotes from the interview transcripts. Excerpts from actual interviews are separated from the text of Chapter 4. They are bulleted by a double-quote (“”) and italicized. For example:

- “ *This is the format of a quote that is excerpted directly from the text of a participant’s interview. It is indented, bulleted by a double-quote mark, and italicized.*

At times lengthy quotes have been separated into multiple paragraphs. New paragraphs within one participant’s quote do not have a double-quote bullet in front of them. That symbol is only used to represent a new quote by another participant.

The themes are outlined in the following sections of Chapter Four. Each theme is introduced by a mindmap which visually displays the sub-themes that comprise that theme as well as shows the organization of that section. These mindmaps should be read clockwise. Chapter Five then provides more in-depth interpretation and analysis of each of the themes.

#### Role of HRD as a Theme

HRD is difficult to define, as will be seen throughout this chapter. In what almost seemed a proxy for a definition, much of the dialogue from participants of this study centered on the role of HRD. This theme was the strongest to emerge from this study and is visually introduced in Figure 4.2.

##### HRD as a Helping Profession

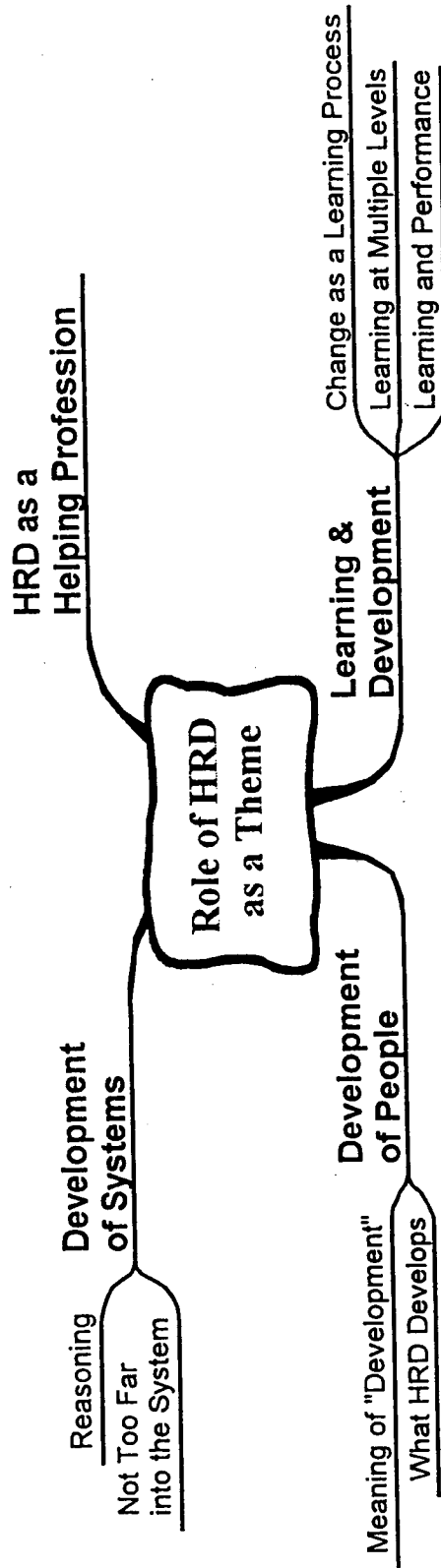
- “ *HRD would be excellent in all ways if we saw ourselves as members of the helping profession and understood what that meant...HRD are handmaidens...*

The idea that HRD has a primary role as a helper was a powerful theme that emerged. This characterization of HRD as a “helping profession” was actually used in these specific words by one participant who identified it as an excellency. In other interviews, too, the spirit of “helping” was evident. This was clear in two threads that are described below.

One way in which this helping role was communicated was the conception of HRD professionals as facilitators:

- “ *HRD folks get things done through people and the role that you take is that of a helper because often you're assisting somebody*

Figure 4.2. Role of HRD as a Theme.





*else, you know, you're not the doer most of the time, you're the helper of the doer. It'll still be you influencing other people because you are not the doer. You're not going to go out and be the quality program. You're going to teach it to a whole bunch of people and help them to do it. You're going to facilitate.*

HRD professionals in this view help others accomplish what they need to do through teaching and helping them to do. For one person interviewed, this meant facilitating a positive outcome versus managing people into one, which was characterized as controlling, directive and imposing.

A second way that this helping role emerged in the findings of this study was a consistent emphasis on helping. One person's motto for good practice is to *do no harm*. Implied in that is the goal of not only not making situations encountered in HRD worse, but actually trying to improve them. Throughout this entire study, in quotes too numerous to mention here, participants consistently emphasized that the role of HRD should be to help make things better. For example, this participant said:

” *it can make a difference in people's lives...I think that broadly defined HRD makes for better individual lives, lives within work places.*

The spirit of improving and developing was clear in almost every conception of HRD and the issues that relate to it. Ideas on what should be developed and how were less clear, but this altruistic notion of wanting to make things better emerged as a central backdrop.

#### Learning and Development

” *Learning is THE heart of HRD!*

...or so exclaimed one person trying to describe what HRD is! Learning is the heart of HRD—this was probably the most clearly acknowledged role for HRD that emerged during this study. The people interviewed strongly associated HRD with some type of role related to development, learning, or education. The same person who introduced the concept of HRD as a helping profession elaborated that when you're an HRD professional you are:

” *essentially a helping person who uses learning as your primary tool.*

As demonstrated in the following quotes, more than a few participants acknowledged the deep connection to learning as they reflected on HRD's heritage which grew largely out of learning-related fields:

” *In most organizations that I've been in the one thing that they really...where we would have most quickly have our credibility is with regard to learning...if an HRD person wants to talk about learning then they're kind of the learning department that has much more wide-spread validity and more credibility. That's the old...from the training, you know, background. ...when people, if they even know the term “human resource*

*development”, they connect to learning quickly and associate us with that very quickly.*

- ” *You ask every single HRD academic program what is the one theoretical discipline/area that they have consistently? It's adult learning. It's about the only consistent theoretical foundation, no matter what focus the program takes. To me, that's why I see learning, especially adult learning, as really the theoretical foundation of our field.*

What learning and development means is still to be clarified, as will be seen later in this chapter. However, the findings here do suggest that many participants strongly perceived HRD's central role as somehow related to learning:

- ” *Do you see yourself in some way as having an educative intent? ... Well, I've always felt that our role, even as a change agent, is educative.... Now you may do it to cause performance changes, but I think that...so that's the educative intent.*
- ” *I'm trying to educate people in systems and to make them better at that in some fashion. I think that's the primary driver.*

#### Change as a Learning Process

There also emerged a strong tie between learning and change—indeed even the conception of change as a learning process:

- ” *We say that Human Resource Development includes what we call training, it includes organization development, it includes organizational learning, it includes any of the philosophical approaches that deal with how you bring about change in people.*
- ” *...acknowledgement that people are finally making that change is not an event, but a learning process. We introduce at point "A" and look for what's different at point "B", without recognizing that what has to be different is that people have learned how to use, or implemented a TQM process, or whatever—that's all a learning process.*
- ” *You can reengineer the work, but in a lot of ways you're still teaching a new work design. In so many ways, they're still learning new skills and new ways of being. You can't make changes without the learning process being engaged. Improving performance? That's making a change, so the underlying process will be learning.*
- ” *I see learning very, very broadly. Because even if you say that somebody has to learn how to work a new process that you're going to implement, that's still learning. I might work with somebody who is designing it so we can deal with resistance to*

*change, how to learn the new system, how we're going to integrate it into this system.*

- ” *There is a whole underlying body of knowledge that has to do with changing the system and then growing into it. Figuring it out and growing into it. Who should be master of that? If we're not...*

### Learning at Multiple Levels

Facilitating learning and development was not limited to just one level or system, which is consistent with this view of change as some kind of learning process. In this study, one person reported an evolution that is taking place in their academic department's thinking about learning...

- ” *...at increasingly complex levels—so individual, group, organizational, societal level learning and the linkages among them. And so from my point of view, the notion of human resource development could be thought of in terms of almost any of those levels.*

Another person felt strongly that HRD had to get beyond thinking of individual learning as its sole focus. Another reinforced this notion in stating that:

- ” *there is such a thing as team/group learning, such a thing as collective learning, such a thing as organizational learning. So, I support learning at all those different levels.*

One participant discussed how the reality of the problems that organizations face demands a developmental force at various levels:

- ” *...it's problems are, you know, they're at various levels. Some of them might be whole systems. Some of them might be on...but that's the way it is. And that's very different than saying I do training or I do OD. I mean, it doesn't ring in the same way.*

Yet another person reflected that OD (considered as a sub-field of HRD) has always focused on levels beyond the individual:

- ” *..it's that focus on a collective consciousness and culture that differentiates any of us who sort of see OD as our home...our framework, you know, where people who are comfortable and like working at a group or organizational level.*

So, here there is support for HRD broadening its focus to include learning interventions at various levels.

### Learning and Performance

One of the seemingly on-going debates that has dominated much discussion in HRD has been that of the whether HRD's primary outcome should be learning or improved performance (see Chapter Two). Of course this too came up throughout the

course of this study. Most of all we see evidence that this debate may be waning a bit, with a new emphasis on valuing *both*. One excellency listed by a participant said simply:

” *HRD would be excellent if it recognized that both learning and performance are important. And, both are dependent variables and that frankly, as I see it, if I were building a model, it would be learning, performance, and there would be probably arrows going between the two. That learning affects performance and performance affects learning.*

Another person said:

” *performance and learning are our mission. So we bring that concept as applied to the real world.*

The differences still remain, however, when noting the emphasis that is placed on each, and in opinions of which should be the first-order dependent variable. A participant who has historically been quite vocal about emphasizing learning offered a reminder:

” *...he said that it's to change the performance level in the organization, and I think that's one thing that they probably need to be doing. I also think that it's to change the capacity for learning of the system itself so that they can keep on learning.*

Others consistently emphasized the performance outcome—while strongly acknowledging the tight link between learning and performance:

” *What comes first the chicken or the egg? Does it really matter if the outcome is the same? I would say that it does matter if you want a better chicken.*

” *It seemed important at the time to talk about that, but I don't think it's that important any more. I don't think so, because I don't think learning and performance...I think they're both important obviously, but, you know, the enduring truth is that performance drives learning to some extent.*

” *If you pushed me on performance and learning, I'd be on the performance side. No question about it. But learning is a vehicle.*

One participant described how, for them, an overly-intense focus on learning represents a premature end:

” *A camp that says that learning is the end and not performance—it's less what they do then what that symbolizes. And that symbolizes, I think, a premature end. It's all about whether people ultimately do something with that. We ought to have impact. What we do, in my mind, ought to help people function in some way, perform in some way—in some*

*organizational sense, whether it be profit, nonprofit, or something. But I like it there. I do.*

Still another participant talked about how HRD could be focused on both learning and performance without stepping over some kind of boundary that a strong emphasis on performance improvement may carry with it:

*” It's more than semantics, but I think there's a difference of terms between saying that we're in this to improve performance versus we're in the business of performance improvement. I don't know what the nuances are there, but there's a difference, you know? There's a big difference in my mind. We can be learning-oriented and still be improving performance.*

One person reflected that organizations demand performance improvement, but also highlighted that HRD professionals need to help the client see and appreciate what leads to improved performance:

*” As a professional, no matter the profession, your role is to guide the client to see the other aspects of the work that's being done. The client says I want to see the impact of this training program on sales productivity. And, it seems to me, your role is to say "fine, we're going to do that, now how would you imagine that a sales productivity problem might be impacted by a training program?" Most people if you ask them the question would go through a logic model that this leads to this, and that leads to the next thing and then it leads to... It's our role to, if people don't understand that, to try to get them to understand that.*

The connection between learning and performance may not be clear, but HRD professionals may have an important role in helping to elucidate the links.

Finally, a potent lesson about the link between learning and performance, with an emphasis on performance, came from one participant who is studying Learning Organizations and Learning Officers. The research team contacted Walt Disney company, a company infamously known for its learning focus and capacity, and found that Disney would not participate in the study:

*” They would not participate in our study of Chief Learning Officers because they would never title somebody that. And we said well why...we thought the title...well, you have to be...just who would have that position. They said we wouldn't even put somebody in a position like that because we talk about performance and productivity—learning is too passive.*

*” Now we could debate that ad infinitum. But, you know, that's telling. One of the most admired recognized corporations in the world and they say, we don't want anybody being the chief learning officer. General Electric said that's exactly what we*

*want. Disney says we don't want any part of that, it's too passive.*

### Development of People

Development of people was a central role of HRD for people interviewed in this study. HRD was viewed as a field that should help people learn and develop, especially in the face of an ever-changing world. These quotes introduce the significance of this role:

- ” *I believe in the sanctity of human development. And I don't mean that in a religious sense, I mean that in a human...humane sense.*
- ” *...but ultimately if a core set of beliefs says that we're all about helping people reach their potential...*
- ” *And I think in the best of all worlds that we would want a scenario whereby people say this is what's more important to them. It's human. It's developmental-oriented.*
- ” *I am concerned about developing people.*

In these quotes there is a very deep connection and commitment to helping individuals learn, develop, and grow. In the following quotes, this thread continues along with a more practical tone included:

- ” *The main reason you come into Human Resource Development is that you want to have some influence. You think that's a point of view that can help solve certain kinds of problems in a better way...gives you a different perspective. If you don't believe that, then get out of the field. Why would you want to be in it? ... Certain kinds of problems—problems having to do primarily with the development of people in the organization.*
- ” *If (the job of developing and unleashing expertise) is not ours, then there's only one other place—the individual. ... I mean, either put us out of business or get serious about helping people in the rough and tough spots.*
- ” *I think our clear product is the development and unleashing of human expertise. So when people are cool, when they can do things...we're supposed to be the masters of knowledge and expertise.*

### Meaning of “Development”

The following quote introduces one of the most striking sub-themes in this study:

- ” *Then the development part is what becomes the real controversy. So development—what does that mean?*

How scholars interviewed here defined development tended to be quite divergent, and the differences may hold some strong philosophical implications (as discussed in Chapter Five).

Some interviewed for this study discussed how disciplines other than HRD have traditionally approached development:

- ” *In the business school what I've seen is that the HR people come out much more oriented towards making decisions about what to do and not to do, as opposed to growing or teaching people. Growing or teaching people is not their approach. So to develop people, you manage them. You give them structures and tasks and all of that. Certainly there's a place for that, too, but that's not what development is to me. It's a larger idea—when you develop people they're learning things, but they're also evolving, growing and developing to another level. I think its thinking developmentally, thinking in terms of what people need in different times in their careers for instance. It's about growth over time I guess.*
- ” *It depends on the perspective of how one defines learning. One of the ideas that I've written about is that different disciplines take different perspectives on what human resource development is about. To an economist, HRD is about value-added in terms of adding to the resources of the organization, so human beings are just another commodity that when they learn they have value-added to the organization. An Adult Educator might look at learning purely in the sense of the individual's potential, without any concern for the organization. An Industrial/Organization Psychologist I think sees HRD (they still use the term training) as building skills. A sociologist/organizational anthropologist would see just the organization level—they're interested in how the individual fits in and how the mass of people work together and develop a culture.*

Throughout this study participants quite regularly distinguished HRD from other disciplines, especially Business/Management, and the idea of development seemed to be the one of the strongest points of differentiation. When probed further, however, it appears that even within HRD there are quite varied notions of what development is and what it involves.

- ” *I think they're not really interested in people learning. I think a performance consultant, for instance, is interested in somebody changing, and to me that still involves learning. Different philosophies of learning is a major point of contention. Much of the performance technology literature is really an outgrowth of behaviorism. I think there's a place for*

*that kind of learning, but I do think that people learn much more cognitively than that—more of a constructivist point of view I suppose. But I wouldn't rule out behavioral techniques categorically, but would focus them on the individual and their growth. When you come out of a constructivist camp, you just construct the learning situation so differently. You expect somebody to need to make meaning of it, learn by doing, etc... as opposed to the rote stuff.*

- ” *Thus, from my perspective, development involves the fundamental condition of knowledge, which means that development provides a person cognitive breadth and depth in which one's personal experience is transformed and edified so as to result in wider and deeper perspectives and understandings. The acquisition of mere skills is NOT development, but a form of procedural control which inherently limits a person's development.*

In a follow-up interview conducted for this study, someone who admittedly believes in the goal of improved performance as a result of HRD intervention reacted to this last quote as they attempted to define development:

- ” *Change and growth...something's changing from an existing state. I guess I like the idea of growth, but I'm not sure that's absolutely accurate. I'd like to think it'd be something positive or some higher state from some perspective (either the individual or the organization's, which is another tension I suppose). There's going to be some notion of can we turn people into better "this", and we'd like the element of people wanting to be that—that it's their choice and they're engaged. Of course I think that's fine. But these words like "manipulation" and "exploitation", these are so loaded! 12-year old kids don't like going through the fundamentals of soccer, but if they do they're better soccer players. Is that good? Is that a little exploitative or manipulative? Well, go easy there, we have to be careful there. I would put myself on the side of caution of just sort of an uncontrolled development notion. I think that can be a slippery slope.*

The issue then becomes to what extent there needs to be some agreement about what development is and involves. This was brought up by one participant:

- ” *The question, I suspect, is can we agree to use the term "development" and then go about doing different things. The simple answer is "No," but the more complex one requires looking at what people mean by development. At their heart, behavioral practices are grounded in a theory of "control" that runs counter to theories of how people develop.... I doubt that*



*it would be profitable to use non-development ideologies to bring about development.*

Another person indicated that it was possible for the field to carry multiple approaches and values regarding learning and development, however pointed out that:

- ” *...too many of us don't honor all those perspectives and still end up looking at things from only one perspective. To me that's the basis of the learning vs. performance debate. But I do think we get into that trap and get labeled in that way. I think that our field is a multi-disciplinary field. We've borrowed a lot from other fields and we will continue to do that, although I think we're starting to develop our own theory-base around learning organization/organization learning etc.... But there's some of us that then still shoot-off from that and still take a very specific perspective. Which happens in every discipline—it's like a psychologist who sees everything from a Adelerian perspective, or a Rogerian perspective or an Existentialist perspective.*

#### What HRD Develops

One thread that emerged focused on different ideas about *what* should be developed. Some participants discussed how HRD needed to foster learning and growth around the whole individual:

- ” *My guess is that a lot of folks...would see that what we're about is the whole person.*
- ” *It's life-related. So fully developed, in terms of capacity. I don't know if anyone has a real handle on what capacity is. Potential to me is capacity, and I'm using capacity a la Maslow's self-actualization.*
- ” *You move into the educational group and I mean, obviously just on the... "Human Resource Development"—you could say that's everything. I mean, that's all encompassing from an individual's...it's almost like you could use a biological example, you know, it's birth or adolescence to adulthood or something. But I think that is a struggle for the discipline to define that. Now if you come at it...and we cover the whole human and all the parts of the human, maybe there.*
- ” *...to help people connect to what they could be doing not only work-skill wise, but work-meaning wise.*

Some participants, on the other hand, had a more limited notion of the role that HRD plays in a person's life and learning:

- ” *Develop critical expertise for individual and organizational success.*

” *The organization does have to expect that people are competent and have the competence to do what they need to do.*

And, part of a quote offered above that exemplifies a more organizational based focus:

” *So why bother? I mean, either put us out of business or get serious about helping people in the rough spots, in the tough spots. We can't be wasting time with day-timer training. I mean, get it on a video tape or something. Give it away. I mean, it's not that it's...don't waste any core thinking on that. Take care of that.*

Development that goes on in (and is typically sponsored by) organizations was also well differentiated from whole person development by another participant:

” *There is a way in which individual learning ought to be tied into organizational learning...AND all individual development is not organizational development.*

*...and I don't think it should be actually because I think it would be, you know, in some ways it's intrusive on the individual to claim that everything that he or she must learn can only be things that are instrumental for an organization. That really takes away from people as human beings.*

*But nonetheless, I think there is a way in which individual learning or a piece of what individuals learn can and should be more actively used by the organization in good sense with full and clear agreement by everybody. That's why we have a contract with individuals—that we want certain things that they bring to the party. And there ought to be some negotiation around what that is, and then people should be encouraged to learn those things that are valuable to the organization for that part of their life they're giving to the organization. So I think what organizational learning does is...well, I go back to Chris Argyris' early definition which is based more or less on John Dewey, that essentially says that people are appointed or annointed to learn on behalf of the organization.*

#### Development of Systems

In addition to development of people, development of systems also emerged as a primary role for HRD. In this sub-theme a much more expanded role for HRD is conceived of—one that reaches into and works on systems.

#### Reasoning

The driving force for this expanded role varied for different participants interviewed. One person attributed this role simply to how organizations are systemic by their very nature:

” *I think for me a part of the HRD piece is more systemic than some of the places where I've played. You know, as an*

*accountant you don't have a whole lot of opportunity to affect individuals, but you do. But you don't affect whole systems as potentially as you can through HRD. I also would not argue that where HRD is today, it's doing that. But I think potentially it's there to do that.*

Working on organizational systems was also powerfully justified by another participant as they linked that work with human development and the overall capacity of humans to be effective:

” *Well I think this is a core debate in our field—are we just about learning or not? And a more restrictive view of HRD would be that it involves the developing of people through learning as opposed to providing human resources in organizations with what they need to be effective and productive. And that's where it enables us to reach out to processes, for example.*

*So if there are people involved then we need....then our role is to...that role's going to vary, but fundamentally it would involve providing the people what they need to be effective in accomplishing that mission and purpose.*

This was highlighted again as another participant placed the individual in context of the organization:

” *I have to...I mean, if the whole system's sick and dying, working with the individuals only with blinders on isn't going to save that system.*

Another person expressed how systems must be worked on and improved to reach optimal performance, and discussed how HRD can play a central role integrating with other organizational systems to achieve this goal—emphasizing that HRD knows the human part of the organization:

” *Now, we can have another level of product, and that is that we know...and maybe we'll lose this work, I don't know...we shouldn't try to claim it all ourselves, but our other product is that since we know the human part of the organization in terms of it's functioning, then we need to be a player in the other processes. We need to help them. It's like finance would help people in terms of managing costs and expenditures. We need to help in the other core processes. So our other product is the actual help and sustainability of the total system.*

Finally, others connected improved systems to creating better environments for individuals to work in:

” *So that people can still accomplish their purpose and do it in an environment that's more affirming.*

- ” *I don't think that it's out of the realm to start thinking about reward systems and production processes and those kind of things. I mean, yeah, you've got to define your domain, and so it is primarily human that is our particular focus...but creating systems that allow for that.*

Regardless of the varied reasoning offered, there clearly emerged a growing emphasis on serving a more systemic role in organizations by helping to develop systems:

- ” *If you'd asked me that four years ago I would have said I'm a training guy and I do training and development, transfer of training, needs assessment, evaluation, that sort of thing. In the last four years I would say I'm an organizational change guy. That it's no where near as narrow as...I do organizational change. So it's leadership—perfectly around human elements, not around, as Ameritech would with what part of the telecommunication industry are we in. Not that kind. Not the strategy call. But how would we align staffing, learning (note the difference between training and learning)...staffing, learning, reward systems, to move us in a particular direction.*
- ” *I think they think of HRD in ways that probably HRD people wouldn't like to think of ourselves—you know as training and development, as implementation, as routine, as skills and behaviors only, and as something that's focused on the individual. As opposed to thinking strategically about the competencies that the organization has to have as a whole and the way in which priorities get set around that...*

#### Not Too Far Into The System

This expanding role of developing systems is not without some debate! As one person pointed out as this discussion unfolded:

- ” *For many people their core at least has been human and that basically we develop humans. And so when you take the full performance improvement perspective and start talking about processes and such, then for many you have violated the boundary of the core—you know, human development.*
- ” *If you are of a mind that HRD is about learning as a variable then...then, yeah, it's easier for a learning person to think about working beyond the individual level, if we're talking about learning at the organizational level for instance. Now the real question for us as a field is what about non-learning that makes systems more effective and therefore the individuals in them more effective? OK?*

*So now I guess there are a few that would argue that anything you do, any time you change anything in an organization there's learning involved, but that's kind of a...could be a little bit of a long stretch.*

This participant was insightful when they asked the key question about the extent to which HRD should be implementing non-learning interventions. Other people interviewed stated the following when asked how to define HRD:

- ” *I just say that our focus is learning based—that’s what makes us HRD. Which is partly why I’m also not...I don’t consider myself a performance improvement specialist. Because performance improvement may use other non-learning interventions. But there’s a lot of fuzzy lines.*
- ” *I think, in some ways, some of us anyway, are leaving behind what was the heart of our field and may be still be and that is the learning. It is the one piece of this that we are truly the master.*

Even advocates of the expanded role of HRD into the development of organizational systems are contemplating how far the profession can and should go in this role, as demonstrated by the following reflection:

- ” *Well, this is the area where frankly I’m less settled on and I think we’re....I think that there’s a real question in my mind how far we can go here. I mean, are we...is our job enhancing organizational or system performance period—whether it involves humans or not? ... there’s some point when you start to not be very involved with people anymore. And I wonder how far afield we can go.*

*In other words, when do we get outside of our discipline? When are we outside of our expertise? When do we cease...when have reached our boundary?*

*And I don’t really, I’ll be honest with you, I don’t exactly know how to draw that line. I mean, let’s take organizational structure, for example. Now, organizational structure certainly affects individuals, you know, so one could argue that...we should be involved in that. You know, organization structure has to do—it affects marketing, distribution, logistics. But, you know, these are things that we don’t know anything about. Now, where are we in that?*

*And I think that’s the murky area. I mean, it’s one thing to say, OK, we should step beyond learning to make sure that the systems in which people will utilize that learning are effective systems. That’s one thing. Then taking the next step to say that*

*we're going to work on organization level process issues that improve the organization or system*

### Who HRD Serves as a Theme

In the same vein as the strong theme introduced earlier in this chapter about what role HRD should be playing, this theme focuses more intensely on who should be served (i.e., who should benefit from development) by HRD. In fact, one person brought this question up explicitly when they reflected on the newly introduced AHRD standards on ethics and integrity (Burns et al., 1999):

” *I read the document emerging, but I was a little concerned that those issues hadn't been raised about who our client...who we declare our clients to be when we are in relationships.*

Another person emphasized how vital it was to confront this question of who HRD serves when they cited an example from history:

” *Like the 80's with reengineering...I think that's where it brought that into, you know, strong release—that whole idea about who are you working for?*

Finally, one of the most provocative questions that was shared by a participant in this study also provided a powerful frame for this theme:

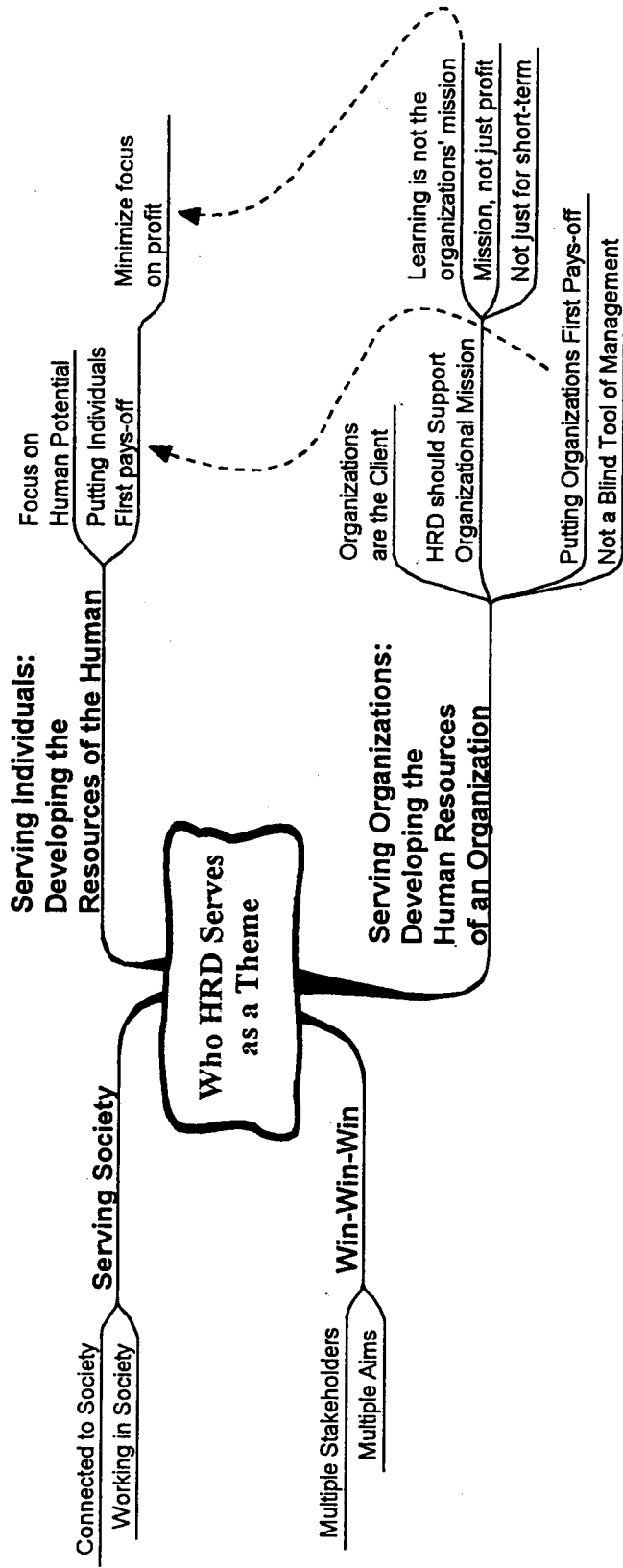
” *And she said, "is HRD about developing the resources of an organization (the human resources of an organization) or should HRD be about the development of the resources of the human?" A very, very different perspective which could lead to a very, very different paradigm.*

Four sub-themes were identified (see Figure 4.3). First, was a focus on serving individuals. Second, was serving organizations. Third, some participants emphasized a balance between multiple stakeholders. Finally, a few scholarly leaders reflected on HRD's critical connection to society and how its activities should serve the greater good. Each sub-theme is discussed below.

#### Serving Individuals: Developing the Resources of the Human

- ” *The HRD profession would be excellent if it saw its role as being responsible to and for individual workers rather than management.*
- ” *Now that's really anti-thetical to everything we...the way we operate now. It's almost like, kind of a socialist-communist kind of philosophy. But again it, without belaboring the point, to me, if I serve the workers and the workers are more productive because they are cared for and supported and helped to grow, the organization's going to benefit.*

Figure 4.3. Who HRD Serves as a Theme.



Responsible to and for individual workers rather than management—this was a powerful distinction made by one participant who advocates serving the individual first. This person goes on to explain:

” *Can we ignore the organization? No, but we can be a profession that serves people in organizations.*

Another person framed the deeply held commitment to individuals that so many in HRD bring to the profession:

” *I think most human resource development people probably come in first and foremost thinking about the people who are involved in the situation, and then they also understand that the organizational system has to be dealt with. It may be because we work with people. I mean, we are defined in part by our roles of work with people, of human resource development. So fundamentally it has to do with people. And people are complex. And we, I mean, we can see the consequences of what it is that we do and its impact on people.*

#### Focus on Human Potential

An earlier section of Chapter Four explored the development of the whole person versus a more limited notion of focusing on job and organizational needs. This thread continues here in where there remains a strong focus on the development of the whole person and their potential.

” *it is the development of people that is the goal of HRD rather than making a profit for the business community.*

” *...we're all about helping people reach their potential...*

” *I am concerned about developing people.*

When probed about who defines a person's potential, one participant re-emphasized the importance of focusing on the individual:

” *So few people are self-actualized that I wouldn't worry about when to stop. Don't worry about it, you'll figure it out when you get there. Who decides how hard to push? The individual—not the company, not the organization. They can ask for it. I guess what I mean by that is ultimately it's the individual's choice.*

” *If their getting pushed too hard, then they're the ones who have to say, "hey, wait a minute, I can't do this. This is beyond my ability, or this is beyond my values in terms of what I believe in terms of family, etc...". But it's not the companies job to necessarily make the decision as to how much I'm going to push you.*

” *Well, I guess maybe it is—maybe it's the company's decision about how much they're going to push, and it's your decision*



*about how much you're going to allow them to push you. But if those people allow themselves to be burnt out, ultimately it's their choice to say "I'm not going to put up with this anymore, I'm going to leave". Or to stay...*

A little later in the interview the same person described an organizational situation that is increasingly common in America today and exemplifies this philosophy. The specifics of this example were based on a study that a student in their program had conducted:

- ” *A good example is some of these high-tech companies. I think they're doing it. They take these people who are tremendously brilliant in terms of technology, let them go, and let them create. And they do it in a way that fosters their potential.*
- ” *...and the challenge is to affect the system. And they believe they are having an affect on the system. And they can work kind of wherever they want—just leave them alone! Then they're motivated. They want the freedom, but they have to believe they're making an impact.*
- ” *And then when they're not being challenged, they want to learn. So they gotta be challenged in terms of affecting the system or learning, and when they're not, the tendency is to leave. They know they can get the money, they're in it for something more important. To me what they seem to do is sort of leave them alone versus develop them. The development comes by leaving them alone and letting them just go and supporting them in terms of learning and...*

#### Putting Individuals First Pays-Off

As can be seen in some of the above quotes, the people that advocated serving the unique needs of the individual first were not ignorant of the organization and its needs. The following quotes emphasize this point further:

- ” *That's not ignoring the organization! I believe that a really good organization that puts people first is going to be profitable anyways, because people are going to want to work for them and be productive and loyal. If you put people before profits, you're going to get your profit anyways—it's where you put your effort and energy and focus. It's a very simplistic cause and effect. Life doesn't totally work that way, but I think, philosophically, high-performing organizations, at least in a large part, come from the development and growth of its people. You can't be high-performing and not have growth and development.*
- ” *My cynicism is around the fact that I believe most organizations...are out for profit which, you know, one would*

*say well that's what they're supposed to be about. ...what I'm about to say came out of that book "Built to Last" by Collins and Porras, I believe it was them who talked about how when they looked at the companies they studied—the ones that were built to last—never saw profit as their guiding...as their mission. Their mission was to make a better product, to serve the customer, things like that. Profit was a by-product.*

- ” *And they used the analogy of human beings don't live to breath. Breathing is a by-product or a natural function of living. We live to do other things. We don't live to breath. So to them the analogy was you don't live to make a profit, profit is something you just have to do in order to be a capitalist entity. But you don't live to do that. You live to do other higher level things. And so these companies saw their role, their vision, their mission, at a higher level than making a profit. But profit happened because they believed in these other things, not because they believed that ultimately their mission was to make money.*

Another person used very similar language about how organizations should not focus on the profit-motive, but rather on people and their development first:

- ” *And my argument there is that business decisions that are made on the bottom line are uniformly unsuccessful. ...They're focusing on the wrong thing. You don't get success by focusing on success. You focus on other things. Here we have a classic paradox. The evidence suggests that if you focus on making money, you are going to be less successful than if you focus on having a productive workforce, for example. If you focus on taking care of your employees, they will make money for you. Zen teaches us that we see things better when we don't focus on them. Focus gives us blinders. Businesses should make certain that employees have the resources to do their work. That is what will produce a successful company.*

Minimize focus on profit. The same participants who so strongly believe serving the individual first pays-off for the organization also had some things to say on profit:

- ” *To them it's margin. It's not about people. It's about margins and costs and stuff like that. So they'd rather spend the money on turnover and management training programs, stuff like that, than other reasonable things to do.*
- ” *The capitalistic system and the every man for himself kind of societal value support a lot of the negative connotations about profit. It doesn't mean that every organization that is within a capitalistic system is necessarily negative or bad. It's just*

*we've set up some values within our society around capitalism that do result in some negative connotations. Systems aren't inherently bad or good. It's how its being implemented and maintained in certain countries. It's what we've done with it.*

The commitment to development and whole-person development was also held up as a more worthy goal than that of chasing profit—emphasizing profit in an of itself is not bad, but there must be additional, more humane goals:

- ” *You know, the purpose of life is to affirm and celebrate life, it's not to affirm and celebrate profit or affirm and celebrate acquisitions! ...I'm not at all opposed to organizations making money, I've put a lot of my life into helping organizations do that. My problem is when that's all they do.*
- ” *I don't have much hope that capitalism, as it exists, is ever going to truly change, because there's just too much power and greed and we see it in all our daily lives. ... And I keep asking myself, and it comes up around sports figures and it comes up around CEOs, after so many millions what do you do with all this money? And my answer is it's just power. It's just accumulation. It's, you know, you can only buy so much. I couldn't imagine what you do with seventy five million dollars...it's past my comprehension.*
- ” *...but again if that's what we're all about—helping organizations and CEOs become multi-millionaires, I don't want any part of that. That's not to me what I'm all about. It's not to me what our field should be all about. There's gotta be something more...got to be a hell of a lot more. And to me the more is that I'm in this for people. I'm not in this for profit, even my own or the organization's.*

Finally, one participant took a much stronger position that focuses on only human development, regardless of whether profit or organizational performance ensues:

- ” *You're not there to make a profit on some...you have all of the benefits of living and developing as a human being and developing those talents—developing your human characteristics—and that ought to be paramount to making a profit. If you don't do that, if you don't develop, if you don't make the person, then even if you make a profit, it's not worth it.*
- ” *It's the development of your talent that's important. That may result in a profit, it may not result in any profit—and that doesn't make any difference! Because even if you do...businesses, they go out of business anyway. Doing that doesn't make a profit all the time. That should not be a*

*consideration in this field at all, and the person who makes that the consideration misunderstands the nature of the field...*

- ” *But Human Resource Development should have a kind of social conscience. That you don't abuse employees just to make a profit, and that's what the performance perspective encourages. It places that above all other concerns, and I'd say that's absolutely wrong. That is an abuse of the whole philosophy of living on this planet. We don't abuse any of the resources. We don't abuse the forest. We don't abuse the land, even if it makes you a profit. That is not our concern. Now, you have to make a profit in spite of us then, see. Any moral person would not accept that as the ultimate end result.*

The organization is seen here as somewhat secondary to serving the needs of the individual. As another participant added:

- ” *So where I have the difficulty though is when you set up the organization as the only important. Organizations for me are important in helping individuals achieve their purpose in life.*

#### Serving Organizations: Developing the Human Resources of an Organization

This emphasis on serving the individual first and having confidence in the return-on-investment for the organization is quite different from an alternative approach that emerged during this study, as represented in the following quote:

- ” *We would be excellent if we were seen as furthering the mission of the organizations or entities that sponsor our efforts.*
- ” *...one of the differences in core beliefs that I see is whether our role is one of furthering individuals' development or whether we are to further the mission of the organization or entity which sponsors and supports our efforts. And I'd take the latter position.*
- ” *And I think that's a core problem in our field...that we have been driven by, in many instances, almost an independent mission (a la education) as opposed to recognizing that HRD...is charged with furthering the mission of that organization.*

The excellency described above is the antithesis of the excellency that opened the former section which placed serving the individual first. In this model, HRD is primarily responsible to and for the organization.

#### Organizations are the Client

That HRD should primarily serve the organization was tied in this study to the idea that HRD is sponsored by organizations, as was alluded to above. Thus, the

organization should be the primary client. This notion was strongly emphasized by various people interviewed for this study:

- ” *I believe HRD is fundamentally hosted by some organization or system. It's not any free-floating system, even if it's third-world country where HRD is supported by the government. So it's hosted by systems.*

One person interviewed for this study listed the following excellency:

- ” *The profession would be excellent if we understand that the system is always the client.*

and went on to elaborate on this theme a few other times during the interview:

- ” *The OD people that I subscribe to...Argyris's....if you read Intervention Theory and Methods, that first chapter, he says that the system is the client. So I think the simple answer would be from Wilfred Beham's work at Tavistock on to Lewin and Argyris—that the thing that created this field of Organization Development was that they moved beyond the individual as the unit of focus.*
- ” *I don't think anyone is kidding themselves—unless they accept that the real stakeholder has got to be the system...that's where the money is coming from, that's the only reason you're there.*

#### HRD Should Support Organizational Mission

Aligned with the presumption that HRD is sponsored by organizations was also a strong belief that HRD should support organizational mission and contribute to enhanced organizational performance:

- ” *The first thing is to make a difference in organizational performance...that organizations actually perform better, achieve more.*
- ” *One of the distinguishing characteristics (or what distinguishes HRD from general education) is that it is sponsored by or it's within the boundaries of some kind of organization or entity that has a purpose...and that it should be engaged in furthering that mission. That's what distinguishes us from other entities in society that are charged with developing people for their general lives and well being of society.*
- ” *The organization itself has to learn, improve, perform. And if the system is the client then... I do think that learning with no strings can enhance the organization. That's what Johnsonville did in the learning organization story there. But they did it and they continued to do it while they saw the payoff in the system. They did it for a system intent. So I think that if*

*we continue to think of the system as the client... So you are the handmaidens of the system in some fashion.*

On a more personal note, one person reflected on lessons that were learned as a child:

” *And so this is the business side of me. You know, I was born and raised in a family business and understanding that you have customers out there. You have decided what the fundamental purpose of the organization is and, as a result of that, anything that doesn't align itself with that is vulnerable to be picked off, thrown away, not being taken serious. And I understand that. And the core beliefs...it's OK, OK for that to go away.*

Here is a strong expression of how HRD should be contributing to the purpose of the organization—aligning with its mission and helping the organization to achieve its goals while also helping the organization itself to connect its “parts” to the “whole”. This was reiterated by someone else, too, when speaking about who HRD’s primary client is:

” *I mainly think it is the system as a whole. I even think that when I'm working at an individual or a unit level. So when I go into a department, for instance, I'm very interested in how that department is working to enhance the overall organizational mission or not. And so they may ask me to come in and do something that seems to me is at odds with the good of the organization as a whole. And so part of what I would see as my role is to help them see that—to help them see the connect or disconnect between what they're doing and what the system should be doing.*

Learning is not Organizations’ Mission. The reality of organizations and their role seemed to dictate to some participants that HRD serve the needs of the organization. A strong concept that emerged was about how organizations are not in the business of learning, and the need for HRD to realize this and work towards the goals of its sponsor:

- ” *Organizations are not in business to learn. They're in the business to perform, and so learning is a vehicle to that.*
- ” *HRD is never going to be the primary business, unless you're a consulting firm. So you have to recognize that widgets have to go out the door—you are overhead! We can say we should be positioned at the top of the organization, we can say anything we want, HRD will almost always be overhead. I mean, this is it!*
- ” *I wonder where does that come from? Where do you get the belief that you have the right to exist and to be awarded resources day in and day out? Why do you get that? So that's a part of my own upbringing in terms of a meritocracy and I believe in democratic values—given a framework of*

*democracy, of fairness, of respect and hope and optimism—that you're given a shot at making a contribution. That doesn't mean you're going to get anything. In the final analysis you're only to get what you get based on merit—you've earned it.*

- ” *You know, one of the things that I say to people, particularly my students, that's disturbing is that any sane organization, if they had a choice, would get rid of HRD tonight. In other words, if this thing of developing and/or unleashing human expertise, dah-dah-dah-dah-dah, if this thing could happen another way, but just happened naturally, totally, there'd be a much better option.*
- ” *They're not in the business...you know, except for some unique corporations, almost every corporation that I know of...every company—they're not into business of developing people. They're in the business of doing something else. So that's humbling, because you're not a necessary element. There are rivals to you and other ways of getting whatever it is that you do. So that demands some attention. And I think there are people that think that companies and organizations should be in the business of developing their work force so that they exist for the work force.*

Finally, one person approached the issue from a little different lens as they talked about the importance of development as well as return on that investment for the organization:

- ” *I do think that a large organizations has time to figure out those issues. You know, they have time to say, well, you know, development's important...if we try this, it may be a high cost, but what are the measures in the end that's going to justify that cost.*

Mission, not just profit. People who advocated supporting organizational mission and helping organizations to achieve more were also quick to discuss how that should not be mistaken as a blatant emphasis on increased profit and money. For instance, one person reflected:

- ” *I've never understood why the so called “performance perspective” which is really mission-oriented is a problem in other types of organizations or entities.*

This quote was a part of a larger discussion about how the focus for many in the performance perspective is on achieving organizational goals and how this has often been misinterpreted, according to this participant, as a focus on only profit. This has led to many HRD professionals saying that the performance perspective is invalid for other types of organizations like non-profits, government, community organizations, unions, etc... Another participant believed that the focus on mission and goals of the

organization is a valid assumption for any type of organization, as is reiterated in the following quote:

” *...they really have one major client and that's the organization and it's goals, vision, purposes—you know, what it is it's trying to do. You're doing it for organizational or system intent.*

In addition, one participant wanted to emphasize a fine distinction between what is often characterized (including in some quotes above) as an exploitative focus on the profit-motive versus what some people interviewed for this study consider to be a more ethical focus on helping organizations achieve organizational missions and performance on multiple dimensions. It is about, this participant says,

” *...organizational performance on multiple dimensions...*

Not just for the short-term. Helping organizations to achieve their mission was also viewed as a fine balance between the short- and long-term. Advocates for valuing the organizations goals said:

” *But along the way it can't be so short-term viewed of economics so that you deny the opportunities for those interim outcomes, those enabling outcomes, to get to some other outcomes at the end.*

” *One of the favorite positions of the kind of learning perspective...is that the performance has to be short-term. Not at all! Not at all! Now, there's a difference between the argument of short-term/long-term, all right, and whether there has to be some outcome.*

” *I mean...there is no research lab (if it's associated with some kind of organization) that will stay in existence if they don't ultimately produce some innovations or some product for the company. So I think there's some real hard issues around making sure we don't get too short-sighted, for making sure that we don't become too myopic and so forth. But, just like a research lab, ultimately if they never give anything of value to the company, they're going to be shut down.*

This last quote uses the metaphor of a research lab to acknowledge that HRD is an investment that does take time to pay-off. While it may not in the short-term, it should in the long-term, and the people who discussed this idea encouraged HRD to deal with managing the tension between short- and long-term investment and short- and long-term return on that investment.

#### Putting the Organization First Pays-Off

Just as the people that advocated primarily serving individuals did not ignore the needs of the organization, so too the people that advocated putting the organization first did not ignore serving the needs of the individuals. The following quotes demonstrate this:



- ” *I have a second core value here. It says that human expertise developed and maximized through HRD processes should be done for the mutual long term or short term benefits of the sponsoring organization and the individuals involved. ...I mean, if they're doing things that make sense now and in the future for the company, I believe that it will pay-off for the company systemically and economically.*
- ” *When you look at the issue of impact, to me, one of the...if not the key criteria, is that organizations function better, profit more—organizational performance on multiple dimensions—but we gotta make a difference there. Then, as sub-set of that, in fact, the way that organizations function better is that they treat their people better—that they have better learning and better people practices.*
- ” *Organizations need us to help them thrive in a changing world, if you don't do that, you're pretty marginal overall. Then as part of that...I think you'll see clearly we improve people's lives and those kind of things. But, I think we gotta make a difference in that function in the organization. For the continued vitality and excellence in the field, that's going to be important.*
- ” *The good news is that most of what we know is that the best people practices in organizations tend to lead to higher performance—that is, these are the organizations that are able to accomplish their missions better. So it's not like we have an inherent conflict or that we have a problem here that to practice HRD ethically might keep an organization from accomplishing it's mission. We're blessed to be in a business that if we do what we do well, and we do it right, then the odds are pretty good that we can enhance the mission or accomplishment of its mission. ...Generally speaking, the development of the individual furthers the mission of the organization when done the right way.*

Finally, there was some discussion from two different people about the challenges associated with holding the organizational needs at least as important as those of the individuals:

- ” *If you're a humanist and working off the three legs, boy your work is tough! That's tough work! If you're a humanist and just working off of one leg, no problem. Just give them doughnuts with icing! But if you want to keep jobs, if you want to sustain those things, if you want the most number of jobs for the most people, if you want the top executives to change their*

*thinking and their work behavior, you want the work processes to fundamentally change to be not only better, but more humane...boy, you're going to run into a meat grinder. People are going to resist that change or have different ideas. That's tough work. The easiest thing for an HRD person is to be a humanist at the individual level. The easiest thing! Piece of cake!*

- ” *I see us working on a much more large and complex system scale. It's easy to focus on one individual at a time.*

#### Not a Blind Tool of Management

The people that discussed serving the needs of the organization first also did not equate this with being a blind tool of management or working from a customer service model. One person listed the following excellency:

- ” *We can be excellent in all ways if we became advocates, in fact, champions for HRD practices with ethics and integrity. So, like any profession, I think we have the obligation to battle against unethical practices—against practices that lack integrity.*

This person went on to explain:

- ” *I mean I go back to the premise if...is that people in organizations are vital to the success of organizations, and our humanistic side says they're vitally important in and of itself...then we should be doing everything we can to make sure our practices are the best that they can be.*

Another person talked about how a deep belief in human beings demands as well as fosters courage in HRD professionals:

- ” *...at that point it takes an enormous amount of courage...if that's our job...to talk back to the system, the organization, about it's behavior, it's system, it's logic, it's inadequacies. So that's what gives us the courage.*
- ” *But it seemed to me that if we truly had these beliefs they would keep us from doing certain things and almost mandate that we do other things. Otherwise they would give us some courage so that when a core belief is violated... You know, if you're supposed to be enhancing the whole organization and that organization is violating all those core beliefs, then you have to make some decisions at that point. You have to challenge, you have to encourage...more courage in terms of advocating for those core beliefs, so I think that they get your stomach in knots.*

In fact, said yet another person, HRD needs to be more integrated in the business to ensure service to worthy goals:

” *If you knew what the goals were, you might not agree with them. You might be in the service of goals that you really don't agree with. Sometimes people can naively enter into something and not be aware that they're being used.*

*And, in fact, if they were aware of what was going to happen...because I do think a lot of people in HR/HRD are frequently in it because they've got a lot of empathy for people and they really do care about the human side of things. And ...sometimes if they really understood what it was they were furthering they might in fact not want to be involved in it. They might make a different choice.*

” *We need to enhance awareness of goals—if you translate that into what we should be doing differently. It may be a lot in part because HRD people haven't been so connected to the business, so when they are involved they're not aware of all the thinking that goes behind it, so they can't extrapolate what this might be in the service of.*

” *HRD people are probably not all that unsavvy, but they may not think through, or may be not fully cognizant of the politics of the thing, or they may know what the implications are likely to be, etc... that in the end they may not be helping people, they may be hurting them in one way or another. If they knew more about it, they might handle the whole thing differently.*

#### Win-Win-Win

One participant raised the notion of win-win-win, which will be shared in a quote a little later. However, that phrase became a powerful organizer for a third sub-theme in this theme of “Who HRD serves” which is focused on (a) multiple stakeholders and (b) multiple aims.

#### Multiple Stakeholders

Still yet there was another theme that emerged as a few people participating in this study made a plea for all of this talk about choosing either the organization or the individual as HRD’s primary client to stop. They said:

” *But it's the either/or stuff again that gets difficult for me.*

” *Well it goes back to, again, an issue that has been confronting the field...and I get irritated every time I see it when people get into the argument about whether HRD is performance or learning...well, it's just a dumb question to start with! But again it goes back to my perception of how much we are driven by either/or questions. Instead of trying to find an “and” question that helps us to embrace a larger and bigger piece of*

*what has the potential of impacting our lives in the positive way. Why do we ask the question—performance or learning? What's even driving that question? It makes no sense to me. So what I'm saying is that I have another whole set of values that I think are important that I wouldn't put into performance or learning, but I would put into a mission for HRD.*

First of all, some people pointed out, HRD actually serves many more than just two clients (the individual and/or the organization). One person pointed out that, at the very least, there are three stakeholders:

” *...there's at least a triadic relationship in any endeavor—the consultant is working for a client, but the beneficiary is somebody else. And so who do we serve. I mean if you come in for...if management asks you to come in and do something and it may have...it may force you to decide at some point are you making decisions for—based on the bidding for the win of the organization and at loss to the people. And sometimes you find situations where one will win at the expense of somebody else.*

Still another person saw the need for an even more expansive view of HRD's stakeholders:

” *The profession of HRD would be excellent if it recognized the importance of multiple stakeholders. That HRD serves a whole variety of stakeholders—not just management, not just the workers, not just the people sitting in training classes, not just the people who buy the training programs, but they serve a wider community...presumably they even serve the shareholders of the company in some form or another.*

Recognizing more stakeholders brings with it more responsibility to balance and work towards the mutual win of many. One person, in particular, recommended that was needed was a new focus on win-win-win:

” *You know, I've done a substantial amount of work with unions. And this whole idea of not a win-win situation but a "win-win-win" situation. Win for the organization. Win for the union. Win for the individual members. So how do you converge outcomes for, you know, these partnerships that are growing-up? How do you get win-win-win situations? Can you ever do that?*

” *...but the idea would be that it's not a hope, but it would be a declared intent with outcomes explicated of what those wins might be. That there could be benefits for win-win-win. And there may not be home runs every time. But what that means is*

*that there has to be a...given an economic stability, that that can happen.*

Two other participants talked about how focusing on multiple stakeholders rather than an “either/or” scenario also necessitated weighing conflicting goals more explicitly to achieve that win-win-win:

- ” *And, in addition, that there might be conflicting goals. Management may want this. Workers may want that and the community may want a third thing. And a really creative HRD practitioner in that new "U", would have to figure out what might be the best route to go here. Can we make this a win-win for all parties, rather than setting it up so that this is a winner and this person and this group is a loser? Is there some compromise position where everybody could win?*
- ” *I operate always with this sense of multiple stakeholders. Shareholders do have to be considered and that is appropriate, but they shouldn't be considered at the detriment of other major stakeholders.*

### Multiple Aims

Just as some advocated a new conception of multiple stakeholders, another person emphasized that the artificial choice between learning and performance was insufficient to guide the aims of HRD. This person said that HRD would be excellent when it:

- ” *...embraces multiple missions to include performance and learning (bold and underscored) but also integrity, work climate, diversity, globalization, peace and other social values.*

and discussed how HRD should honor multiple goals or outcomes:

- ” *So, you know, I've got all these other things that I think are important outcomes of good HRD work and until we can embrace all of them, we're not going to be an excellent field.*

This certainly indicates a move towards a more expansive notion of who HRD serves and what it does in the process.

### Society

A final sub-theme that emerged in this theme was focused on serving society. This came up in two quite distinct threads about (a) being connected to societal needs, and (b) actually conducting HRD practice in society. These are discussed below.

#### Connected to Society

Being grounded in a deeper connection to society and its needs was expressed in two ways. First, there was some hope from two participants that organizational efforts (and thus HRD efforts) would ultimately contribute to a better society:

- ” *It's not just to line IBM's pockets. It's that helping organizations perform what they do has societal effects—will make a better society. I'd like to think that that amount of effort stimulated the economy—helped people maintain jobs,*

*made people some money, bought some kids some college educations, kept some jobs here that might be in Burma, helped us make better microphones or electric blankets, led to better schools.*

- ” *There seems to be a connection between the 100 best companies to work for and the companies that are touted as highly successful. My sense is that the ones that—maybe not in all cases, but in many cases—the ones that support social responsibility, diversity, ethics in their business practices and so on are also the ones that are over the long-haul more profitable and effective in what they choose to do. That's what HRD should be supporting.*

Second, one person reflected on what role HRD needs to be playing in the broader sense of workforce issues in society. This person listed the following excellency:

- ” *HRD would be excellent if it was connected more to the broader sense of workforce development.*

Responding to a request of what that could mean for HRD, this person explained:

- ” *Workforce development for me is maybe thinking about the enterprise of, you know, preparing for work, responding to changes in work, and all the things that we talk about learning how to adapt ourselves personally for changes in our lives for work.*
- ” *...but from my perspective it's part of the larger entity. And I use the word enterprise, because I try to think about it more as a unitary thing. It's not one thing. It's all those things in some loose collaboration, confederation of activities that are becoming more and more articulated.*
- ” *An example would be HRD managers who are becoming involved in school-to-work programs because their organizations are participating in those kinds of things and so they're forced to confront some of the societal issues in that community and how they affect that organization. If we don't have the broader notion of where all this fits in then I think we're not better for it.*

#### HRD Working in Society

Another idea strongly advocated, by two people in particular, imagined a role for HRD that would remove it from an organization-only context and have its professionals more actively working in society. These people wondered whether HRD was becoming too narrowly-focused and constrained to only the organization-setting:

- ” *That led us to discuss why, after all these years, and this is one of my "the profession would be excellent issues", have we always defined ourselves within the context of organizations?*
- ” *As this other concept of workforce development has emerged.... it's made me think that HRD has a risk of being narrowly defined within organizational settings and not having as much of a societal focus that it probably...it should need and also probably will unavoidably merge to in the near future.*
- ” *Vocational education was the narrow focus that drove people...out of the field... (and into HRD) because it offered a greater, broader, more inclusive focus...a more attractive focus. And I have a feeling that HRD is beginning to feel the same things like Vocational Education felt maybe in the sixties—you know, the constraining elements of if we just focus ourselves at the organization level. There's a fear I guess, I don't know if this is true or not, but there could be a fear that we would be kind of cordoned-off—that we might be too narrowly considered in the organization.*

Instead one person speculated a more expansive role:

- ” *HRD would be excellent if it stood on it's own rather than being defined only within the organizational context. If you define yourself as an independent profession, then it allows you to start saying maybe one of our roles should be to work in the community or maybe one of our roles should be working with individuals.*

Part of the justification for thinking about serving society in a more active way was intimately related, this person thought, to the changing nature of work in the 1990s and predictions for work in the future:

- ” *If work is changing in time and place, so it's such that we don't work nine-to-five in an organization where the HRD person resides and provides learning experiences, then that alone should start to drive us towards a different kind of model of how we provide learning.*
- ” *And, it may be that we provide it more in the community, much like the traditional Adult Education model in a way. Only we provide it while I'm telecommuting—you know, I may be reading with my HRD counselor about what learning I need to have to help me grow or I may be going at lunch time to a local professional support group...that is meeting in my community, not meeting in my industry or my...because we're all working at home!*

- ” *But I do believe that there...again, if we have that core set of beliefs and we...in some way were around helping individuals reach their human potential, we could be doing that in an organization just as much as we could be doing that out in a community.*

Another person wondered what organizations would need from HRD as workforce demands change:

- ” *I think society will pass us by...that we would have a risk of being irrelevant to our organizations. Because while we might be effective in helping them change, we wouldn't be part of the larger strategic issues of getting the workforce as opposed, developing the workforce—of getting and transitioning in the workforce. And those are kind of big issues that maybe had vocational education overtones in the past.*

In that same vein, one person wondered with the changing world, how HRD professionals can differentiate what they do? For instance:

- ” *I did some pro-bono work for our town doing some strategic planning. Was I an Adult Educator or was I an HRD person? I was working in a community-setting, not a work/organization-setting, but I was doing strategic planning and vision and mission stuff. The point I'm making is that it doesn't matter in the end what hat I'm wearing, what more matters is the skills I'm utilizing to get the work done that needs to get done. And a lot of the difference between AdEd and HRD is the setting, not the skills. And for 30 years I've crossed back and forth.*

This same participant focused heavily on HRD doing more of their work in the community context—focusing on helping those in need.

- ” *If there truly is this gap between the haves and the have-nots that keeps widening and widening, what if we were to take on the role of what we were calling "community HRD"? Where we got out of the organization per se (or at least our only home wasn't the organization) and we actually somehow carved a role that allowed us to be in the community helping the have-nots reach their potential....because they're not being reached within the organization, except through very special programs hiring the homeless or...but they're few, very few and far between.*
- ” *Should HRD actually get into or start to take on some of the attributes of social activists? Kind of a social activist HRD person who would go into a community—and under-developed community—and through like the churches in the community,*



*through other community institutions, start to help people identify what they could be doing and how they could find more meaning in their lives and work and...*

Another person shared that OD consultants of today can use their methodologies for many ends and shared this story as an example of a societal-focused role for HRD:

” *Don Kohl is driven by using OD to solve national problems. He's mucking around in northern Ireland stuff. At the next OD Institute they're going to bring some people in from Yugoslavia and a Kosovo refuge...and he was pushing hard for the South Africa situation. And, you know, I have trouble with this sort of sole focus thing, but I absolutely applauded this, yeah, we have a role in HRD around peace.*

Of course, this is not without controversy. One person made an appeal for more involvement in the community and society, but also emphasized that this effort should be labeled what it is—social responsibility—and not HRD:

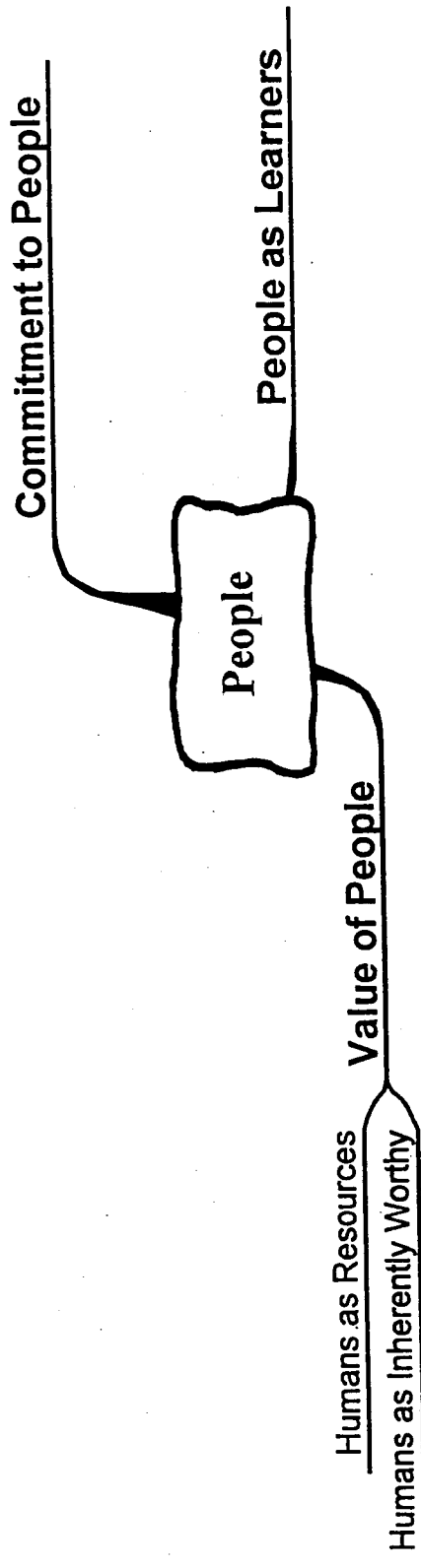
” *What it does exclude is development of the individual that does not support the mission of the organization. And I consciously exclude that. Let me take a contrived example, just to make a point? Let's say that I have workers who are doing basic manual kinds of tasks and they don't have a high school education. Now is it my job to get them all a GED even though they'll never use it on the job and it'll do nothing to improve the mission of the organization? Is it the HRD department's job to get them all GED?*

” *Well from a corporate or a social responsibility perspective, if the organization wants to be socially a good citizen—sure! But I would not say that we would be obligated to develop them just because they need to be developed. All right should they get a GED? Absolutely! That's why we have community colleges, technical colleges...we encourage and support that...but the distinction...and this is where the mission comes into play, all right? ...That's where the tough part comes in.*

### People as a Theme

As would most likely be expected, a study about beliefs underlying HRD would most likely uncover some beliefs about people. Indeed, a comparatively small theme did emerge as is overviewed in Figure 4.4. This theme includes three sub-themes: (a) commitment to people, (b) ideas on how people are valued in the context of human resource development, and (c) ideas about people as learners.

Figure 4.4. People as a Theme.



### Commitment to People

Although not talked about very much, there are traces of deep beliefs about people—things that could be key assumptions to potentially drive HRD practice. This was encapsulated by one participant who said simply that they had:

” *...a fundamental belief in individuals and a positive belief in individuals and their goodness and their potential.*

There was also some discussion from other participants about various characteristics that they ascribe to individuals. One example was comments made by two participants that characterized humans as social beings:

” *And one of the things is that we're social animals. That's an enduring truth and we learn from others along side each other. ... You can't e-mail a warm handshake.*

” *I think you ought to be part of something. That the whole notion of organizations...is you're part of some collective activity. It's bigger than you. That you have some sense of collegiality, you have some sense of cohort that you belong to something. It doesn't have to be necessarily analogous to family, but that it's belonging to something.*

Another participant talked about individuals and their belief in their motivations, especially as related to work:

” *If we believe, and I know this may sound really corny, but if we believe people want to do a good job and we treat them like they want to do a good job, maybe they'll just do a good job and they'll do what needs to get done.*

” *Right. If you're sick, you're sick. ...if they trust me about being sick, if I'm truly sick I'll stay out, and they even call and, you know, they might call and say how I'm doing, but I want to go back to work when I'm not sick because I know that I'm trusted and I know that I don't have to come up with ways to use my sick leave or sick leave becomes this tool to either manipulate or take advantage of or count.*

This was re-affirmed by another person interviewed for this study as they reflected on individuals and expectations:

” *...not afraid of the human being delivering. I don't think people need, in modern day life, they don't need a handout here. ...they can deliver. They don't need to have just the right to get this stuff. ... I'm very comfortable—I'm an advocate of that and I'm not afraid of it because I've seen time and time again that the thing about my core beliefs, I mean in human beings, pays off.*

Another participant in this study reflected on the changing nature of work in the 1990's and how individuals, then, are changing or not-changing their nature in relation:

” *I think the current mode of thinking is one of free agents and I think there is a large part of the population.... I know that there is some faction in the population that finds that desirable. That's the way it should be. What's wrong with that? You just go to the highest bidder. People do exercise what I call their free agency to decide for themselves what is most important and what they can do.*

As much as there were traces that could be interpreted as indicative of a deep belief of and commitment to individuals, it was not without limitations from some participants:

” *I mean so we have to look at the full range of options. There are good people and bad people. ... All you do is open up the newspaper. There are demented and distorted people out there to varying degrees and I put myself in there at times. I mean, we're not always clear thinking. OK? And there's a point when all of us go off the scale and we need to be pulled up short and that's part of HRD's job. ... At times, yeah, we need to tell people that they're not good enough. They're not smart enough. They haven't learned enough. They're not going to make it. That's the part that, you know, I mean that's when the pure...when the extreme humanists that want to get someone else another chance and another chance and another chance...at the same time the system is eroding.*

Along with this somewhat tempered belief in individuals also came some input from a few participants on the extent to which people and organizations “fit”:

” *'Cause I think that we get into the wrong boxes. I can be a humanist and the best thing I can do, and I do it all the time, is to help people get in another box. They're in the wrong box. It doesn't mean that you're not a good person. It doesn't mean that you're not a high potential...it's just that your...the features that you bring, the attributes you have are not a good fit. You know that's what systems theory would end up saying. I have talent attributes and I don't fit, and I go across the street to go...all of a sudden I'm a star. How is it that someone is a jerk on this side of the street and a star on the other side of the street? And so...we can actually help people get to better places and they might be outside the system that hosts us. I think it's very humane.*

” *And it's actually riskier than just giving people another chance...I mean, they may in fact, their life may be diminishing right in front of you. You give them another chance, when in*

*fact their going to fail cause the larger system is stacked against them and you get them over to another system and then they...I think it's more work and it's riskier. Yeah. You challenge people...you have to deal with that. And it comes out of your values, your mission, your definition about what you're about. If you're going to tell people they do have the expertise, you know, it's just like people that don't. You gotta know the difference.*

- ” *The more developed the individual, the more effective. Although there can be an issue of over-competence in the sense of any one person being over competent or over-developed for any specific position. What do we do with that? We, like good...if you believe in person-organization fit, than the organization is not going to want people that are overdeveloped for a specific position anyway, so they should be moving them upward or out. Or individuals should be asking to be moved up or out. It doesn't pay to have people overdeveloped and sitting in a position that they're bored in and they're going to be ineffective. I definitely believe in person-organization fit. But I don't believe in boxes.*

In yet another context, one participant talked about organization-person fit when faced with resistance to organizational change:

- ” *It's a contingent sort of thing. The key for me is if you've got a whole lot of people reacting to what you're doing in that way, you ought to look at what you're doing. They've got a lot more history with the organization, they know the job, and sometimes it might be wrong what you're trying to do. Given numbers, I would question the approach and try to listen to what they have to say. But if you've done all that and still have a problem, you move them out of way. They get left behind in some way.*

Here we see a high value on the people in terms of the knowledge they offer, as well as limitation to how much an organization should withstand.

#### People as Learners

There was also a theme that emerged and offered some insights about what participants think about people as learners and how they learn. First, were two ideas from participants about how development is central in peoples' lives:

- ” *I also think that learning and performing are critical aspects of being human. If you look at any infant, the infant is constantly learning and developing and performing in new and different ways. The only time in your life that you aren't learning and performing in really different ways is when you die, and maybe even at death you are learning something new...but I don't*

*know because I've not been there. So if you're interested in human beings, that's an important aspect of being human.*

- ” *I have a tough time believing that organizations care about the long term development of the individual. And I fundamentally believe that individuals have a long-term concern about their own long-term development. And I mean, I trust that. I do not trust the organization for that and I think that's a real stretch for organizations. I think they should worry about that, and do it, and I think that HRD ought to push on the organization to think more about that. But that's not handled well by the...I don't want to give that part of my life to an organization. And I won't give it over to HRD.*

A second set of ideas came from participants who discussed how people learn and learning processes. One person shared their idea about expectations and learning, advocating a more constructive approach to learning:

- ” *...and so you can certainly expect that of me, but you can't necessarily get it from me, because I have that kind of autonomy and every other human does, too. So, if you're in a management mode, you try to manage away that divergence. If you're in a learning mode, then that's a powerful tool to work with—now all I have to do is throw resources at you and you'll go learn on your own. You know, you will take charge and expend enormous energy learning if I create the opportunity for you.*
- ” *...or even Gilbert frankly. I mean, Gilbert started engineering human behavior. You know, that very metaphor tells you something about how they think people can be changed. And if you spend any time at all trying to change people...you know, I don't engineer well.*

Another participant built on this notion saying:

- ” *My own personal philosophy is one of, although I don't always apply it on myself, is one of providing as much independence as possible.*

Another set of ideas emerged that stressed experience and application as ideals for the learning process:

- ” *...what we say is that nature is the cruelest teacher—she gives the test first and the lesson after. And that's learning from experience, you know? You always get the trial-by-fire first and then you figure out what it meant and really, you're rationalizing it so.*

” *I'm not at all surprised however that we simply affirmed what everybody knows—that learning on-the-job in the workplace is the most potent force. ... much more so than any formal learning provided.*

Finally, one participant shared an important distinction that has already been pointed out earlier in this chapter when discussing the role of HRD, but is so intricately connected to learning that it must be shared here, too. That is, the important distinction that not all human learning is organizationally-related learning—as expressed in the following quote:

” *There is a way in which individual learning ought to be tied into organizational learning...AND all individual development is not organizational development.*

*...and I don't think it should be actually because I think it would be, you know, in some ways it's intrusive on the individual to claim that everything that he or she must learn can only be things that are instrumental for an organization. That really takes away from people as human beings.*

*But nonetheless, I think there is a way in which individual learning or a piece of what individuals learn can and should be more actively used by the organization in good sense with full and clear agreement by everybody. That's why we have a contract with individuals—that we want certain things that they bring to the party. And there ought to be some negotiation around what that is, and then people should be encouraged to learn those things that are valuable to the organization for that part of their life they're giving to the organization. So I think what organizational learning does is...well, I go back to Chris Argyris' early definition which is based more or less on John Dewey, that essentially says that people are appointed or annointed to learn on behalf of the organization.*

This powerful quote raises a few important issues for consideration: (a) the acknowledgement of humans as learning beings, (b) the idea of humans' choice to explicitly contract to learn on behalf of or to share learning with the organization, and (c) the delicate tension between how much individual and organizational learning should be linked and/or how they are related.

#### Value of People

One controversial issue that emerged during this study (and that mirrors dialogue in the wider HRD community) is how humans are valued. Here emerged two different ideas that were discreetly, but significantly different. The question is whether the HRD profession views humans as inherently worthy versus worthy as human resources?

### Humans as Resources

There was talk about how humans should be valued in organizations—for all that they bring and what they contribute to organizational success. In this view, the individual is portrayed as a resource, such as in the following quotes:

- ” *the people in organizations, in particularly the knowledge that those people have, and particularly in today's world, is one of the primary, if not the most important contributors to success organizations today. It's at least one of the most important.*
- ” *Expertise is a combination of knowledge and experience. Now if expertise...if we believe that organizations are human-made entities that rely on human expertise in order to establish and achieve their goals, then expertise is at the essence of the life of the organization.*

Here the emphasis is on building the business-case for valuing and investing in human resources and the development of people.

### Humans as Inherently Worthy

Alternatively, a second view emerged that quite explicitly objects to even the idea of humans as resources:

- ” *...the humans are there to be used as a resource—now I say, well, that's not the case, humans are there for their own value! Well, geez, the person who would talk-up the performance view and say they're only of value if they contribute to the bottom line. So if you'd said we're dealing with human resources, that term has spawned into some disrepute recently—the human resource part. It tends to dehumanize people to talk about them as a resource.*

Another participant reflected that classifying humans as resources has never captured the essence of the value of people:

- ” *...we could go into the knowledge workers and all that sort of stuff, but that's not for me the essence. ... I hold a high value for individuals, and I can't separate that in organizations or outside of organizations.*
- ” *I think the arguments are there and they're all the wrong arguments. They're manipulative arguments. That's why it's coming out of economics. You know, their whole language—like I used earlier the term “intellectual capital”, “human resources”—now those are all economic terms.*
- ” *I don't believe that we're seeing organizations putting more importance on humans because all of a sudden they've discovered that humans are important. I think what's happened is they're recognizing that as we move out of the manufacturing climate into an intellectual climate that the only*



*people with intellect are humans. So humans become their product, they become their inventory, they become... what are some other economic terms... their assets.*

- ” *All terms that have nothing to do with values that I guess I would hold about humans. They're only important now because they need them for business success. My value system says humans are important because that's what the world is made of—of humans. That's just at the core of life. That's my teleos.*

### Work as a Theme

One of the most astounding things to report is actually how *little* work was discussed during the interviews conducted for this study. A more in-depth analysis of this follows in Chapter Five, however Figure 4.5 demonstrates how very little was said about this topic.

#### Meaning of Work

One participant talked extensively about the idea that work can and should be:

- ” *...inherently fulfilling for the right reasons, you know. It doesn't have to be something that you don't want to do.*
- ” *I've been collecting quotes and there's a quote from Martin Luther King...if you're a street sweeper, be the greatest, be the Beethoven of street sweeper, be the Michelangelo of street sweepers—because what you do, no matter what you do, you could do it in a way that's worthwhile and meaningful. ...And there've been studies like Csikszentmihalyi's studies about “flow”—there are street sweepers that have tremendous meaning in their work because they believe in what they're doing.*

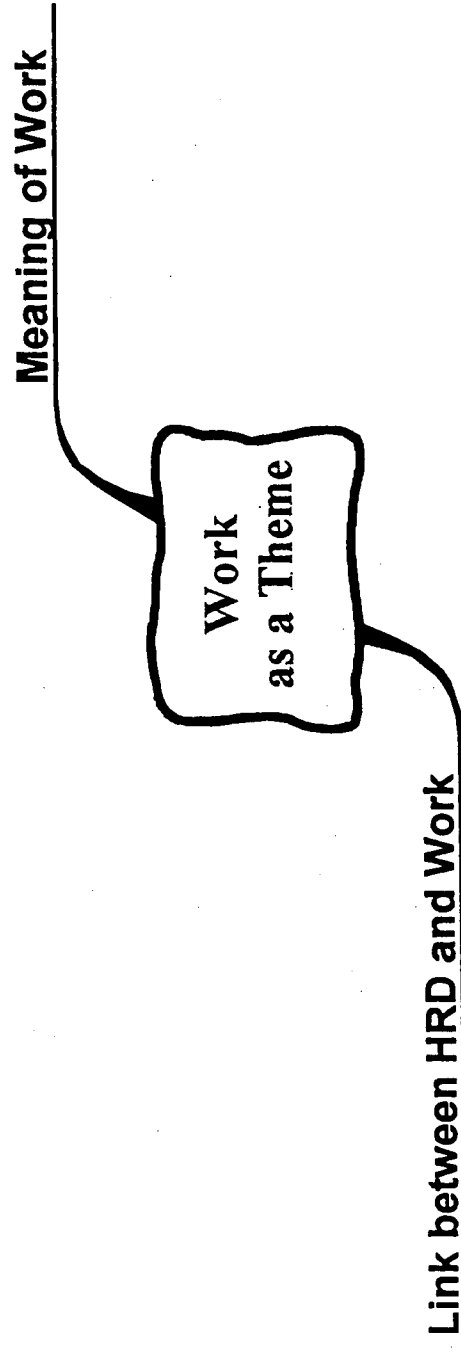
Here there emerges some assumptions about how work should be something that individuals can believe in, and find purpose and meaning in. This was important to this study participant—for spiritual as well as practical reasons:

- ” *...if you truly have a feeling—a meaning and a purpose in your work—then maybe other things kind of roll off your back. The bureaucracy may exist, but somehow it isn't as oppressive because the job itself and the work itself and the way I'm treated as a human being within the bureaucracy is still such that it allows me the freedom and the autonomy.*

This person was also cognizant that there are many people in the world who do not find meaning in their work. However, it was felt that this was an area in which society (and HRD?) needed to take some responsibility:

- ” *The people who punch the clocks—I think we socialize those people into believing that the best they can hope for is to just*

Figure 4.5. Work as a Theme.



*make a little money, to go home and buy a TV and be able to watch it, and have some beer and go to sleep. We socialize people into that. We have not helped people truly understand that they could have meaning in their work, number one. Number two, there's eighty percent of the people supposedly, according to several studies, that are unhappy at work to one extent or another. Again, I think we've made work and jobs, so oppressive that people don't know how to find the meaning. It's like it's this hidden gold mine that people don't even know exists underneath all the oppression and all the stress that they have to endure. ... And then there are the third group...I've met people who truly say "I have no interest in this particular job other than the money it gives me to do other things that I find meaningful". ... But the point is there are people that either choose or are forced into situations where they don't have meaning at work and maybe they still look for meaning in other ways.*

#### The Link between HRD and Work

The link between HRD and work was actually brought up explicitly during interviews only once by one participant, who placed HRD in the context of a broader notion of workforce development, which was characterized in the following quote:

” *Workforce development for me is maybe thinking about the enterprise of...you know, preparing for work, responding to changes in work, and all the things that we talk about learning and how to adapt ourselves personally for changes in our lives for work.*

This person saw HRD as part of a loose collaboration of activities that focuses on development for and related to work.

During later stages of data collection when it became clear that work was not being surfaced, the researcher probed the topic and two participants did reflect on HRD and work. One person who had “grown-up” in Adult Education discussed how the focus on work in HRD was a key attractor:

- ” *The central focus of a lot of my own research and practice is around work, and around the meaning of work, and what happens to people when they work, and, you know, how they can create optimal advantage individually and organizationally or collectively in groups from work. So I think that's probably why and what pulled me.*
- ” *I think that adult educators who are more involved in the HR area, even if they keep a foot in both doors, ultimately are looking at those aspects of learning that pretty much happen within organizations and within work life.*

- ” *We know without being aware that that's not the only part that human beings have, you know, but that that's...whereas I think more of the classic Adult Education literature will look at individual development and individual fulfillment and individual change that might or might not happen within the organization. So the whole idea of lifelong learning certainly can include and acknowledges that a lot of learning is driven by career shifts and career needs etc..., but the discipline as a whole looks more towards, you know, fulfillment of and meeting of purposes that are not, necessarily work-related.*

On the other hand, another person interviewed for this study wasn't quite so confident in linking HRD to work:

- ” *I think it is the link to work...but even to me that blurs. I could go to a local junior college and take a class on supervisory skills—is that Adult Ed or HRD? I don't know if its all that important when it comes down to it.*

### Organizations as a Theme

Traditionally many in HRD have considered it to be a profession which is conducted in some kind of organizational setting, rather than a school-based setting. The issue of organizations did arise in this study, as participants shared views about (a) HRD in organizations, (b) what organizations are and what role they play, and (c) how organizations should be treating people. An overview of this theme is provided in Figure 4.6.

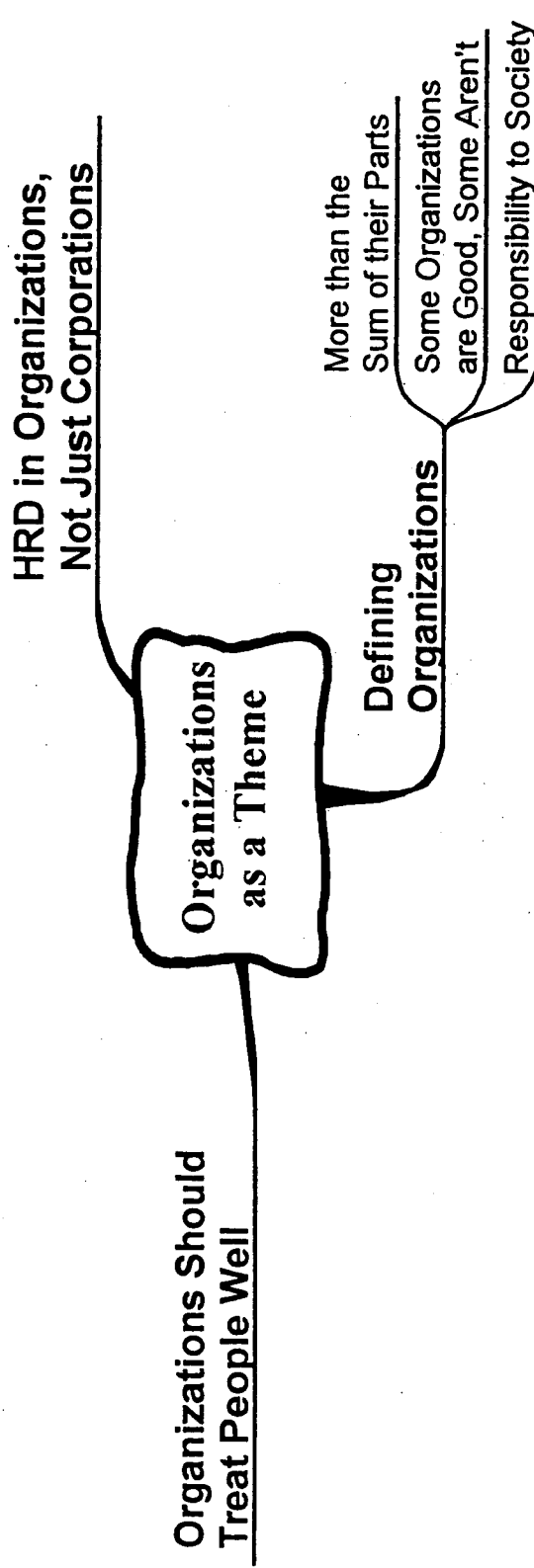
#### HRD in Organizations, Not Just Corporations

As was discussed above in the theme about who/what HRD serves, there has emerged during this study a rather tight link between HRD and organizations, although certainly with some exceptions that have also been discussed. This will not be rehashed here. However, it should be noted going into this section that many interviewed for this study strongly identified the organization as the client and emphasized system or mission intent. On the issue of organizations, though, there was less clarity about what organizations are and how they are defined.

The word “organization” according to a few participants, has recently begun to be a code word for “corporation”. There was a strong attempt by some participants to react to this. One person talked about how the corporate model has become too dominant in HRD and made a plea for the profession to not be constrained to the corporate-setting as it's only (or even central) setting:

- ” *Right now one of the issues that's fermenting is whether the field should be identified exclusively with corporations and to me that's a pretty clear answer. My work...I've worked in University and a University is not corporation and I think Human Resource Development goes there as well as any place else. And so I do not necessarily like the criteria of a*

Figure 4.6. Organizations as a Theme.



*corporate setting to govern the definition of Human Resource Development and what it's supposed to do.*

- ” *But, nevertheless, it still means we're dealing with some kind of people in a type of organized setting. That is the concept.*
- ” *I don't want the field to be defined by the corporate venue exclusively. That is not Human Resource Development. That is just one of the places where you do your practice.*
- ” *... Practitioners as well as academicians, recognize that the term "organization" means something more than the "business". There are hundreds of thousands of organizations that are not businesses, but we allow the business paradigm to influence this unnecessarily. That doesn't mean that businesses aren't organizations, it just means that they're not exclusively. ... And HRD is applicable to all of those, so you don't take a*
- ” *model then that restricts what you're doing to one type of organization...or one type of goal.*

It is evident that this person defined HRD as taking place in some kind of organized-setting, while also lobbying for HRD to not be associated only with a corporate setting.

Another person strongly reacted to the tendency of some in the field (like the person above) to accuse others of equating “organization” and “corporation”:

- ” *In HRD we are part of some system that sponsors what we do. And I take a fairly broad view—and that's one reason I don't like to use the term organization. ... I hate to talk about the organizational-level of performance anymore because organization connotes...well, to many that means “corporate”. Even more flexibly it's non-profits and government, but it still bounds us into bureaucratic kinds of organizations.*
- ” *So I just prefer to talk about mission—that entities are systems that have a mission and if we're in those entities or systems and developing people for those entities or those systems then, you know, our job is to help them accomplish that mission. And that mission could be lives saved, it could be dollars, or whatever.*
- ” *But I don't see a fundamental difference in developing human resources within a non-profit, or a government entity, then a corporate entity. They all have a purpose, a mission, they define it some way. And for that matter one can even...stretch into communities a little bit. Any type of system or entity has a purpose, or at least for HRD, those are the ones that we work with.*

- ” *And so that's why I've tried to get away from talking about organizations and to just talk about a mission-level of outcomes, so that we're not bound up in this corporate connotation, even though that's where we practice quite a bit.*

A few other participants also reiterated the suggestion forwarded in the above quote to define “organization” more broadly in many different contexts and to accomplish many different goals:

- ” *I think that any organization is an organization where you can see HRD operate...*
- ” *But I think a lot of what it is that human resource people think about...do have relevance in almost any organization.*
- ” *...that mission could vary enormously.*

So in the above discussion there are some threads that define “organization”. Loosely summarizing, “organization” is characterized as some kind of organized-setting that is trying to achieve some kind of goal/mission. In fact one person actually offered a definition of organization as being:

- ” *that's a group of people who are brought together to accomplish goals.*

#### Definition of Organizations

Beyond the rather strong discussion above about defining organizations more broadly than just corporations, there was little discussion that helped to further define what an organization is or is not. The exceptions were a few focused discussions about specific issues.

#### More than the Sum of Their Parts

One issue was the introduction of what is characterized by one participant as the age-old debate as to whether an organization is a collection of individuals or something more than the sum of its individuals:

- ” *we had this debate month after month...what (some) will say is that the organization is a collection of individuals...well, there's no such thing as an organization, it's only individuals. Because that's the debate we get all the time around the learning organization...that, you know, to try to illustrate to people that there are systems that can persist beyond you leaving the firm. ... You know, anyone who has been in a high performing group where the team consciousness has evolved, and a lot of people have not, but anyone who's been in a setting like that where they've been part of something that was suddenly bigger than them, knows that there's something more.*

Another participant in this study also commented on this issue:

- ” *At the systems level, you need individuals interacting to make a system, and an organization is ultimately a system. I agree*

*with Argyris' and Schon's view that essentially if you want to influence a system you still have to work through people in one way or another. People are very much involved.*

- ” *But an organization—as a community, people interacting—there's less attention that you might pay to an individual person and what they're thinking or feeling even though that's part of the whole thing, you would look at system dynamics among the different pieces of it.*

What is important to note, and a fitting end to this section, is that the person who brought up this debate pointed out that this view of organizations may differentiate HRD from other disciplines like Psychology or Adult Education.

#### Some Organizations are Good, Some Aren't

A few people wanted to discuss how organizations are characterized—almost in what seemed to be a defense of organizations and how they are sometimes characterized negatively both in the profession as well as in HRD-related professions:

- ” *We have to look at the full range of options. There are good people and bad people. There are good organizations and bad ones, you know, and everything in between.*

Another person shared that their experience with organizations was that organizations and its leaders wanted to do the “right” things most of the time:

- ” *I will tell you that if I worked in organizations I often will ask the question, you know, “are there some things that you do just because they're the right things to do?”. They will always say yes. Always! So they understand that. We aren't dealing with bad, amoral...executives. We're not dealing with people who have no values. They do. They understand what it means. ... I've never seen anyone argue that people...now does that mean they always act morally? No, we all act immorally in some ways. It doesn't mean that we don't know what we should be doing and it also doesn't mean that we can't grow to an understanding of doing things differently. That's our role.*

This last quote also provides a clue to yet another important idea that emerged in this study. A few participants reflected that it is HRD's tolerance of the imperfections of organizations and its capacity to work on change from within that differentiates it from other disciplines. The two quotes that spurred this idea follow:

- ” *So I mean there are a lot of things I don't like about how organizations function. And that's why I'm in OD—is to help them do that better.*
- ” *...yes, they are sometimes doing things that beat people up. More often than not they have or are being beaten-up themselves. And if no one is there trying to help them sort of get vision on what they're doing, and also get tools to do less*



*harm...you know maybe they can't do no harm because they're already in a sick system. Some of these places are worse than ever, but somehow somebody's got to give them a way to both survive, because I don't think they should leave their families foodless either.*

Another person commented in this same vein. When asked whether HRD had a role in helping “sick” organizations to get better, the person responded:

” *Of course! And it has an even more important role in helping them to not even get sick.*

While yet another person was in concert with this idea, they were also quick to point out that HRD should be careful to not assume that all “sick” systems must be saved:

” *So we gotta...so do we have the tools to make it better or is it just beyond us? Or do we just let it go? I think at times we have to let it go.*

### Responsibility to Society

A few participants also shared ideas on the role that organizations play. One person discussed how important organizations are in helping people to improve people's lives and the human condition:

” *There are lots of organizations around who make life 'lots better—not just for their employees, but for their customers. You know, companies provide goods that people demand. That's a good purpose. And companies provide economic well-being to their employees. That's a good purpose. Companies provide long term, life-long retirement opportunities for employees. That's a good purpose. There are many good purposes for organizations. I'm not at any level anti-organization. But, there are people in our field who are and there are a lot of people in this world who are. I'm not one of them. ... Organizations for me are important in helping individuals achieve their purpose in life.*

Later this same person reemphasized this role while also noting that many organizations today do not fulfill this important role:

” *The role of the organization is, in the ideal context, to improve the human condition. I think that we have demonized the organization so that it improves the condition of some while destroying the condition of others. And I think that's an inappropriate application of organization theory. But it can happen...anything we can do we can do well and do poorly.*

Yet another person called for organizations to enhance their role in the bettering of society in a way that truly connects organizations with their communities:

” *... reaching out to the communities. Not in a social responsibility sort of way, which I applaud and support, don't*

*get me wrong, but in the truly connecting way of saying the more I help people in the community grow and develop the more they may come into my organization and help me grow and develop.*

On the flip side, one participant talked about how challenging it is for organizations to serve that critical role in society as well as to be more humanistic in nature in the face of economic realities:

- ” *...it's probably true that their survival is more tenuous than ours. So it may be a little harder for them to be humanistic. They have shareholders, they have targets, they have...and so to say that we're caring people, that we're taking care of our own, is maybe less viable there than it is for us.*
- ” *But I don't see that as totally absent. I think we're seeing that some places with very humane...family friendly workplaces or something. That's a bit of a concession. Probably you wouldn't have to do that in many organizations—that's probably a productivity and profitability loser in some ways. And you might run the... you can't keep these people, you can't attract them...but still I think that there's some concession there to say that this isn't just about a competitive profitability standpoint. We want to make attractive places and I think people will be increasingly drawn to that. ... You don't necessarily have to optimize around performance all the time. I think people would acknowledge that.*

#### Organizations Should Treat People Well

For some interviewed for this study, it was vitally important that the organization treat people well. What it means to treat people well varies, of course, but the following quote is representative of this deep interest in the well-being of the individual:

- ” *Human Resource Development starts with the word "human" and, in the ideal world, if organizations were functioning in a healthy way, they would put the needs of people first. And they would put the needs of the bulk of people first, not only the needs of the person at the top or the shareholder—they would have a systemic view of what is good for people.*

Other people talked about how an organization should care for the people that work in it. In a personal reflection, one participant shared:

- ” *...if I believe the organization is not really caring and supporting the people, then I don't know if I can live within that organization. I don't know if I could....*

Another person told a story of an ineffective employee orientation and its failure to send a clear message to employees about how they are cared about and valued:

” *And I think that what I would like to see is to have people think about how what you do in a small little training room...new employee orientation, for instance, I think is the most important thing that people did. It's your organizational socialization tool. So if you think that way, you are not going sit there and just fritter away, like they do now, they watch safety video. ... But people would not do that if they realized that that is sending a tremendous message about whether the organization is going to take care of you or think about you in any important way.*

One participant talked about how organizations should foster a sense of purpose and meaning in individuals, while also affording people the freedom and autonomy they deserve:

” *...if you truly have a feeling, a meaning and a purpose in your work, then maybe other things kind of roll off your back. The bureaucracy may exist, but somehow it isn't as oppressive because the job itself and the work itself, the way I'm treated as a human being within the bureaucracy is still such that it allows me the freedom and the autonomy...*

Another participant elaborated on this sense of purpose and meaning as they envisioned a role that organizations can play in helping people to connect to something that is bigger than themselves:

” *I think that my nirvana would be that organizations are more than just cogs and parts, that you belong to something. ... I would hope that's what we strive for in organizations—is wanting to connect, to have some institutional connection as opposed to just be a free agent.*

For one person, this idea of treating people well was as simple as this lesson—organizations should treat people as they wish to be treated. This person offered the example of a company that was recently showcased in a news magazine for its excellent business practices:

” *...and they run the company without any....you know, they didn't sit down and read a lot of management books or books on meaning of work or spirituality, or the latest leadership. All they did was operate on the basis of what they believed they would like to be...they would like to treat employees the way they would like to be treated basically. ....What it seems they've done is said “let's not have rules governing everything.”*

Another characteristic of treating people well was expressed by one person as they thought about building a healthy culture where:

- ” *...it's OK to bring things up....and a place and structure and system whereby when we move...well, we have opportunities to stop and think about that stuff as we frame or reinterpret the new policies, procedures, and practices.*

Finally, the person who forwarded the notion of “improving the human condition” was asked what that might look like. They responded:

- ” *It would mean that people have fun at work. It would mean that everyone would have a livable wage. It would mean that people would be allowed to grow and develop in their jobs. It would mean that there would be greater equity within the work place.*

### HRD Interventions as a Theme

The work of HRD gets done through interventions. While this was not discussed extensively during this study, there were some ideas about interventions to explore. These are introduced in Figure 4.7.

#### Characteristics of Effective HRD Interventions

The results of this study show a few clear ideas about what makes for good HRD interventions. Four characteristics specifically were identified from the interview data.

#### Systems Interventions

The first characteristic that emerged was that an HRD intervention should be, according to one participant:

- ” *more or less a systems intervention.*

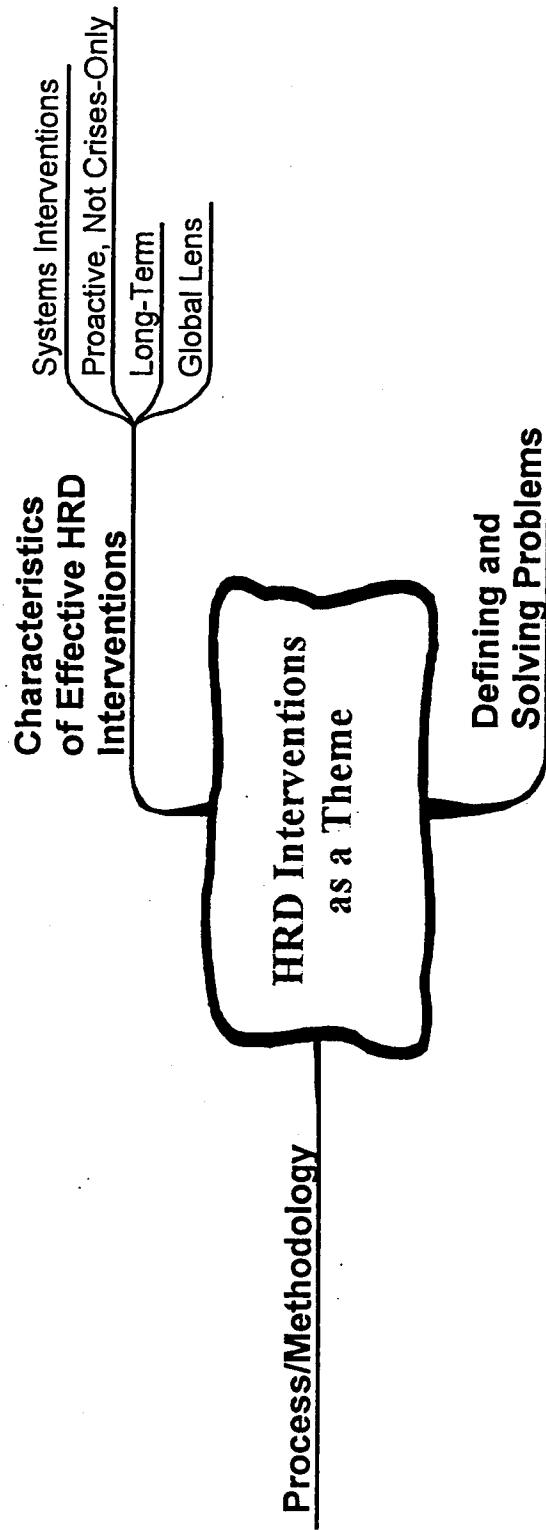
That is, HRD should approach the presenting problem with a systems point of view—an understanding of the system and how the target of intervention is related to other parts of the organization. Or, as another participant discussed:

- ” *HRD people have to understand that what they're doing, they wouldn't just be looking locally at one part of it, but would be trying to ferret out what are the linkages, what other stakeholders and factors need to be taken into consideration, that would be affecting the particular thing that they're looking at.*

This was reiterated by another participant that described how HRD work must tend to system dynamics even more so than any one individual:

- ” *At the systems level, you need individuals interacting to make a system, and an organization is ultimately a system. I agree with Argyris' and Schon's view that essentially if you want to influence a system you still have to work through people in one way or another. People are very much involved.*
- ” *But an organization—as a community, people interacting—there's less attention that you might pay to an individual person and what they're thinking or feeling even though that's part of*

Figure 4.7. HRD Interventions as a Theme.



” *the whole thing, you would look at system dynamics among the different pieces of it.*

While, as one person pointed out, interventions...

” *probably end up being something that is sort of locally negotiated...*

There does seem to be an emphasis on interventions being based in some kind of systems understanding and impact. This is reinforced in this final quote:

” *...it's sort of like some people are very conscious about trying to make individual, process, and organization separate. I don't have any need to do that. In fact, I don't know how you can do that. For me they are all one of the same system...*

### Proactive, Not Crises-Only

One participant listed the following excellency that illuminates a strong belief about what kind of interventions HRD professionals should be implementing:

” *The profession of HRD will be excellent in all ways when HRD is seen as an on-going activity, not just a crises-initiated activity.*

When asked to elaborate, this person went on to say:

” *Well, all of the...let me speak specifically to OD...for all the rhetoric we have in OD around talking from changing from a medical model—what I still see in practice is the medical model. When the organization is sick, they call on someone to help them. Very, very little...I even see it in training. Where's the drive for training today? You see it around computers, we see it around diversity, we see it around sexual harassment—all of which are crises-driven. None of them are there because things are going well. None of them are there to build or develop or enhance the potential that's already there. ... We're never going to be able to deliver what we can deliver as long as we're seen as going in there after the fact*

Being relegated as a resource to serve organizations or people in a crises-capacity only is not the ideal for this participant. Instead, HRD:

” *...if it's viewed as an on-going activity, would be balanced in identifying, affirming and celebrating what's going well and in identifying, working with, and improving the things that aren't going well. That for me is the balance I'm looking for. I don't think we should be problem-focused..., nor do I think we should close our eyes and pretend that problems that are there aren't there.*

In this view, too, then (and in the ideal) there would be much less crises actually happening. This person went on further to explain:

- ” *Crises come because of lack of planning. Crises come because of not having laid the appropriate foundation or not anticipating something that's coming. That doesn't mean that some problems aren't going to be bigger than others, but it will all be anticipated, it will be planned, we'll have done scenario planning, we will have done all the stuff that's out there and available to us as tool, we won't have crises.*

Extending this idea of being proactive even further, one participant envisioned the potential for HRD to become:

- ” *...more a part of how they do business....when you start to see HRD being done as the way business is done and not being done by HRD professionals. That may be another indication of excellence.*

#### Long-Term

One participant interviewed for this study made a case for HRD to focus on long-term impact of interventions:

- ” *There is nothing that will work in the short-term. That's what we know from our research—is that nothing will work in the short-term, that nothing's easy, nothing's localized, it all has to be system-wide and has to be long-term. ... I like to use CQI...well, we know from the research that if companies will stay with it for three years, they start to get proven results. Anything under three years, in fact, it can have the opposite impact, it can have a negative impact. But a lot of companies aren't...*

#### Global Lens

A final characteristic of effective HRD interventions that was brought up by two different participants had to do with ensuring that HRD continually expand its views to include and attend to global differences. One person said that the profession of HRD would be excellent when:

- ” *it considered cultures other than the US culture.*

This participant went on to say:

- ” *We need to consider, if we aren't already, cultures other than US culture and first-world countries. That would enrich the field. I think there needs to be an exchange of ideas theory, research, practice. Those ideas are somewhat different in other cultures and places.*

Another participant also discussed this issue. They said:

- ” *I mean it's a framing way of thinking about things. And so when we think about human resource development practices we're often just totally unaware of how other people in other parts of the world understand even the function that we might*

*be talking about creating a practice for, let alone the ramifications of the practice or the policy or the procedure. Or, you know, or if you take it over to the theory side...the research and theory...because the way we frame it, in and of itself, says something about how we understand the issue. And we usually understand the issue more from...within-culture perspective as opposed to a cross-culture perspective.*

#### Defining and Solving Problems

HRD was characterized by a few interviewed for this study as being able to help solve problems:

” *Companies need problem solvers, I think. The problems for the top people are more complex than ever, they need help. So if you're not helping, then you get outsourced or marginalized or you get downsized cause you're not helping. I mean, if all you're doing is reacting, a supplier of something, then you can buy that externally. It's cheaper. You don't have the overhead of worrying about giving these people an office...or when you don't need it any more, you get rid of it.*

Helping to define gaps (between actual versus desired), for instance, was cited as a common part of most HRD interventions:

” *Most people would agree that there's a gap analysis in most of these frameworks—somewhere you look at gaps. Some of the models that I use, I think, deliberately try to work at multiple levels—individuals, group, and organizational levels—and this provides an opportunity to have some real impact.*

One of the most powerful ways that HRD can intervene in this area is to be excellent problem-definers, as was called for by one participant:

” *Well, I think, mostly it cuts out garbage. I mean, you don't put in spark plugs when you needed a muffler, you know, and we've all done that, we've thrown things at problems and didn't define them right...so you have a higher hit rate on effectiveness and efficiency.*

*Our core process isn't...we claim it to be a problem-defining, problem-solving method...but it's not. It's really an intervention and we apply intervention. Someone else defines the problem. So as a field, beyond the research, we need to have people that are good problem definers. And I think that's what organizations want. I think right now we're being asked to do that more than we're willing and capable of doing. So, I think our field needs to think of itself as a problem-definers—as our core process being a problem-defining, problem-solving method.*



The emphasis for this person as they elaborated on this idea further was on HRD focusing more on defining problems and less on solving ill-defined problems and/or reacting:

” *And so they're at least on a rigorous problem-defining, problem-solving mode. I think that there are at least good problem-assignors, good problem-solvers—and that's very different than just reacting. You get a lot of reactors.*

The above quote could be interpreted as placing a heavy emphasis on enhanced competency in problem-defining. It is unclear from this data the extent to which that expertise should be held by the HRD professional and offered to the client versus a more collaboratively-based model that was suggested by other participants of the study. Two participants discussed the issue of problem-defining and stressed collaboration:

” *It became very clear in a number of the places that I worked that the real answers to improving people's lives couldn't be resolved unless people who were involved in one way in the problem, got involved in the solution. So, you know, on the one hand it's something that is, I think, actually does contribute to a better product—if you get people collaboratively working together and thinking through issues that pertain to their problems.*

” *...around problem-solving versus problem-framing...so I think that what you want to do is, from a global point of view, ...is to be conscious that when you're entering (especially when you're entering into something that has the slightest opportunity to be not routine, and a lot of things are not routine in this day and age), that you consciously provide a forum and vehicles by which you can get different points of view out on the table, different understandings...that you don't take for granted that you know what it is, but you create a process by which you can explore what it is.*

Yet another participant called for HRD to solve problems the way that clients define them:

” *A helper is one who looks at your problems and assists you in solving the problems the way you're defining them. The way you can see them, helps you define the problem. In a non-helping relationship, you become directive. You decide what the person's qualities are. You specify how they're to be corrected in advance and then you impose that on the other person.*

It is unclear at this point how subtle or prominent these different approaches may be in the practice of HRD, but they should be explored more in the future to see how it impacts various models and approaches to problem-solving.

Finally, building on this notion of problem-solving, there were a few random ideas that were raised about ethical issues associated with serving in this problem-defining/problem-solving capacity. For instance, there was talk of how HRD professionals must take steps to ensure a just relationship between helper and helpee. Some of the things that were offered as qualities this relationship was that it was based on explicitness as well as an acknowledged and felt need:

- ” *...in any good helping relationship people ask for help. They want it in some way. It makes it very, very difficult when you have a group of people in a mandatory training session. You treat that very differently and very sensitively...a really seasoned trainer will go into a situation like that and they will turn it around in the first hour. I've seen it. Because they know how to take people who don't want to be there and agree with them to help...to make it clear that this was an unfair, unethical thing and I know that...they don't pretend, they don't, you know, the novice will go in and sort of try to make it better somehow, you know.*

Other things that were brought up were how an HRD professional should know the bounds of their competence and not practice outside of these limits, and should not foster over-dependence in the relationship.

#### Process/Methodology

There was also some talk in this study about the need for HRD to have systematic ways to conduct their work—processes or methodologies that work. One person emphasized the need for this as they assessed the lack of expertise and consistency in the profession:

- ” *...they're not schooled...they're not trained...they're not certified in the process—they're subject matter experts. But they know how to make an insurance sale or make a BLT sandwich or something, and all of a sudden they're the HRD person. They don't have a process...they don't have a systematic way of doing their work.*
- ” *...And so if the organizing system, the host system, or the HRD function in the organization doesn't demand that this is the way we do our work, then you can have ten, twelve people working in the same work group in the same company all working with internal clients, following different processes. And so then the clients have no idea what's going...I mean, it's a zoo...and it makes the function impotent in the organization.*
- ” *Be like every time you want to deal with an accounting problem, every accountant you dealt with does it differently! And so, I mean, it doesn't mean that there is one right way, but there are ways that are dumb and there are ways that are OK, and they can be worded in general enough terms that people*

*use the same common language so they can work together as a team and they can work with their organization with some coherence.*

- ” *And we don't have that...we don't have that. And I think it's absolutely insane! And I think it comes down to some of this clear stuff about our beliefs, our definitions, our...what our core values are, our core methodologies, and if you don't ever articulate all this you can live with all these inconsistencies.*

This person was also clear to note that having systematic ways of doing HRD work does not mean having only one way:

- ” *there are rival processes, there's not one way to do accounting, there's not one way to do a medical procedure. I mean, there's all kinds of ways.*

Surprisingly, though, it is important to note that throughout this study there was only one methodology consistently put forward as a key methodology for HRD—Action Research. It was suggested as an excellency by one participant:

- ” *...if action research were more accepted in our profession and if that were positioned in a way and done in a way that helps to really build the links between a good theory and good practice.*

Other participants, too, outlined action research as their core processes:

- ” *On an ongoing basis we are continuing to assess the state of the organization, helping the organization do action planning, we're feeding it back to the organization. We are implementing the action plans. We are evaluating the action plans. Does this sound familiar? At this point I don't know a better model for OD. So again I wouldn't say it's the ultimate model, but I don't know anything better.*

Furthermore, one participant emphasized that a framework such as action research is a powerful methodology for any kind of organizational problem—not just those that are human resource related:

- ” *...it's problems are, you know, they're at various levels. Some of them might be whole systems. Some of them might be on...but that's the way it is. And that's very different than saying I do training or I do OD. I mean, it doesn't ring in the same way.*
- ” *So if it's marketing, for example, if you only go in with OD, it's not going to work. But I would argue if you only go with marketers, it's not going to work. What's going work? It's going to work with a lot of people from a lot of perspectives using tools that are appropriate to the question being asked.*

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Chapter Four reported the themes that emerged after an intensive analysis of the data, with an emphasis on hearing the voices of the participants of the study through excerpted quotes from actual interview transcripts. Special care was taken in that chapter to minimize researcher bias and report as much of the participants' voices as possible. This chapter focuses on the interpretation and analysis of the data and is divided into two parts. The first part provides additional in-depth analysis and discussion of the themes, and part two of this chapter concludes this research study.

### Summary and Analysis of Each Theme

This first part of this chapter is strongly interpretive in that it features discussion about the findings of this study. Specifically, it provides three things for each theme:

1. An in-depth summary of the results reported in Chapter Four;
2. An analysis of all sub-themes discussed in that section—focusing strongly on (a) similarities and differences that can be identified amongst beliefs, and (b) key issues or questions that are raised by findings reported in that section. These are introduced at the beginning of the section discussing each theme in a simple table format.
3. Identification of specific belief statements, interpreted from the findings reported in Chapter 4. These are separated from the text of Chapter 5, in boxes, and bulleted. For example:

- This is an example of a specific belief statement interpreted from results reported in Chapter Four.

The final section of part one of this chapter provides an overall analysis of the themes.

### Role of HRD as a Theme

An analysis of this theme reveals many important ideas that participants of this study shared in common, and also identifies points where the participants diverged. Table 5.1 introduces these similarities and differences, and the discussion that follows elaborates on these points.

### HRD as a Helping Profession

Summary. The idea that HRD has a role as a helper was a powerful theme that emerged. Helper was characterized in two ways. First, was the idea that HRD professionals are facilitators and serve a facilitative role. Second, was the idea that HRD is a profession that helps—that helps to make things better and to improve things. This spirit of improvement was clear in almost every conception of HRD and the issues related to HRD that were raised during this study.

- HRD is a helping profession dedicated to facilitating improvement.

Table 5.1. Role of HRD as a Theme: Similarities and Differences

<b>Role of HRD as a Theme</b>	
<b>Similarities among Scholarly Leaders</b>	<b>Differences among Scholarly Leaders</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping and facilitating are central</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who to help? With what? How?</li> <li>• What does it really mean to be a “helping profession”?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning is at the heart of HRD</li> <li>• Change as a learning process</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning at multiple levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Idea of learning at multiple levels is contradicted by later conversation questioning extent to which HRD should reach beyond individual-level</li> <li>• Heavy focus during interviews on the individual</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both learning and performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritization between learning and performance</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong commitment to development of people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal: what gets developed and for who’s end                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Whole person vs. job/organization needs?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Process: definition of “development”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of systems also is important</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different motivations for systems interventions                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– For the individual or for the organization?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How far into the system should HRD reach and work?</li> <li>• How are “learning” and “non-learning” interventions defined?</li> <li>• Know the “human part” of the organization?</li> </ul>

Analysis. These ideas of helping through facilitating appear to be central to HRD’s identity. The divergence is introduced later when the scholars interviewed for this study take various positions about what should be improved and how, which is discussed later in this section.

But what does it really mean to be a helping profession? Have the field’s professionals really grappled with this and how it does or should drive HRD practice? Or, is it simply an expression of the altruism that seems inherent in education? Pace (1991) says that a helping driving force and a control driving force are diametrically opposed and that these different philosophies motivate radically different practices. If this is true, than the apparent agreement that surfaced in this area of the study may not be as central of an organizer as it may appear.

#### Learning and Development

Summary. Learning is at the heart of what we do! This was a powerful theme that emerged. It was a strong emphasis for each and every participant interviewed for this study. HRD was consistently associated with some type of role related to development, learning, or education. In part, this was attributed to HRD’s heritage growing out of education and training. But even OD (an acknowledged “newer” area of HRD) was couched as a learning process when scholars interviewed for the study

conceived of change as a learning process. Learning emerged as a very strong grounding for HRD.

Another almost universal theme showed that HRD's role of learning is interpreted to be happening at more than just the individual-level. HRD was viewed here as working on development at multiple levels—including individual, process, group/team, organizational, and even societal. The people who raised this topic envisioned a role for HRD that is focused on learning at these increasingly complex levels.

There was also evidence that the learning versus performance debate that has in large part been led by some of the participants of this study is waning a bit. Many of those interviewed advocated emphasizing both learning and performance and were reflecting on the interactive relationship between them. However, it was also clear from remaining quotes in this section that there are various notions of which goal is emphasized first and strongest.

- HRD professionals are helpers who use learning as their primary tool.
- Change is a learning process.
- Learning and performance are inherently related.
- HRD facilitates learning and development at multiple levels—individuals, process, group/team, organizational.

Analysis. This theme that grounds HRD in such a strong learning-role was one of the surprises in this study. Learning was seen as *the* central role of HRD—even by those whom identify themselves as “performance-people”. The performance versus learning debate that has commanded so much attention during the last few years has almost seemed to set-up the two camps as polar opposites, and the performance camp has been consistently accused of not believing in learning as the heart of HRD. The findings of this study contradict this and position learning as one of the most foundational concepts for HRD.

Learning at multiple levels has been a “hot” issue in the field during just the last few years (Holton, 1999), bolstered by organizations' growing interest on organizational learning. The data here characterizes HRD as facilitating learning at various levels. Individual, group/team, and organizational learning were mentioned throughout the study, while the idea of learning at the process and societal levels were less frequently referenced.

What was interesting in the analysis of this study, though, was that while some advocated for the expansion of thinking about learning at multiple levels, the majority of the remaining conversation focused almost solely on development of the individual and/or development of the system/organization. These are each discussed in more detail below.

The debate of either/or learning or performance appears to be waning and a few participants advocated it stopping altogether. From their view, *both* are important. If this trend continues, it could mark a new phase of development in the field where there is much more dialogue about the implications of embracing both.

Embracing both, however, sounds easier than it really may be. There was still ample evidence here that different people value one goal more than the other. Many of those interviewed reported that they were increasingly focusing on improved performance as a primary outcome and learning as a mediator to that goal. The implications of this could be far-reaching. However, they might be muted somewhat as both “sides” warn against over-emphasizing either.

### Development of People

Summary. There was a strong commitment to the development of people uncovered here. Development of individuals was a central and primary role for HRD. HRD was viewed as a field that has traditionally, and should continue to, help people learn and develop. The quotes in this section reveal a deep connection and commitment to development—talking about the sanctity of human development, helping individuals to reach their potential, and helping people through the rough spots they face.

Defining development proved to be a bit more complicated. How scholars interviewed for this study defined development tended to be quite divergent. It seemed clear to a few people, though, that however HRD defines development, it is distinctly different from how other professions/disciplines define it. In these quotes, growth of people was contrasted with other disciplinary approaches that appear to focus on different things such as controlling behavior.

Within the profession, some people believe that a performance-oriented view of development is very different from a learning-oriented view, the former focusing on behavior change and the latter aiming towards a more holistic notion of growth. One person wondered whether these varied views of development can co-exist in the field. Another person, on the other hand, thought there was certainly room for multiple ideas on what development is, but acknowledged the possibility that most people will usually work from one very specific definition.

Highly related to defining development is the idea of what gets developed. Foci here ranged from whole person development to a more limited role that develops knowledge and skills necessary for job or organizational needs. Another view distinguished more clearly between the respective goals of individual learning and individual learning that is organizationally-sponsored.

- HRD helps people develop and reach their potential.
- Development results in changes in job/role performance.
- Development results in growth of the individual.
- Individuals are learning-beings.
- When learning is organizationally-sponsored, individuals learn on behalf of the organization (explicitly and in full agreement).

Analysis. Once again in this section there emerges what could be interpreted as a general area of agreement between those interviewed—some strong statements from a majority of those interviewed that human development is a primary role. It was in understanding how development is defined where the important differences arose.

What was somewhat confusing during analysis of these results is that there are a few things about defining development that are talked about—the *goal* of development and the *process* of development. These two distinct things were often discussed together as one and should most likely be pulled apart in order to gain more clarity about what differences truly remain.

However, what can be seen is a thread that juxtaposes whole person development versus development of knowledge and skills based on job and organizational needs. This is a major point of divergence that sets off a stream of differences that can be seen throughout the rest of the themes. Also revealed in this section, as well as in some prior sections, is that how people are developed (i.e. helping vs. controlling) is a point of contention that more than likely results in quite different belief systems. This is one of the few areas in which there is HRD-specific literature to consult. Kuchinke (1996) described, compared, and contrasted different goals of HRD and their underlying ideologies, focusing solely on the concept of human development. He identified three dominant approaches to human development: (a) development as self-realization, (b) development as goal-attainment, and (c) development as dynamic problem-solving. The findings here did not directly fit into this classification scheme, but do demonstrate that different beliefs emerge when defining development.

Finally, one participant in this section cites Dewey (1859-1952) to aptly differentiate between individual learning and individual learning that is sponsored by organizations. This view could be considered a potential compromise position for two reasons. First, this view more fully acknowledges that humans are learning beings who learn things much beyond the scope of job/organizational needs. Second, however, it differentiates that when learning is organizationally-sponsored, individuals learn on behalf of the organization. This is an interesting notion that certainly deserves more scholarly attention in HRD.

#### Developing Systems

Summary. In addition to development of people, development of systems also emerged as a primary role for HRD. Here an expanded role for HRD is encouraged—one that reaches into and works on systems. What is important to note in these findings is that there are two very different motivations for this interest in developing systems. The first is focused on individuals and ensuring that they are provided what they need to be effective in their roles and to be able to work in a healthy environment. The second set of reasons offered were much more focused on the organizational-setting and helping the organization achieve its mission and goals.

Another theme that emerged during this study was found in participants' critical reflection about the extent to which HRD should reach into and work on systems. One person in particular was seriously questioning how far HRD should stray from a central focus on the individual. Another person questioned how much HRD should be honing the development and use of non-learning based (versus learning-based) interventions.

- HRD develops systems.
- HRD develops systems to help people achieve their potential.



- HRD develops systems to provide people what they need to optimally perform.
- HRD develops systems to help systems achieve their mission and goals.

Analysis. There seemed to be a strong theme that one of HRD's roles was to develop and help to improve organizational systems. The centrality of that role was debatable depending on the participant. And, as mentioned above, the two different sets of reasoning offered were quite different—almost a “for the individual” versus “for the organization/system”. This most likely points to a major split between various belief systems.

This divergence also most certainly leads to very different HRD practices. The person who believed that HRD is learning-based and should temper its involvement in non-learning based interventions is also a person who advocates working for the individual in all ways. The people who advocated reaching farther into the system justifies more non-learning based interventions because of their motivation to help the system successfully achieve its goals.

Inspecting this sub-theme more closely a question arises. How are “learning-based” and “non-learning based” interventions even defined? This is further complicated when referring back to an earlier sub-theme that defined change as a learning process. The field must better define these terms and then must critically analyze how far it can go into the system with both learning- and non-learning based interventions. When, if ever, does working in a system become too divergent and away from HRD's core as well as its expertise?

Another interesting idea that was brought-up by two participants in this study was that HRD knows the “human part” of the system. The idea that HRD is a profession that specializes in the human part of organizations could indicate an even more expansive role than just learning. What would that really mean? What are the implications for other issues related to humans (like motivation, social organizing, etc...)?

#### Who HRD Serves as a Theme

During one of the first interviews conducted for this study, a participant brought up this issue as they reflected on how vital this question of who HRD serves was and their disappointment that the question had not been adequately addressed in the recently published AHRD standards on ethics and integrity (Burns et al, 1999). As the interviews progressed, it quickly evolved from a powerful question to an effective organizer for this emerging theme. That this question emerged as so fundamental in terms of the ideas of those interviewed is in and of itself remarkable and worthy of much more study.

One of the most provocative questions raised during the interviews conducted for this study was a rather simple one, but one that brings this question of who HRD serves into the forefront: for what end do HRD professionals do their work and for who's benefit? The participant that raised this question asked whether HRD was about developing the human resources of an organization or about developing the resources of the human? The answers that emerged and were categorized in this theme indicate a few

different perspectives, which are summarized in Table 5.2 and then each described below.

Table 5.2. Who HRD Serves as a Theme: Similarities and Differences

<b>Who HRD Serves as a Theme</b>	
<b>Similarities among Scholarly Leaders</b>	<b>Differences among Scholarly Leaders</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to individuals continues here</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing the human resources of an organization or the resources of the human?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRD defined by its work with people or organizations?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good human resource practices benefit the organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Views of organizations, mission, and profit</li> <li>• Varied approaches to this belief</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the world a better place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wider view of multiple stakeholders and aims</li> <li>• Extent to which HRD should serve and work in society</li> </ul>

Serving Individuals: Developing the Resources of the Human

Summary. The strong commitment to individuals and their development that can be seen in the last section about the role of HRD continues here. The emphasis shifts slightly, though, as one participant explicitly stated that the HRD profession would be excellent if it was responsible to and for individual workers rather than management (or the organization). The sub-theme that emerged was that HRD should be putting people and their needs first, over and above those of the organization, because it is defined by its work with people.

- HRD is responsible to and for individuals, rather than to the organization.
- HRD is defined by its work with people.

Part of how this was demonstrated was through a strong focus on individuals and helping them to fully develop. Building on the notion of whole-person development versus development based on job/organizational needs, these participants advocated focusing on developing the whole person to his/her optimal potential. When asked about who defines “potential”, the answer was that the individual does because individuals inherently work towards self-actualization—striving to grow and work in creative and meaningful ways.

- HRD helps people reach their full potential through development.
- Individuals choose their development goals and self-manage their short- and long-term development based on their individual, unique needs and desires.
- Individuals want to do work that is creative and meaningful.

- Individuals work for multiple reasons besides salary/pay.

Putting people first was justified because, according to these participants, investment in people pays-off for the organization. These participants believed that tending to people is what best positions the organization for optimal performance.

- Organizations benefit from a central focus on the development and growth of its members.
- Effective human resource practices leads to effective organizations.

In the same section, participants also surfaced some suspicion about organizations that focus too heavily on achieving profit over all other things. Some negative connotations about profit were revealed—ranging from (a) profit is bad to (b) a more tempered opinion about how profit shouldn't be the only goal of an organization, to (c) one participant's stronger position to focus only on human development, regardless of whether profit or organizational performance ensues.

- Profit is a by-product of effective business and human resource practices and should never be the primary goal of an organization.
- The needs of individuals should always be more highly valued than the aims of profit.

This last person went on to say that an HRD professional who primarily focuses on profit or organizational performance, rather than the development of human beings, misunderstands the nature of HRD. Instead, organizations were encouraged to focus on people and development (and other worthy goals) and to view profit as a by-product of doing the right things.

Analysis. The value of putting people first was communicated in this section quite strongly. One can sense a real desire to help people be all that they can be and valuing their needs above all else. For participants that identified with this sub-theme, HRD is defined by its work with people. This commitment to individuals was contrasted with a much lesser commitment to organizations, or, as for some interviewed, by a resistance to HRD being defined as a profession that works for organizations restrictively.

What was also uncovered here was a theme of suspicion and a rather negative opinion of organizations and their motives. The people who spoke up on serving the needs of individuals had very firm ideas about putting people first, and a few felt that that should be true regardless of the organization and their needs. In fact, there was very little discussion about what the potential needs of the organization might be or of HRD's role in helping organizations to fulfill those needs. Nor was there much mention of balancing individual and organizational needs. Rather, the focus here was, for the most part, squarely on the individual.

Even among the few that talked about an eventual pay-off for the organization that invests in people, there remained a clear distaste for organizations that focus too

heavily on profit—and there were some pretty broad generalizations that characterized many organizations as doing just that.

This suspicion was extended by one participant who implied that HRD professionals who approach their work from the “performance perspective” abuse employees and fundamentally misunderstand the field. This is a clear signal of a very different belief system than the one that is described in the following sub-theme.

Serving Organizations: Developing the Human Resources of the Organization

Summary. The excellency that introduced this sub-theme was the antithesis of the above position that focused so strongly on serving the needs of individuals. The participant that offered this excellency stated that HRD would be excellent if it were seen as furthering the mission of the organizations or the entities that sponsor its efforts. The focus here was clearly on serving the organization.

- HRD should serve the system’s mission and goals.

There were a few reasons that were offered by various participants to support this position. First, organizations were viewed as the primary sponsor of HRD—providing the money and resources to engage in development activity. One participant who strongly identified with OD explained how past OD theoreticians have always advocated that the system is the primary client.

- HRD is distinguished from other entities in society that are charged with developing people by its focus on the system and its mission.
- HRD is a handmaiden of the system.
- HRD is defined by its work with organizations.
- HRD is sponsored by organizations, thus organizations are the client.

A second reason that was surfaced to explain why HRD should serve organizations was that organizations are not in the business of learning, and rather should be supported in achieving the mission for which they do exist. The goal of HRD that was forwarded here was to support the mission of the organization and to enhance organizational performance. One person reflected on their understanding of how organizational success demands that all of the organization’s elements align to enable the mission of the organization—and HRD was no exception.

- Organizations exist to achieve their mission/goals.
- The various parts of an organization should be aligned and focused on achieving organizational mission/goals.
- HRD should be aligned with the mission of the organization and help the organization achieve its goals.
- HRD should enhance organizational performance.

There were also two other key ideas that were forwarded in this section. First, was that achieving the mission of the organization should not be equated with achieving profit. Organizational mission/goals were interpreted to be applicable to any kind of organization (non-profit, community, government, etc...) and were not necessarily assumed to be a quest for profit, but rather could be performance on multiple dimensions. Also, achieving mission was characterized as a delicate balance between achieving short- and long-term goals, as well as investment and pay-off in both the short- and long-term, rather than a sole focus on maximizing short-term pay-off all the time.

- Any type of organization has a mission and goals.
- Organizational performance can be measured on multiple dimensions, not just on profit.
- Profit is a by-product of achieving organizational mission/goals.
- HRD should provide short- and long-term value to the organization.

Just as the people whom advocated primarily serving individuals did not entirely ignore the needs of the organization, so too the people that advocated putting the organization first did not ignore serving the needs of the individuals. One person noted that there was really not any kind of inherent conflict here because the best people practices in the world tend to lead to higher organizational performance.

- Effective human resource practices leads to effective organizations.

This group discussed that putting the aims of the organization first was the most effective way to increase the likelihood of obtaining resources for people and human development. Another participant stressed mutual long- and short-term benefit for both the organization and the individual. This group also openly talked about the challenges associated with balancing the needs of the organization with the needs of the individual.

- Achieving mission/goal demands development of the organization's members.
- Human development aligned with and helping to achieve mission/goals of the organization results in mutual benefit for both the individual and the organization.

Serving the needs of the organization was not to be misinterpreted as HRD being a blind tool of management that blindly served its client. A few participants called for HRD to use its commitment to individuals as courage to stand up for and demand better, more humane people practices. It was alluded to that organizations sometimes do bad things, but one person recommended that rather than being disgusted by this and walk away, HRD should integrate itself into the organization so that its professionals can know about explicit and inexplicit agendas and fight for more ethical people and human development practices.

- HRD does not tolerate unethical, amoral, or unhealthy business or human resource practices.
- HRD professionals have a moral duty to fight for good human and development practices.
- HRD professional should make every attempt to be fully aware of both stated and unstated agendas of the organization.

Analysis. This section introduced what can only be characterized as almost the polar opposite of the theme forwarded in the prior section. Here value was placed on serving the needs of the organization and helping the organization that sponsors HRD achieve its mission. Indeed, it was implied in this sub-theme that HRD is fundamentally defined by its work in and for organizations. The logic here was that organizations sponsor HRD and are able to do that because they successfully achieve their own mission and goals, thus HRD should serve organizations. In the prior sub-theme, it was forwarded that HRD was defined by its work with people. These are two very different foundational assumptions.

Both of the above positions (serving people and serving organizations) seemed to agree with the logic that effective people practices make for an effective organization. However, as one person in the above section pointed out, it has to do with how one approaches that belief. The group that chose to serve the organization seemed to heavily focus on the organization's effectiveness and advocated effective people practices as a primary tool to help achieve that success. The other group that chose to serve the individuals approached this from the side of the individual first. This is a very fine, but significant distinction between these two sub-themes.

Another thing revealed in this section was a rather different view of organizations. Organizations were viewed in this sub-theme as existing to achieve organizational mission/goals. This is different from how organizations were characterized in the sub-theme that prioritized serving individuals. Although the role of organizations was simply not talked about as explicitly in that sub-theme, there did seem to be less value of the organizations mission/goals, and a more negative opinion of organizations and their motives. Here, however, there was clear acknowledgement that organizations exist for reasons other than to help people learn, and that HRD should be aligned with the system's mission/goals (within some type of ethical/moral boundaries around humane and fair human resource and business practices).

What was even more interesting to this researcher is that the participants that grounded this theme did not say that they would choose the organization *over* the individual. It was not an either/or dichotomy for them, as it seemed to be for the group that grounded the sub-theme above where individuals were chosen *over* the organization. In this theme, commitment to the organization was not assumed to be at the expense of individuals—the commitment to individuals, their development, and good treatment was assumed, and deeply held.

More importantly, a few participants in this section talked about the how hard it was to balance the sometimes conflicting needs of the organization and the individual.

This was characterized as a struggle and appeared to be a challenging part of their work. There did not seem to be a willingness to “sell-out” the individual or automatically subordinate the needs of the individual for the needs of the organization.

Contrasted with this, the other group that focused primarily on serving the needs of individuals did not seem to pay much attention to the organization. One almost sensed there that organizational needs should indeed come second, and there was little apparent struggle to balance conflict between the individual and the organization. In fact, one person in that section commented that organizations would have to succeed *in spite of* HRD. The group that supported serving the organization would most likely say that organizations succeed *because of* HRD.

Yet another important finding emerged between this set of sub-themes when one person brought up OD’s heritage which traditionally emphasized the system and system intent. That same person also contrasted this with the heritage of T & D which was characterized during that interview as traditionally defined by its focus on serving the needs of individual. This was an important distinction that emerged and should most certainly be analyzed more outside of these findings. It was suggested by more than a few people during the course of this study that OD, T & D, and CD (considered to be the three sub-fields of HRD) approach HRD fundamentally different and could most likely not agree on any kind of core beliefs or values such as the role of HRD, who is served, etc...

#### Win-Win-Win

Summary. Still yet there was another sub-theme that emerged as a few people participating in this study made a plea to stop all this talk about choosing *either* the organization *or* the individual as HRD’s primary client. One person explained that there is always at least a triadic relationship in HRD relationships—the client, the consultant, and the beneficiary of the HRD work. Another person suggested an even more expansive view that acknowledged multiple stakeholders and included even an organization’s shareholders as well as society as a whole.

- HRD serves multiple stakeholders.
- There are always at least three stakeholders in any HRD intervention—the consultant (internal or external), the client who is sponsoring the effort, and the people who are the focus of the intervention.

Recognizing additional stakeholders bears with it more responsibility to balance and work towards the mutual win of many. The notion of “win-win-win” became an organizer for this sub-theme as participants stressed assuring win’s for as many stakeholders as possible.

- HRD sometimes has to choose among competing aims.
- HRD professionals should make every effort to maximize the benefit for all stakeholders involved (win-win-win). This should be a declared

intent with explicated outcomes, and conflicting goals should be openly discussed to achieve compromise.

Another person stressed that not only are there multiple stakeholders in any given situation involving HRD, there are also multiple aims that HRD should (and often does) strive for. These included, but were not limited to, performance *and* learning, diversity, work climate, globalization, peace, and other social values). All of these were considered important outcomes of HRD work that should be embraced.

- HRD should strive for improvement in multiple ways.

Analysis. This idea of “win-win-win” for multiple stakeholders and in multiple ways could almost be characterized as an extension of the sub-theme that emerged above that reflected on balancing the needs of the individual and the organization. The emphasis here, though, was much stronger on being explicit about who potential stakeholders might be, what aims each has, and how all parties involved can optimize around those goals. This is such an important idea, especially in HRD! As can be seen in both the results of this study as well as in much of the HRD literature, the discussion of who is served by HRD has been traditionally dominated by an either/or paradigm. As a result, the conversation has focused on choosing one or another more than it has explored what it really may mean to balance multiple stakeholders and multiple aims. There is a clear need for better and more explicit models of partnering for “win-win-win” and for managing divergent needs.

One person in this section talked about multiple aims for HRD. Once again choosing not the “either/or” of performance or learning, this person reported that OD methodologies are being used all over the world for goals of achieving peace, addressing poverty, etc... It is unclear where this fits in much of the above conversation. Is it a different agenda all together? Maybe not. The group that advocated serving the organization stressed that HRD work should be done for the organization’s mission and organizational performance on multiple dimensions. Thus, it would seem logical that many of the aims listed by this participant could be potential goals of a system that is working on these issues, and therefore HRD should be supporting that system towards achieving those goals.

On the other hand, maybe this is a very different potential mission for HRD? It would be if this person meant to say that HRD should be serving the needs of society—professing these goals and social values as primary aims of HRD. This would be a very different message than what was revealed in the sub-themes above, and may have powerful implications if truly embraced. When another participant was asked to react to this idea of multiple missions such as those listed, they asked whether that wasn’t the job of every organization, discipline, profession, etc...? In their words, “isn’t that motherhood and apple pie stuff?” Maybe it is, and maybe it isn’t. Certainly, though, another issue for the field to contemplate.

#### Serving Society

Summary. A theme also emerged during this study that focused on serving society. This came up in two quite distinct threads. The first thread was about HRD



being connected to society—rooted in the happenings of society and its needs. There was some hope from two participants that organizational efforts (and thus HRD efforts) would ultimately contribute to a better society.

- Organizations should foster a better society.

Another person urged a role for HRD that ensured it was part of a broader context of workforce development issues in society.

- HRD is part of the broader context of workforce development in society.

The second thread related more to HRD professionals actually working in society. Some people wondered why HRD was trending towards being defined (indeed constrained) to only an organizational-type of setting.

- HRD is not limited to only the organization-setting, but works in any setting.

Instead, it was advocated here that HRD expand its role and serve the needs of individuals in society—helping them to develop and reach their potential. This development was still somewhat limited to potential around work. This argument was strengthened by reflections on the changing nature of work which is increasingly absent of any kind of organizational context, or is at least increasingly taking place in very different organizational models.

Of course, this is not without controversy. One person made an appeal for more involvement in the community and society, but also emphasized that this effort should be labeled what it is—social responsibility—and not HRD.

- Development of the individual that does not support the mission of the organization is socially responsible, but is not the primary goal of organizations (or HRD).

Analysis. One of the first ideals that was uncovered here was that HRD actually should help to make the world a better place. The context in which this was brought up was very much related to seeing how organizations fit into society as a whole—hoping that organizations help to make the world a better place. However, later in this section there is additional talk of HRD being positioned to foster human development absent of any organizational-setting and focused only the realization of human potential. So is this ideal of wanting to help improve the world (a) another example of altruism, (b) hopefulness for a better world, (c) justification for HRD's role in organization, and/or (d) a potentially true and powerful commitment to a purpose of human development outside of a specific context? It clearly meant different things for different people represented in this sub-theme, but what are the implications of this for alternative philosophies in HRD?

What is important to note here is the different assumptions that were driving those who advocated that HRD not be constrained to only an organizational-setting, and rather be out working in the community-setting. These same people revealed during earlier

conversations that HRD is fundamentally defined by its work with and for people. Thus it seems quite logical that they would then also not feel as if HRD should work only in organization, or for organizational mission. This view positions HRD as serving the needs of individual—thus, it doesn't matter where this is done or who sponsors it. This logic is rather different from that of the participants who assume that HRD is defined by its work in and for organizations.

Another interesting idea that was raised in this section was the call for HRD to be fundamentally connected to societal issues around workforce development. This is one of the few places that the idea of “work” was raised. As will be seen later in Chapter Five, HRD was rarely associated with work, but here it was. The idea raised was that HRD serves a specific role in a whole network of activities involved in preparing people for work and to best cope with a multitude of issues related to work, especially given the changing nature of work. The person who discussed this idea linked HRD to development around work, but did not see this as being equated with organizations or organizational mission.

A final central idea that emerged in this section was offered by one person who extended HRD's reach even a little further into society as they suggested that HRD could serve and work with disadvantaged members of society around issues related to work. Another person reacted against this notion when they were asked to respond to this idea in a later interview. According to that person, this kind of human development activity should be done, but should be clearly labeled social responsibility and not HRD. Once again, it is important to begin to see the connections of logic forming here. The person who reacted this way believes that HRD serves organizations and organizational mission/goals. It is therefore logical that activity that does not directly align with an organization's mission would be separated from activity that does.

#### People as a Theme

An analysis of this theme reveals a few ideas about people that a few participants of this study raised, and that seemed to be ideas held in common. The analysis also finds some important differences and/or questions. These are introduced in Table 5.3, and then discussed in the sections below that probe each sub-theme.

#### Commitment to People

Summary. A theme that emerged during this study was a sense of deep commitment to people as well as a few strong beliefs about people. One person, for instance, stated that they had a fundamental positive belief in individuals, their goodness, and their potential. Humans were viewed here as highly motivated, especially as related to work, and capable of achieving a lot.

Humans were also characterized as social beings that strive to be a part of something bigger than themselves. There were also threads that characterized people as agents capable of and expected to manage their lives (including as related to work). Organizations, in return, were expected to provide opportunities that help individuals to do that and not put them in “boxes” that were unnecessarily limiting.

Table 5.3. People as a Theme: Similarities and Differences

<b>People as a Theme</b>	
Similarities among Scholarly Leaders	Differences among Scholarly Leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deep belief in and commitment to people, with some limitations</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humans as learning and social beings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How people learn</li> <li>• Role of organizationally sponsored learning</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free agents capable of managing own career and development</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person/Organization fit is appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reason for person/organization fit</li> <li>• Inherently valuable or valuable as human resources?</li> </ul>

- People are inherently good and full of potential.
- People are social beings.
- People want to do good work and live good lives.
- People exercise self-control and management over their lives.
- Organizations should provide ample opportunity for people to reach their maximum potential.

Some limitations to an unbridled faith and commitment to people were evident, though, when it was acknowledged that not all people are always “good” and clear thinking.

Along with this somewhat tempered belief in individuals also came some input from a few participants on the extent to which people and organizations “fit”. It was acknowledged that people do not always fulfill the unique needs of the organization or job, and that sometimes choices must be made to ensure a good fit. In fact, this was forwarded by one person as the more humane thing to do for the overall well-being of the individual.

- Peoples talents and skills should be well-matched to the needs of the organization.

Analysis. The overall theme about people was not as strong as other themes that have been introduced so far in this chapter. However, one does sense in this sub-theme the deep commitment to people and a few deep beliefs in their goodness and potential, even with the acknowledgement that humans make mistakes and can be flawed.

Other ideas that were forwarded about people were rather random. One of the more prominent ideas involved thinking of people as free agents who are capable of managing their own development and careers, and who want to perform and do good work. Here again there seems to be quite positive values around people.

Interestingly though, the same people who communicated these ideas about people also fully acknowledged the value of ensuring people fit well with the roles they are in. There almost seemed to be two different reasons offered this view, though. One perspective strongly forwarded that people should be increasingly challenged in their development—constantly pushed to grow and not be stagnated. Another perspective approached the same issue of person/organization fit from a bent that was slightly more aligned with the organization, although still clearly thoughtful of the overall well-being of the individual. These two people talked about effectiveness in the role and helping the individual to see that they may be able to be more effective in another system. There appears to be here an ever so slight distinction between these two perspectives, but one that may be significantly different to justify the same action.

#### People as Learners

Summary. There was also a sub-theme that emerged and offered some insights about what participants think about people as learners and how they learn. First, there was the proposition that development is central in people’s lives, indeed critical aspects of being human.

- Learning and performing are central aspects of being human.
- Humans are learning beings.

A second set of ideas came from participants who discussed how people learn and peoples’ learning processes. One person shared their idea about expectations and learning, advocating a more constructive approach to learning since humans are autonomous and self-directed, and, as this person stated, cannot be engineered.

- People are autonomous and self-directed.
- Individuals have a self-interest in their own short- and long-term development.
- Organizations have some, but not primary responsibility, for individuals’ short- and long-term development.

Even more was offered about how individuals learned. Building on that idea of not “engineering” people, other participants advocated independence and experience and application in the learning experience.

- Humans naturally learn given opportunities and resources (can’t be engineered and need freedom to do it)
- Humans learn powerfully through experience.

Finally, one participant shared an important distinction that is intricately connected to people as learning beings. This person was very purposeful in differentiating that not all human learning is organizationally-related learning. This powerful quote re-emphasizes a few of the important points raised above and points to a new one. First, is the acknowledgement of humans as learning beings. Second, is the

idea of humans' choice to explicitly contract to learn on behalf of or to share learning with the organization. Third, this person points to a delicate tension between that must be managed about how much individual and organizational learning should to be linked and/or how they are related.

- Work-related learning is only one aspect of human learning.
- HRD-sponsored individual learning should be linked to and fulfill organizational needs.

Analysis. There were a few key issues raised in this sub-theme about people as learners. One of the most prominent is spurred by the one participant who reflected that humans are not engineered. Much of the performance improvement movement in HRD grew out of Gilbert's (1978) work on engineering human performance which has been critiqued for being rather behavioristic. In these findings there emerges a more constructivist-based approach to human development. There also seems to be here a growing recognition that humans choose to learn. Although many interviewed for this study acknowledged that there is a role for behavioristic techniques, there was less buy-in to the assumptions of that school of thought. How does that mesh with some of HRD's heritage? Could the differences emerging here begin to stake-out very different philosophies of development?

Finally, a major contribution of one participant of this study was the important distinction raised between the whole of individual learning and learning that is organizationally-sponsored and explicitly agreed-upon between the individual and the organization. So often in HRD it seems that a choice for organizational-sponsored learning has been misinterpreted as a belief that organizationally-related things were all that the individual needed to or actually did learn. The findings reported here point to an indication that this may not be true. Rather what can be seen in the quote provided by one participant in this section is a compromise position that more fully embraces people as learning beings, while also more clearly distinguishing between what is learned, for whom, and why.

#### Value of Humans

Summary. One controversial issue that emerged during this study is how humans are valued. Here emerged two different ideas that were discreetly, but significantly, different. The question is whether the HRD profession views humans as inherently worthy versus worthy as human resources?

First, there was talk about how humans should be valued in organizations—for all that they bring and what they contribute to organizational success. In this view, the individual is portrayed as a resource. The people who spoke about this perspective emphasized building a business-case for valuing and investing in human resources and the development of people.

- Humans are valuable to organizations for the resources they provide.

A second view that emerged explicitly objected to the idea of humans as resources. Instead, these people emphasized that humans are worthy in and of

themselves. Talking of human as resources was characterized as dehumanizing and as missing the true essence of the value of people.

- Humans are inherently valuable.

Analysis. After a review of this section one could get the sense that those who profess to inherently value humans think that the other group who talks about people in the organizational context as resources simply don't value people at all. Whether this is true remains to be seen.

However, an analysis of the contrasts between these two views does reveal a potentially important thing. The participants that talked about humans as resources did not even discuss the inherent worth of individuals. What does this mean? Does this mean they don't value humans? Is this view of humans as resources a fundamental statement of the value of humans on this earth? Or does this simply mean that their focus on the organization and organizational mission has taught them that they must build a business case for investing in people within the organizational context?

On the other hand, the alternative view hints at an important question—what are the consequences of valuing humans as resources to organizations? Should HRD have a role in ensuring organizations value humans in ways other than as mere resources?

#### Work as a Theme

One of the most surprising things reported in the findings of Chapter Four is actually how *little* work was discussed during the interviews conducted for this study. Only two comparatively weak sub-themes emerged: (a) meaning of work and (b) the link between HRD and work. Table 5.4. introduces key similarities and differences.

Table 5.4. Work as a Theme: Similarities and Differences

<b>Work as a Theme</b>	
Similarities among Scholarly Leaders	Differences among Scholarly Leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work should be meaningful and fulfilling</li> <li>• Potential links to work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is HRD connected to work?</li> </ul>

#### Meaning of Work

Summary. One participant talked extensively about the idea that work can and should be inherently fulfilling. It was stressed that people could find meaning for their lives in work if they believe in the work that is being done. Here some assumptions emerged about how work should be something that individuals can believe in, and find purpose and meaning in. This was important to this participant—for spiritual as well as for more practical reasons such as the idea that meaningful work simply made life easier.

- Humans seek meaning in their life.
- Work can be a source for meaning and purpose in life.
- Work can be inherently fulfilling.

- Work is easier and better if it is meaningful.

This person also believed that people in this society who appear to not find meaning in work have been socialized to believe that, and that society (and HRD?) have a role in helping them to see otherwise and discover the value of meaningful work.

- Society socializes people into believing that some work is not meaningful and worthy.

Analysis. The person who spoke at length about this sub-theme provided some powerful reflections on the meaning of work in individuals' lives. The issue that is raised is how much does HRD need to get in touch with what work means to people? What implications does this have for the act of developing human resources?

#### The Link between HRD and Work

Summary. Any link between HRD and work was explicitly and voluntarily raised only once during interviews. This sole participant placed HRD in the context of a broader notion of workforce development—part of an enterprise that prepares people for work and issues related to work.

- HRD is part of a broad enterprise focused on workforce development—development for and related to work.

During later stages of data collection when it became clear that work was not being surfaced, the researcher probed the topic and two other participants did reflect on HRD and work. One person who had “grown-up” in Adult Education discussed how the focus on work in HRD was a key attractor. This person viewed HRD professionals as adult educators who deal with learning in worklife.

- HRD professionals are adult educators who deal with learning within organizations and worklife.

Another person, on the other hand, questioned this link, especially given the changing nature of work and the many venues in which people can now obtain work-related development.

Analysis. It was truly astounding for this researcher how *little* work was discussed during the interviews. This researcher originates from a program entitled Education for Work, Community, and Family. Work is a central organizer for this program, and for the specialization of HRD within the program. In this personal way HRD has been intricately connected to work. In the larger field of HRD, too, much of the discussions, research, and literature is about people and work—how they function at work, what work means to them, and development for and in work-settings.

It seems important to note that the topic of work came up during this study only when a few participants were specifically asked about it. Analysis during data collection began to reveal areas that were not being talked about, and work was noticeably missing. The only exception was the link that was drawn by one participant between HRD and the broader notion of workforce development. Thus, during the last few interviews

participants were specifically asked about work and HRD. One person who talked about it identified a strong link, while the other doubted that link.

So, one must ponder the significance of this finding. It is certainly plausible that a link between HRD and work is very deeply assumed by a bulk of the participants interviewed for this study, and that the interviews simply did not probe deep enough to uncover it. However, the likelihood of this lessens somewhat when this is compared to the great amount of strong themes that did surface about the role of HRD and who HRD serves.

Work just did not surface as a strong theme in this study. The findings here show that HRD was much more strongly linked to concepts of organizations and people than it was to work. Perhaps a tangential, but still significant, link could be made with some participants beliefs that HRD should develop job/organizational (implied work-related) skills, but even that belief seemed to be more focused on organizational needs than it was on the concept of work. A key question for further study, then, is how is HRD related to work? How central is work to HRD?

#### Organizations as a Theme

Many in HRD consider it to be a profession that is conducted in some kind of organizational-setting, rather than a school-based setting. The issue of organizations did arise in this study, as participants shared views about (a) HRD in organizations, (b) what organizations are and what role they play, and (c) how organizations should be treating people. Table 5.5 summarizes similarities and differences that emerged in this theme.

Table 5.5. Organizations as a Theme: Similarities and Differences

<b>Organizations as a Theme</b>	
<b>Similarities among Scholarly Leaders</b>	<b>Differences among Scholarly Leaders</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRD takes place in some kind of organized-setting that is goal-oriented (not just corporate)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior theme surfaced strong beliefs that HRD should not be constrained to only an organizational setting</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizations are more than a collection of individuals</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in organizations gets done through people</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degree of tolerance for organizations and their imperfections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characterization of organizations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should treat people well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why organizations are important</li> <li>• Putting needs of individuals over needs of organization</li> </ul>

#### HRD in Organizations, Not Just Corporations

Summary. The term “organization” according to a few participants, has recently begun to be code word for “corporation”. There was a strong attempt by some participants to react to this perceived issue. One person talked about how the corporate model has become too dominant in HRD and made a plea for HRD to not be constrained to the corporate-setting as it’s only (or even central) setting. Instead, the emphasis here was on HRD working in any kind of organization.



Another person strongly reacted to the tendency of some in the field (like the person above) to accuse others of equating “organization” and “corporation”. Instead, this person stressed that organizations are mission-oriented—describing that any type of organization has a mission. A few other participants also reiterated this suggestion to define organization more broadly in many different contexts and as existing to accomplish many varied goals.

In summary, this discussion does reveal some threads that begin to define organization. Loosely summarizing, an organization is characterized as some kind of organized-setting that is trying to achieve a goal/mission. In fact one person actually offered a definition of organization as being a group of people who are brought together to accomplish goals.

- HRD is conducted place in some kind of organized setting that is goal-oriented.

Analysis. One point of convergence did seem to emerge here when it was almost universally agreed that HRD takes place in some kind of organized-setting that is trying to achieve some kind of goal. It should not be taken lightly, though, that a group of HRD professionals was characterized by its work with corporations. Could this be indicative of a different school of thought in HRD? If not, this group in HRD should question why this apparent miscommunication has surfaced, and advocate this view more strongly if it truly believes in defining organization more liberally (i.e. beyond a corporate model).

Secondly, it must be questioned whether this definition of organizations (as some kind of organized-setting that is trying to achieve some kind of goal) is strong enough to guide practice and theory in HRD? One person asserted that HRD would fundamentally be done the same in almost any kind of organization. Is this true? A definition of organization would seem to be worthy of much more work in the field.

Finally, what is not included in this section and must be included in this analysis, is a discussion introduced in an earlier sub-theme. In the theme about who HRD serves, two participants positioned HRD as serving society and argued for a more expansive notion of HRD that did not define (or, in their words, “constrain”) it to only an organizational-setting. They were not overly concerned about this distinction between organization and corporation, but rather did not even want to see HRD limited to just organizations. So, is HRD defined by its work in organizations (that strive for some kind of mission/goals)? To what extent?

#### Definition of Organizations

Summary. Beyond the above sub-theme, there was little discussion about defining what an organization is or is not, except for a few discussions about focused issues. One issue was the introduction of what was characterized by one participant as the age-old debate as to whether an organization is a collection of individuals or something more than the sum of those individuals. Both views forwarded here leaned towards believing that the organization is more than the sum of its individual members, while also acknowledging the importance of individuals in those systems.

- Organizations are more than a collection of individuals.

- Work in organizations gets done through people.
- HRD work in systems is conducted with and through people.

Another idea emerged when a few participants wanted to discuss how organizations are characterized—almost in what seemed to be a defense of organizations and how they are sometimes viewed negatively both in HRD as well as in HRD-related professions. Just as there are good people who can do bad things, so too there are good organizations who can do bad things. Other quotes went on to emphasize that organizations aren't inherently bad, want to do the "right" things (act morally, etc...), and can grow into doing thing differently.

This last quote also provides a clue to yet another important idea that emerged in this study. A few participants reflected that it was HRD's tolerance of the imperfections of organizations and its capacity to work on change from within that differentiates it from other disciplines. For another participant, though, this assumption did not imply that all systems should be improved and/or saved.

- Organizations are moral systems with integrity.
- Organizations can change.
- HRD can help organizations to change by working from within.
- Not all organizational systems should be improved or salvaged.

A few participants also shared ideas on the role that organizations play. One person discussed how organizations are important in helping to improve people's lives as well as the overall human condition, while another person called for organizations to enhance their role in the betterment of society in a way that truly connects organizations with their communities. While this view was supported, another participant noted how challenging it was for organizations to serve that critical role in society and to be more humanistic in the face of realities of a global economy.

- Organizations are important in society to improve the human condition of employees as well as society at large.
- Organizations are important in helping individuals to achieve their life purpose.
- Organizations should connect with the communities in which they reside.
- Organizations do not need to optimize around performance all the time.

Analysis. In this sub-them there were a few varied ideas about organizations. The first raised the question whether organizations were more than the sum of their parts. Both people that addressed this question leaned towards a view of organizations that saw them as more than a collection of individuals. What is important to note is that the

person who raised this debate pointed out that this view of organizations may differentiate HRD from other disciplines like Psychology or Adult Education. Are organizations more than the sum of their parts? What does this really mean? What are the implications of this for development of people and development of systems?

Another interesting thing that emerged was participants' mild defense of organizations—positioning them as inherently good entities, even while acknowledging that they sometimes do questionable things. This is more than likely a reaction to criticisms by other fields who have accused HRD of not caring about individuals and “selling-out” to organizations that seem to consistently treat people poorly. In this sub-theme, these participants acknowledged the flaws that accompany organizations, and this did not seem to dampen their motivation to work in organizations.

In fact, these participants actually shared a desire to work in organizations *because* they are flawed. They viewed HRD's role as helping organizations to change and be better entities (not just in achieving performance, but also in being better for humans and society). This seemed motivated once again by a strong commitment to humans—the logic being that organizations should be worked on because so much of peoples' lives are centered around work. One person wondered whether HRD is in fact differentiated from other fields, such as Adult Education, by this acceptance of organizations and the belief that organizations can change and will most likely change through the influence of forces from within. This is an important point raised in this study.

Finally, there were some reflections on the role of organizations in peoples' lives and society as a whole. Here emerged some deep assumptions about the responsibility that organizations have. The people who talked about this saw organizations as needing to serve good purposes in society—with an emphasis on helping to improve the human condition.

The groups that spoke about serving organizations (in the a prior sub-theme) did not directly speak to this issue of the role and responsibility of organizations in society, with the exception of one person who acknowledged how challenging it is for organizations in today's global economy to “make concessions” and do the right things. It would stand to reason, however, the characterization forwarded here would most likely differ from a more economic-based view that focuses on the behavior of organizations and how commodities are produced, distributed, and consumed. Assumptions about organizations fundamentally affect the definition of them and related beliefs about HRD's role in organizations—and this shows through here.

#### Organizations Should Treat People Well

Summary. A stronger sub-theme emerged that expressed how important it was that organizations treat people well. What it means to treat people well varied, of course, but this deep interest in the well-being of the individual that has been threaded throughout the findings of this study showed itself here, too.

It was forwarded that organizations should care about and tend to the needs of people—ensuring that people knew their valuable role and contribution to the organization. One participant talked about how organizations should foster a sense of purpose and meaning in individuals, while also affording people the freedom and

autonomy they deserve. Another participant elaborated on this sense of purpose and meaning as they envisioned a role for organizations to help people connect to something that is bigger than themselves. For one person, this guideline of treating people well was as simple as this lesson—organizations should treat people as they wish to be treated.

- Organizations should put the needs of people first.
- Organization should care for and support its employees.
- Organizations should foster meaning and a sense of purpose in employees.
- Organizations help people "connect" to something bigger than themselves—thus, fostering an important sense of meaning in individuals.
- Organizations should trust employees to do well.
- Employees should have input on organizational issues that affect them.
- Work should be a positive part of a human’s life experience.

Analysis. Some strong ideas were forwarded here that reemphasize meaning and purpose in work, and call for organizations to help facilitate that. The other interesting story that was offered here was about how innovative companies are trying new models of organizational functioning—models that encourage freedom and autonomy for the individual, high trust levels, and more employee involvement at all levels. This story suggests potential beliefs about the work experience of people in general.

Most of what emerged here is important to record, but does not seem all that surprising given themes that have already been discussed. The commitment to the individual, various impressions of organizations, a few ideas on the meaning of work, etc... lead to an overarching feeling that HRD professionals want to ensure good places for people to work and that work is meaningful for individuals. The ideas offered in this theme are most likely just a few items of a much longer list detailing what that might look like.

#### HRD Interventions as a Theme

An analysis of this theme uncovers many ideas that the participants of this study shared in common, and also identifies points where the participants diverged. Table 5.6 introduces these similarities and differences, and the discussion that follows elaborates on these points.

Table 5.6. HRD Interventions as a Theme: Similarities and Differences

<b>HRD Interventions as a Theme</b>	
<b>Similarities among Scholarly Leaders</b>	<b>Differences among Scholarly Leaders</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systems interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider system or work in system? How deep?</li> </ul>

• Proactive and long-term	
• Customized methodologies to meet diverse needs of different environments and cultures	
• Help to define and solve problems	• Degree of collaboration in problem defining • Types of problems HRD is involved in
• Need for multiple, systematic methodologies – Centrality of action research?	

### Characteristics of Effective HRD Interventions

Summary. The findings of this study point to a few ideas about what makes for good HRD interventions. Specifically, four characteristics were identified from the interview data. The first characteristic that emerged was that HRD interventions should be, according to one participant, “more or less systems interventions”. That is, that HRD should approach a presenting problem with a systems point of view—an understanding of the system and how the target of intervention is related to other parts of the organization. In addition, one participant stressed that in systems interventions, an HRD person must tend to the dynamics of the system even more so than any one, specific individual.

- HRD professionals approach and intervene on presenting problems with a systems point of view (understanding the impact on the system).
- The interaction of individuals creates a system.
- The individual, process, and organization are a whole that cannot be separated.
- Establishing system boundaries is locally-negotiated.
- Systems interventions demand attention to the dynamics between parts of the systems, even more so than a intensive focus on any individual part.
- HRD works through people to influence/change a system.

A second characteristic that emerged was that effective HRD work would be proactive, and not just limited to intervening in crises. Although HRD certainly can help in crises, the view in this sub-theme was that it can also be a powerful force in helping to enhance things that are going well and shouldn't be solely problem-focused. One ideal that was forwarded, in fact, envisioned HRD becoming more a part of how organizations function.

- HRD should be both an on-going, proactive activity, as well as an activity that addresses problems.

A third characteristic that emerged was that HRD interventions should be focused on long-term impact. This person stressed that HRD research has shown that nothing works in the short-term, and that interventions must be system-wide and long-term for optimal results.

- The optimal impact of HRD interventions will be felt in the long-term.
- Organizations should commit to HRD interventions for long-term.

A final characteristic of effective HRD interventions was brought up by two different participants and had to do with ensuring that HRD continually expand its views to include and attend to global differences.

- HRD methodologies must be customized to meet the diverse needs of different environments and cultures.

Analysis. The first characteristic emphasizing the implementation of systems interventions contrasts somewhat with the major focus on the individual and individual development that has surfaced in other sections of this report. The question that was raised during the discussion of HRD's role revealed that some participants were questioning the extent to which HRD's reach into the system should be limited so that the central focus could remain on the individual. Yet here, there was a clear message to at least understand the parts of the system and how they relate to and affect the target of intervention.

The second and third characteristics that emerged about HRD being both proactive and long-term are highly related. Playing off the metaphor suggested by one participant, there has been a tendency for organizations to view HRD interventions as short-term "band-aids" for symptoms. The ideal forwarded in this sub-theme would be that HRD is consulted to address more systemic problems and able to stay involved long enough to ensure real change. On the other hand, there was also a call to view HRD as force that can help to improve on things that are already going well—and not just be called-in during crises. Both of these characteristics are ideals more than they are realities of much HRD activity today. What changes must ensue to facilitate the acceptance of HRD as on-going, proactive, and long-term? What courage is required of HRD professionals?

#### Defining and Solving Problems

Summary. HRD was characterized by a few interviewed for this study as being able to help solve problems. Helping to define gaps (actual versus desired), for instance, was cited as a common part of most HRD methodologies.

One of the most powerful ways that HRD can intervene in this area is to be excellent problem-definers, as was called for by one participant. The emphasis was on HRD focusing more and more on helping to define problems, and much less on solving ill-defined problems and/or reacting. This belief strongly focuses on HRD competency in problem-defining.

What was less clear in the remainder of this sub-theme was the extent to which that expertise should be held by the HRD professional and offered to the client versus a more collaboratively-based model that was suggested by other participants of the study. Two participants discussed the issue of problem-defining and stressed collaboration. Yet another person called for HRD to solve problems the way that clients define them.

- Problem-defining is crucial to ensuring effective problem-solving.

- Problems should be defined by the client as they see them.
- Problems should be defined by the client, with assistance from skilled HRD professionals.
- Problem-defining/solving is a collaborative process that explores and involves multiple and diverse points of view.

Analysis. Solving problems did emerge as a common thread in this sub-theme. As one person pointed-out, a gap analysis (analyzing the difference between current and desired levels) is a fairly standard assumption underlying many models used in HRD. However, the point raised above that HRD can also be powerfully implemented to build on good things that are happening should not be forgotten. There is a fine-line between being characterized as problem-solvers and proactive builders. What are the nuances of each of these identities? How can HRD effectively promote both?

The other very important distinction that emerged was the difference between problem-defining and problem-solving. There was a call for enhanced competency in defining problems—grounded in the observation that HRD professionals should not always trust that clients have defined problems correctly. This belief implies that a central HRD role is helping to accurately define problems.

There were at least two other contrasting beliefs raised in this section having to do with the level of collaboration between HRD professionals and its clients. There did seem to be a high-value around collaborative problem-defining/problem-solving. This is no surprise given that many core models in HRD (such as Action Research) demand this kind of client involvement. However, one person advocated a view that places much more emphasis on clients defining problems and much less on HRD intervention to assist in that. These two different beliefs would most likely lead to two very different sets of HRD activity, and should be explored more in the future to see how they impact various models and approaches to problem-solving.

#### Process/Methodology

Summary. There was talk during interviews conducted for this study about the need for HRD professionals to use systematic methods to conduct their work. One person emphasized the need for this as they assessed the lack of expertise and consistency in the profession. This person was also clear to note that having systematic ways of doing HRD work did not mean having only one way, and that multiple methodologies should be available as long as they are rigorous and explicit.

- HRD uses systematic methodologies to conduct their work.
- HRD employs multiple processes to successfully conduct their work.

Surprisingly, though, it is important to note that throughout this study there was only one methodology consistently put forward as a key methodology for HRD—Action Research. It was suggested as an excellency by one participant and other participants also outlined it as a core process in HRD. Furthermore, one participant strongly

emphasized that the Action Research model is a powerful methodology for any kind of problem—not just human resource-related problems.

- Action research is a central methodology in HRD.
- HRD methodologies are problem-defining/problem-solving methodologies suitable for range of problems (not just human resource related problems).

Analysis. A strong belief was forwarded that HRD should be using systematic and rigorous processes/methodologies. This seems vitally important in a profession where the number of practitioners doing HRD work exponentially increases each year.

One person suggested that multiple methodologies should be used in HRD to most effectively address problems, as long as they were rigorous. The questions that remain to be asked then is how that rigor is measured and how will it be maintained in the practice of HRD?

Another question that arose during the analysis of this sub-theme is whether there are any limits to the number of rival methodologies that are even possible or realistic? Many of the scholars interviewed for this study forwarded Action Research as their model of choice—presumably because of its rigor and effectiveness. What are the implications of such strong support for this process? Could it be some kind of foundational process for HRD or perhaps for one school of thought in HRD?

Finally, one person suggested that methodologies in HRD (such as Action Research) can be applied to all sorts of organizational problems, not just human resource ones. This would certainly support earlier assertions for HRD to work at multiple levels of the organization. On the other hand, this also adds a new level of complication to the whole discussion of how far HRD professionals should be reaching into and working on the system.

#### Analysis of the Six Themes Overall

It is helpful to pull-up from the detail presented in the previous sections to more clearly see the points of convergence and divergence among the beliefs forwarded by the HRD scholarly leaders who participated in this study. This has been done in the Tables 5.1-5.6 which were presented throughout the previous sections outlining key similarities and differences within each theme. These are presented as a whole in Table 5.7 to provide a summative view of all the themes.

Table 5.7. Thematic Analysis of the Core Beliefs Underlying Human Resource Development

<b>Role of HRD as a Theme</b>	
<b>Similarities among Scholarly Leaders</b>	<b>Differences among Scholarly Leaders</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping and facilitating are central</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who to help? With what? How?</li> <li>• What does it really mean to be a “helping profession”?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning is at the heart of HRD</li> </ul>	



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change as a learning process</li> <li>• Learning at multiple levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Idea of learning at multiple levels is contradicted by later conversation questioning extent to which HRD should reach beyond individual-level</li> <li>• Heavy focus during interviews on the individual</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both learning and performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritization between learning and performance</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong commitment to development of people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal: what gets developed and for who's end <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Whole person vs. job/organization needs?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Process: definition of "development"</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of systems also is important</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different motivations for systems interventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– For the individual or for the organization?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How far into the system should HRD reach and work?</li> <li>• How are "learning" and "non-learning" interventions defined?</li> <li>• Know the "human part" of the organization?</li> </ul>

### Who HRD Serves as a Theme

Similarities among Scholarly Leaders	Differences among Scholarly Leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to individuals continues here</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing the human resources of an organization or the resources of the human?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRD defined by its work with people or organizations?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good human resource practices benefit the organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Views of organizations, mission, and profit</li> <li>• Varied approaches to this belief</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the world a better place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wider view of multiple stakeholders and aims</li> <li>• Extent to which HRD should serve and work in society</li> </ul>

### People as a Theme

Similarities among Scholarly Leaders	Differences among Scholarly Leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deep belief in and commitment to people, with some limitations</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humans as learning and social beings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How people learn</li> <li>• Role of organizationally sponsored learning</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free agents capable of managing own career and development</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person/Organization fit is appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reason for person/organization fit</li> <li>• Inherently valuable or valuable as human resources?</li> </ul>

### Work as a Theme

Similarities among Scholarly Leaders	Differences among Scholarly Leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work should be meaningful and fulfilling</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential links to work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is HRD connected to work?</li> </ul>

## Organizations as a Theme

Similarities among Scholarly Leaders	Differences among Scholarly Leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRD takes place in some kind of organized-setting that is goal-oriented (not just corporate)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior theme surfaced strong beliefs that HRD should not be constrained to only an organizational setting</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizations are more than a collection of individuals</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in organizations gets done through people</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degree of tolerance for organizations and their imperfections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characterization of organizations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should treat people well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why organizations are important</li> <li>• Putting needs of individuals over needs of organization</li> </ul>

## HRD Interventions as a Theme

Similarities among Scholarly Leaders	Differences among Scholarly Leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systems interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider system or work in system? How deep?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactive and long-term</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customized methodologies to meet diverse needs of different environments and cultures</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help to define and solve problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degree of collaboration in problem defining</li> <li>• Types of problems HRD is involved in</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for multiple, systematic methodologies – Centrality of action research?</li> </ul>	

Assessing Table 5.7 as a whole reveals potentially strong foundations for HRD—beliefs that could serve to begin to define the essence of the profession. Most notable is two strong sets of beliefs that were held in common throughout interviews conducted for this study. The first is a set of ideas around HRD as a helping profession that facilitates improvement of some kind. This facilitative role emerged as a key point of agreement. And the desire to “make things better” should also be recognized as important common ground among various emerging systems of thought in HRD. More so, the focal point for which improvement is done in HRD was largely centered on the individual. The commitment to individuals and deep beliefs for and about human beings (including their goodness and potential) were clear in the findings of this study. Another example of this pledge to improving things for people can be found in participants’ strong urging to not tolerate unethical, amoral, or unhealthy human resource practices.

A second powerful foundation for HRD that can be culled from these findings is the strong emphasis on learning and development that emerged among each and every participant interviewed for this study. HRD was consistently associated with the spirit of learning, and much of the activity discussed throughout all of the themes focused on learning. This included conceiving of change (at all levels) as a learning process. The performance versus learning debate that has commanded so much attention during the last few years has seemed to portray these two camps as polar opposites. These findings contradict this and position learning as one of the most foundational concepts for HRD.

Of course Table 5.7 also points to major differences and signals critical issues that must be more seriously discussed within the profession. These differences were most evident in the theme about who/what HRD serves.

The differences that emerged in this theme also indicate at least two potentially distinct systems of beliefs underlying HRD. A sorting and careful study of the beliefs that were extracted from the text presented in Chapter Four (and that were identified as belief statements in previous sections of this chapter) shows a remarkable emergence of two identifiable streams of logic organized around the primary argument forwarded in the theme entitled “Who HRD Serves?”. In that theme, two very strong and contrasting positions asserted that HRD primarily serves either (a) individuals or (b) organizations. As other themes unfolded throughout the study, it became clear that other beliefs surfaced were also key assumptions underlying each of these two positions. These contrasting systems of beliefs are presented in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8. Serving Individuals versus Serving Organizations: Contrasting Systems of Beliefs

	<b>Serving Individuals</b>	<b>Serving Organizations</b>
Beliefs underlying the System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRD is defined by its work with people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRD is defined by its work with organizations.</li> </ul>
Beliefs about the setting for HRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRD is not limited to only the organization-setting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRD is conducted in some kind of organizational setting that is goal-oriented.</li> </ul>
Beliefs about the importance of organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizations are important in society to improve the human condition of employees as well as society at large.</li> <li>• Organizations are important in helping individuals to achieve their life purpose.</li> <li>• Organizations should connect with the communities in which they reside.</li> <li>• Organizations should foster a better society.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizations exist to achieve their mission/goals.</li> </ul>
Beliefs about people in organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizations should put the needs of people first.</li> <li>• Organization should care for and support its employees.</li> <li>• Organizations should foster meaning and a sense of purpose in employees.</li> <li>• Organizations help people “connect” to something bigger than themselves—thus, fostering an</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizations have some, but not primary responsibility, for individuals’ short- and long-term development.</li> </ul>

	important sense of meaning in individuals.	
Beliefs about the responsibility of HRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRD is responsible to and for individuals, rather than to the organization.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRD is sponsored by organizations, thus organizations are the client.</li> <li>• HRD should serve the system's mission and goals.</li> <li>• HRD is distinguished from other entities in society that are charged with developing people by its focus on the system and its mission.</li> <li>• HRD is a handmaiden of the system.</li> </ul>
Beliefs about profit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The needs of individuals should always be more highly valued than the aims of profit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRD should enhance organizational performance.</li> <li>• Organizational performance can be measured on multiple dimensions, not just profit.</li> <li>• HRD should provide short- and long-term value to the organization.</li> </ul>
Beliefs about people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People are inherently valuable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People are valuable to organizations for the resources they provide.</li> </ul>
Beliefs about learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development results in growth of the individual.</li> <li>• HRD helps people reach their full potential through development.</li> <li>• Humans are learning beings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development results in changes in job/role performance.</li> <li>• HRD-sponsored individual learning should be linked to and fulfill organizational needs.</li> <li>• Humans are learning beings, however when n learning is organizationally-sponsored, individuals learn on behalf of the organization (explicitly and in full agreement).</li> <li>• Development of the individual that does not support the mission of the organization is socially responsible, but is not the primary goal of organizations (or HRD).</li> </ul>
Beliefs about developing systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRD develops systems to help people achieve their potential.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRD develops systems to help them achieve their mission and goals.</li> <li>• HRD should be aligned with the mission of the organization and help the organization achieve its goals.</li> <li>• The various parts of an organization should be aligned and focused on achieving organizational mission/goals.</li> </ul>

Beliefs the prioritization between the individual and the organization	<p><i>This group advocated putting people first, and trusting that the organizational benefits would follow...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizations benefit from a central focus on the development and growth of its members.</li> <li>• Profit is a by-product of effective business and human resource practices and should never be the primary goal of an organization.</li> </ul>	<p><i>This group advocated putting organizations first, and trusting that the people benefits would follow...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieving mission/goal demands development of the organization's members.</li> <li>• Human development aligned with and helping to achieve mission/goals of the organization results in mutual benefit for both the individual and the organization.</li> </ul>
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While Table 5.7 outlined key differences and showed that there was a great deal of divergence within the theme about who/what HRD serves, Table 5.8 helps to show that, among the scholarly leaders interviewed for this study, there does emerge a rather clear and logical belief system that supports each position.

A review of the history of philosophy in the professions (presented in Chapter Two) reminds us that it is beneficial for divergent viewpoints to develop over basic questions such as those that emerged during this study. However, it is vital that these alternative beliefs be surfaced, analyzed, and measured by the rigorous standards of philosophy. Elias and Merriam (1995) state that “philosophers deal in theories” (p. 2). Theory in philosophy is a coherent description, explanation, and representation about general and abstract matters around which we lack understanding or that might not be able to be understood through science. The rigor of philosophy is building and aligning the logic of the answers to the questions that are being raised—in creating whole systems of thought. Professionals in HRD must begin to acknowledge that various beliefs forwarded by others are typically supported by a logical system of thought. Table 5.8 is a first attempt to elucidate two potential systems using the beliefs that were surfaced by participants during this study. There is much more work to be done in furthering this work, however it is a useful tool to begin the dialogue.

### Conclusion

The second part of chapter concludes this research study. A discussion of the limitations of the study is provided. This section also includes some guidance on how the reader might use this study, as well as makes some recommendations for the profession of HRD.

#### Limitations of the Study

There are limitations to this research study. First, this was a qualitative study with the primary goal of exploring and beginning to understand core beliefs of the key scholars being interviewed. The assumptions underlying qualitative research demand limited generalizability, and these findings are not meant to be generalized. Rather this research has reported only beliefs of those interviewed, and should be interpreted from a perspective rooted in the assumptions of qualitative research.

Secondly, it must be reiterated that this study is only an early mile-marker in a long, winding, and continuous journey. This study was meant to be a scholarly inquiry

that will stir serious dialogue about core beliefs underlying the profession. The intent here was not to identify and rally for one set of beliefs, nor was it to serve as the seminal piece of research on this issue.

A third limitation is that qualitative research is only as good as the researcher. This was a study conducted by a “young” researcher with limited experience in qualitative research. However, the research was entered into with an adequate base of knowledge as well as a strong awareness of many of the potential challenges that lay ahead, and many precautions were taken to ensure a highly rigorous research process.

#### Recommendations for Readers

One of the hallmarks of qualitative research is that the responsibility of gaining enhanced understanding from such a study rests largely with the reader. It is up to the people who choose to consider this study to make judgments about it based on their own reasoning.

To facilitate that, Chapter 4 provided a report of the themes that emerged after an intensive analysis of the data, with a heavy emphasis on hearing the voices of the participants of the study through excerpted quotes from the interview transcripts. Special care was taken there to minimize researcher bias and report as much of the participants’ voices as possible. Chapter 5 was more interpretive—offering the researcher’s summary and analysis of the category of themes and data. Readers of this document should consider both chapters in their own journey of asking questions and seeking meanings, and are urged to remain open to potentially different meanings.

The rigors of qualitative research demand this posture and effort, but, even more importantly so does the discipline of philosophy. The importance of engaging in philosophy as an act—of engaging in dialogical and dialectical thought—was stressed in Chapter 2. Philosophy relies on critical thought and discussion as its primary instruments of learning, and in this sense, philosophy remains an intensely personal activity. It demands that all its participants think their own way to whatever system of beliefs that ultimately constitute their thought. Philosophy cannot be absorbed from others. Rather pieces such as this research study should be used as a data point for personal and critical reflection.

#### Recommendations for the Profession of HRD

HRD is at a critical stage—growing from its early development to a more mature stage where it has the potential to make great contributions to organizations and the humans that work in them. Most people that come to HRD are drawn by their desire to help individuals and organizations in some way. It is that same motivation that draws scholars into thinking about the profession itself and that is the impetus for this study. This study rests on an assumption—that is, *that the capacity of HRD and its professionals to affect change in the world is enhanced by living as a professional community.*

As a relatively young and growing profession, HRD has yet to systematically identify its core beliefs. Underlying every facet of HRD are beliefs with philosophic components that form the foundation of practice. HRD must begin to identify its own system(s) of beliefs as a community of professionals. The purpose of this study was to uncover core beliefs of the profession of HRD. In order to do this, the inquiry explored

assumptions and beliefs of scholarly leaders in the field. Specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Explore the core beliefs that are underlying and driving participants' ideas of excellencies to be produced by the HRD profession.
2. Analyze the findings to identify common and divergent core beliefs across participants of this study.

It is hoped that these objectives have been effectively achieved.

Most importantly, it is hoped that the findings of this study will be a contribution to the community of HRD, and that the profession will find additional ways to pursue this issue with vigor in the future. One of the most potent ways to do that will be to increase dialogue about core beliefs underlying the profession. To restate an important quote first cited in Chapter 2:

The institutionalization of a process whereby a profession's values and moral commitments are regularly discussed and assessed, in terms of changing conditions both inside and outside the profession, offers a period of critical self-examination both by individual members and by the profession as a whole... This process of self-criticism, codification, and consciousness raising helps reinforce or redefine and realign the profession's collective responsibility, and it is an important learning and maturing experience for both individual professionals and the profession. (Gellerman, 1990, p. 7-8)

In addition, there is much research to be done around beliefs underlying HRD, and the interplay between these beliefs, HRD theory, and HRD practice. It is hoped that this study will serve as a first systematic inquiry into these beliefs and as a basis on which to stimulate further research on the philosophical components of HRD.

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## APPENDICES

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## APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF STUDY

### Summary of Study

#### An Investigation into Core Beliefs of the Discipline of HRD

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##### INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Development (HRD) is “a field in search of itself”(Chalofsky, 1992). While HRD has made great strides in establishing itself in organizations and beginning to construct a knowledgebase to guide its practice, much of the scholarly discussion during the last 10 years has focused on definitional or foundational issues which have yet to foster any widespread agreement.

The two most pervasive issues that demonstrate this have been debates about the definition of the field and the purpose of the field. First, on the issue of definition, a recent literature review conducted by Ruona & Swanson (1998) and Weinberger (1998) uncovered over 20 different definitions of HRD. From HRD’s first definition by Nadler (1970) to today, the field is still unsure of who it is and what it does. The current lack of definition is not for lack of trying. The over 20 definitions uncovered have been by some of HRD’s top scholars. As stated above, Nadler proposed the first definition on record in 1970 and continued to refine his concept throughout the early-1990’s. Malcom Knowles (1978) began to define HRD in his seminal book, *The Adult Learner*. There was also the landmark ASTD study led by McLagan (1989) that produced a model of HRD practice, defined it, and delineated its three focus areas as training & development, organizational development, and career development. More recently, there have been definitions offered by scholarly leaders such as Swanson (1995), Watkins (1990), Chalofsky (1996), and Sleezer & Sleezer (1997). However, the controversy over defining HRD continues.

The other issue that has commanded a great deal of attention has been that of the purpose of HRD. Two distinct schools of thought have emerged that argue that HRD is for the purpose of 1) improving performance (Swanson, 1995) or 2) learning (Watkins & Marsick, 1995; Bierma, 1996). The focus has been on the perceived dualism between these two goals and the issue has taken center-stage at numerous international conferences, dominated entire monographs, and is debated in many articles.

Evident in these debates is a fragmentation of the field that threatens its contributions and, ultimately, its sustainability. Brethower (1995), discussing human performance technologists, stated that “we cannot speak with one voice saying to others ‘this is our mission, these are our products, and this is what we know!’” (p. 17). The current state of the field finds that these issues of definition and purpose are dominating discussion and supports Chalofsky’s 1992 assertion that HRD is “still looking for a unifying base to rally around” (p. 176).

Issues such as the two discussed above are quickly becoming examples of “conversations having us” (Topp, 1998). That is, of conversations going-on and becoming so prominent that little else actually happens except the having of the conversation. Positions are defended, tradition weighs heavy, very few new thoughts are generated, and little progress is made in understanding and creating new meaning.

HRD is moving from being recognized as a profession of practice to an area of discipline and academic study. With this evolution, certain things need to happen. A discipline is distinguished by its ability to define the content of their domain, conceptually organize their content, and identify and utilize principles of discovery and verification that constitute the ground rules for creating and testing knowledge in their fields (Schuman, 1981). Much of this work has only begun to be addressed in HRD. Furthermore, HRD can learn from the evolution of other disciplines. Sternberg (1990) has identified four basic stages through which disciplines evolve. First is an initial stage where professionals become interested in a common set of

phenomena and think about how to study it. Second, is the early development stage where theory and research begin to be conducted and initial paradigms are set and debated. Third, the mature stage, is when one or a few number of paradigms become prominent and research and theory-building increase and are focused on furthering those paradigms. Finally, there is a post-mature stage where new paradigms begin to emerge as older ones are proven to be insufficient to address key challenges facing the discipline and then the four-stage cycle begins again.

HRD is at a critical stage—growing from the early-development stage to a more mature stage where it has the potential to make great contributions to organizations and the human resources that work in them. A central task in furthering this maturity is identifying its core beliefs. Many key leaders in the field have repeatedly called for clarifying the assumptions that underlie HRD as a way to move the field past definitional issues such as those discussed above. Kuchinke (1996) points out that underlying these issues are “different assumptions about the rights and responsibilities of organizations, the relationship between employees and organizations, and the role of organizations within society” (p. 56). These different views are rooted in different belief systems. Chalofsky (1992) said that the core of a field “is comprised of philosophy and mission, theory and concepts, and roles and competencies” and discussed how interrelated they are—feeding one another and needing to be aligned. Watkins (1990) stated

we need research and theory-building to figure out who we are...we have not yet developed a thermometer that measures and delimits our field. We need rigorous, shared, defensible, common definitions...and to agree on a common set of values that characterize ethical practice...before we can have a coherent theory of people development in organizations. (p. 182-183)

#### PROBLEM STATEMENT AND PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

As a relatively young academic discipline, HRD has yet to systematically identify its core beliefs. Underlying every facet of HRD are core beliefs with philosophic components that form the foundation of practice. This foundation can be individually or commonly held. History is characterized by phases where different prominent philosophies influenced current conditions, actions, and events. In education, for example, the philosophical schools of thought forwarded by Dewey and Snedden are consistently contrasted and analyzed for their varied impacts on schools in America. In business, Taylor’s scientific management philosophy is being replaced by more organic views of how organizations function and disciplines like HRD are helping organizations cope with the far-reaching implications of this change.

HRD must begin to identify its own philosophy as a community of professionals. The purpose of this study, then, is to uncover core beliefs of the discipline of HRD. In order to do this, the inquiry will explore core assumptions and beliefs of scholarly leaders in the field, based on a framework for mapping a philosophy (Frankena, 1965). Specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Explore core beliefs about excellencies to be produced by the discipline of HRD.
2. Explore the core beliefs and assumptions that are underlying and driving participant’s beliefs of excellencies to be produced.
3. Analyze the findings to identify common and divergent beliefs across participants of this study.

#### THE RESEARCH QUESTION

- What are the core beliefs of key scholarly leaders in the HRD profession?

#### RESEARCH DESIGN

- Basic, qualitative research using participant interviews.

- **First Interview:** The first would be an approximately two-hour interview that will focus on the following organizing question, “If the profession of HRD was excellent in all ways, what 5-7 things would be true?”. A worksheet will be provided to you prior to the interview to help focus your thinking on that organizing question, this is included in this packet of information. The conversation, however, will only begin with that key question and the purpose of the interview will be to explore the beliefs that are driving your ideas on stated excellencies. You will be free to decline to answer any question. The interview will be scheduled at your convenience. The interview will be audio-taped to assure accurate transcription of your perspectives, however you may decline to be audio-taped.
- **Second interview:** A second interview will be conducted to ensure accurate understanding and interpretation of what was discussed during the first interview. You are also free to raise any additional thoughts you may have had since the first interview. This follow-up interview will be approximately one hour, and will be conducted over the phone at your convenience. These will also be audio-taped with your permission.

#### SAMPLE

- Potential participants will be solicited on the basis that they have served a leadership role in a scholarly association related to HRD. That is, each participant has been either: (a) a current or past president of the Academy of Human Resource Development, or (b) a current or past chair of the American Society for Training and Development’s Research Committee. This sampling criteria has been chosen because these two associations represent the two primary scholarly associations of the field and leaders of these associations are elected by their membership.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM/IMPORTANCE OF THIS INQUIRY

HRD has seen no attempt to create a systematic philosophy for the discipline. Many have called for such activity and a few have attempted investigations of isolated issues in a philosophic manner, but efforts to rigorously address the issue have been limited. This study will begin to address this lack of systematically analyzed philosophical beliefs in HRD. It will contribute to HRD in at least three key ways: 1) furthering the evolution of the discipline, 2) affecting practice, and 3) affecting theory.

#### Evolution of the Discipline of HRD.

This study will clarify and improve the understanding of the structure and philosophical components of HRD. It will reemphasize the importance of deep reflection, which is the “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief...and the further conclusions to which it tends” (Dewey, 1933, p. 9), in HRD.

Second, it will report on some of these key components and identify beliefs held in common as well as debated. Magee (1971) tells us that “one of the tasks of philosophy is mapping the logic of...discourse, laying it out, so to speak, so that a person can make his way about it successfully” (p. 45). This study will help to elucidate organizing principles for HRD by tapping the wisdom of experienced scholars.

This will help the field to better navigate through key issues it is facing. Philosophy can provide a framework for articulating the purpose of the field and moving past the “conversation having us” (Topp, 1998). Instead, we need to have the conversations—and a primary way this can happen is if we really begin to explore the deep assumptions that drive the field. It is at this level that generative conversations take place and real change begins (Topp, 1998; Bohm, 1994). Surfacing and clarifying key assumptions provides a set of criteria to guide future discussions of what is and isn’t HRD. We can analyze different schools of thought emerging in HRD (i.e. performance and learning ) to see where they come together and where they do not. Philosophy can be a rigorous backdrop for judging whether and to what extent the field can accommodate multiple definitions and purposes. This same set of criteria can also be used to balance the long- and short-term interests of HRD—helping us to do both for the optimization of the field. Philosophy can be an important mechanism to guide the nature of conversations that need to continually be held in HRD. This will ensure that HRD grows well.

Another issue that is increasingly being discussed is that of professionalization in HRD. The focus of a 1998 AHRD symposium, the issue is multi-faceted and controversial. One of the emerging dilemmas is what any kind of credentialing or certification would be based on. Reflection, theory-building (Mott, 1998; Hansen, 1998), research, and competencies have been suggested as possible bases, while others have suggested bases that are more philosophically grounded. Ellinger (1998) and Watkins (1990), for instance, have both advocated an integrated vision and values. It is presently unclear where this conversation will lead and how it will impact the future of the field. However, it is increasingly clear that philosophy will factor into it.

Finally, an investigation of core beliefs will serve as the basis for a longer journey of exploring, identifying, and creating future philosophy systems in HRD. The spirit of philosophy demands the quest for wisdom never be fulfilled. The clarification process is never finished—it is a continual process where “new light is always dawning on meaning of concepts at every level, with the consequence that the whole enterprise has to be forever examined” (Magee, 1971, p. 47). Thus, it is hoped that this study will serve as a starting point for future development of philosophical systems.

#### Implications for Practice.

Reflection about philosophical beliefs ensures that as practitioners we are leading, in Plato’s words, an “examined life”, acknowledging that beliefs about basic ends and principles lead to concrete conclusions and action. This process can be done unconsciously where it is subject to many hazards. Or, it can be done consciously where one (or an entire field) strives for clarification and alignment. Striving for identification of key beliefs and assumptions and, then, being grounded in those articulated by the discipline of HRD will undoubtedly result in better and more consistent practice. This is especially relevant in HRD, an applied field driven by its practice, where theory sometime lags behind the challenges being faced in organizations. Philosophy provides some structure on which to make decisions when research is not there to support a practice or policy. Magee (1971) identifies the importance of philosophy to complement science when he explains:

Conclusions about what to do are a mixture of judgements about the “excellencies to be produced” combined with empirical or scientific knowledge about how to produce them. It is important to notice that we cannot derive the list of prescriptions, excellencies, that are a set of value judgements about what to do, from the descriptive, empirical, knowledge accounts of what the facts usually are. It is, in short, not possible to go directly from scientific understanding to policy and practice. Practice is always a combination of prescriptive convictions and descriptive understanding. (p. 46)

The logic of philosophy allows us to engage in thinking that is at once disciplined and imaginatively creative. We are able to apply philosophical methods to practical problems and ascertain what the issues are and how different assumptions affect the problem. In addition, we can use philosophy to analyze and interpret practice. In these ways the idealism of philosophy can be used to improve how we address practical problems. The act of philosophy cultivates the capacity and appetite for reflection, for exchange and debate of ideas, for life-long learning, and for dealing with problems for which there are no easy answers. Strom (1996) states that “philosophical query asks why practitioners conduct practice in the manner that they do, in order to (a) provoke reflection, (b) systematically analyze and evaluate procedures, and (c) determine the appropriate philosophy or philosophies to drive back to practice” (p. 33).

#### Implications for Research and Theory Building.

Theory-building and research are emerging as important critical issues facing HRD. Critical work is being done to encourage and refine research methods and paradigms (Swanson & Holton, 1997; Marsick, 1990) and to call attention to the importance of building theory in HRD (Mott, 1998; Hansen, 1998; Torracco,

1997; Chalofsky, 1996). The motivation driving these efforts is to undergird HRD with a solid, systematically-acquired knowledge base.

Another important part of the evolutionary process is to acknowledge the philosophical framework in which these discussions are taking place. A worthy debate on paradigms for research and theory-building between Marsick and Passmore in 1990 hinted at connections of research with epistemological concerns and even with notions of worldview, but these connections are rarely made. Many discussions of research and theory-building are happening in a vacuum concerned with only science and methods, or the “how to” of generating new knowledge. For the most part, scholars have agreed that there are two primary ways of doing research (quantitatively and qualitatively) and have urged people in the field to get on with the business of researching.

While this is practical and necessary, there is certainly merit in also placing knowledge-generation in a philosophical framework—put in it’s place, as it were, and strive to understand how it is connected with how we see, think about, and act in the world. Research and theory-building are only parts of an overall context that drives HRD. How we see the world and what we recognize as knowledge in HRD fundamentally affects the methodologies we employ to research and build theory. A too limited view can limit the scope and utility of HRD. A too broad view can lead to the slippery slope of relativism where there are few standards. Philosophy ultimately demands that we consider what knowledge and theory really are. When placed within a context of assumptions about reality and nature our current views of these things may or may not change. Marsick (1990) states:

...if we are to describe accurately and explain the world we research, then, as we work we must test our assumptions about what we view as knowledge, whether our view is compatible with the nature of organizations and the phenomena we are researching, and how we believe we should go about researching these phenomena. (p. 33)

It is important to acknowledge how science and philosophy complement one another and proceed on a journey that demands work in both areas from HRD scholars. Philosophy is not more or less important than science, it is just different. While science tells us what the world contains, philosophy asks about different ways to classify these things. While science produces knowledge, philosophy asks what we can know and how. While science provides new knowledge of the observable or based on experimental tests, philosophy suggests “rules” for the stuff of reality and how it is organized. Philosophy looks behind science and analyzes concepts/notions and methods that are used. It pushes a discipline such as HRD to strive for even more than good research. In this way, philosophy may suggest important standards of rigor for research and theory building that have yet to be considered.

*References for those cited are available if you would like them*

## APPENDIX B: RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

### Research Consent Form

#### An Investigation into Core Beliefs of the Discipline of HRD

---

##### INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study to explore and document scholarly leaders' beliefs of excellencies to be produced in HRD as well as their other core beliefs. You were selected as a possible participant because you have served a leadership role in a scholarly association related to HRD during the last 10 years. That is, you have either been: (a) a current or past president of the Academy of Human Resource Development, or (b) a current or past chair of the American Society for Training and Development's Research Committee.

This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of philosophy. The principal, and sole, investigator is Wendy Ruona, Ph.D. Candidate in Human Resource Development, University of Minnesota. Before agreeing to take part in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation. It describes the purpose, benefits, and risks of the study, and the safeguards that will be taken. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study at any time.

##### RESEARCH PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to uncover core beliefs underlying the discipline of HRD. In order to do this, the inquiry will explore core assumptions and beliefs of scholarly leaders in the field, based on a framework for mapping a philosophy (Frankena, 1965). Specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Explore core beliefs about excellencies to be produced by the discipline of HRD.
2. Explore the core beliefs and assumptions that are underlying and driving participant's beliefs of excellencies to be produced.
3. Analyze the findings to identify common and divergent beliefs across participants of this study.

Many have called for scholarly and rigorous work on issues related to beliefs and philosophy underlying HRD, but efforts to rigorously address the issue have been limited. This study will begin to address this lack of systematically analyzed philosophical beliefs in HRD, and your participation will assist in that goal.

##### RESEARCH PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask that you participate in two interviews. The first would be an approximately two-hour interview that will focus on the following organizing question, "If the profession of HRD was excellent in all ways, what 5-7 things would be true?". A worksheet will be provided to you prior to the interview to help focus your thinking on that organizing question. The conversation, however, will only begin with that key question and the purpose of the interview will be to explore the beliefs that are driving your ideas on stated excellencies. You will be free to decline to answer any question. The interview will be scheduled at your convenience. The interview will be audio-taped to assure accurate transcription of your perspectives, however you may decline to be audio-taped.

A second interview will be conducted to ensure accurate understanding and interpretation of what was discussed during the first interview. You are also free to raise any additional thoughts you may have had since the first interview. This follow-up interview will be approximately one hour, and will be conducted over the phone at your convenience. These will also be audio-taped with your permission.

## RISKS

A risk of this study is identification of its participants. Several measures will be taken to assure your anonymity and the confidentiality of the findings. These are described in detail under the next section of this form entitled confidentiality.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

There is some choice regarding the level of confidentiality that will be ensured for this study. Given the high-profile nature of the potential participants, I would like you to choose whether and to what extent you may be identified. There are three possible levels:

- Level 1: Criteria Only: Names of those interviewed will not be published. Only criteria for the pool of the sample will be published and it will not be made clear who participated and who did not. Participant's name and the name of their organization will not be used on audio-tapes or transcripts (if it is by mistake, it will be deleted from the transcript). Each piece of data will be identified by a code number. Names or specific affiliations will not be included in any report or publication of the study findings. Quotes and interview excerpts will not be attributed to the participant by name or in any other way that would lead to identification of the participant.
- Level 2: Identity-Only Disclosure: Names of those interviewed will be published. Quotes/excerpts will not be accompanied with a name or information that will allow the participant to be identified. Participant's name and the name of their organization will not be used on audio-tapes or transcripts (if it is by mistake, it will be deleted from the transcript). Each piece of data will be identified by a code number. Names or specific affiliation will not be included in any report or publication of the study findings.
- Level 3: Complete Disclosure: Names of those interviewed will be published and quotes they say will be attributed to them personally, by name.

The final decision of confidentiality will be made only after all participants have selected their preferred level. The decision will be the level on which there was *unanimous* agreement. Thus, at a minimum all participants will be ensured confidentiality at least at Level 1 (Criteria Only Disclosure). If all participants agree to Level 2 (Identity-Only Disclosure), then the study will proceed in that way. If all participants agree to Level 3 (Complete Disclosure), the study will proceed accordingly. Please review three potential levels of confidentiality and disclosure, and choose one by clearly marking an "X" in the box to the left of the choice you prefer.

In addition, to protect the confidentiality of participants of this study, the master list of names, audio-tapes, and transcriptions and notes will be in a locked file cabinet accessible only to the principal investigator. Audio-tapes will be erased no later than September, 1999.

### **COSTS & COMPENSATION & BENEFITS**

There are no costs or compensations involved if you participate in this research project, nor are there any anticipated direct personal benefits.

### **VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY**

Taking part in this research project is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with Wendy E.A. Ruona, the University of Minnesota, or any party associated with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdrawal at any time.

**HOW TO GET ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS:**

You are encouraged to ask questions both before you agree to be in the study and also at any time you need information in the future. The researcher conducting this study is Wendy E.A. Ruona. You may contact her directly with any questions you have at (651) 917-0505. You may also contact Ms. Ruona's academic advisor, Richard A. Swanson, Professor of Human Resource Development, at (612) 624-9727.

If you have any questions or concerns that you would like to discuss with someone who is not directly associated with Ms. Ruona or would like to discuss your rights as a research participant, you may call The University of Minnesota's Research Advocate Line at 612-626-1680.

**STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records upon turning this form in.

---

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I have fully explained this research study to the participants, and in my judgment there was sufficient information regarding risks and benefits, to make an informed decision. I will inform the participant in a timely manner of any changes in the procedure or risks and benefits if any should occur.

---

Investigator's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

IRB #: 9903E00003

IRB Approval Date: March 15, 1999



APPENDIX C: DISSERTATION MEMO FORM

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Access window titled 'Memo Entry' containing a 'Dissertation Memo Entry Form'. The form has the following fields and content:

- Topics:** A dropdown menu with the selected value '10100, What would that look like?'
- ID:** A text box containing the number '11'.
- Creation Date:** A text box containing '7/10/99, 5:43 PM'.
- Subtitle:** A text box containing 'HRD not a thing, but an activity'.
- Participant:** An empty dropdown menu.
- Memos:** A large text area containing the following text:
 

I'm sensing that HRD is perceived to be an activity, more so than a thing. But then--WHAT DO WE DO?????

So many people don't want to be constrained by the "organizatoin" part of HRD. But rather are lobbying for a focus on what HRD does. This is far from agreed-upon though--ample people are OK with organizational focus.

Development is certainly an agreed upon theme. But, I'm not sure that that offers too much clarification. Development means a lot of differnet things.

And, if it's about developmetn of the Human Being--regardless of context--than how is HRD different from VoEd or AdEd?

If it's about development related to work--how different from VoEd?

Then, there's this stuff about HRD being a way that business's do business. What does that mean? What are the implications of that? How does this relate to Dick's idea of HRD as a process? What about Brian's idea that HRD is about tools?

The bottom of the window shows 'Form View' and a status bar.

Microsoft Access

File Edit View Insert Format Records Tools Window Help

Memo Entry

### Dissertation Memo Entry Form

Topics	ID	14
12300. Balance multiple needs/reinforcing loop of de	Creation Date	7/13/99, 5:59 PM
Subtitle:	Participant	
Those who choose "orgs" over "individs"		
<p>Memos</p> <p>I envision a balancing teeter-totter with this delicate balance of win-win-win for multiple stakeholders. The two ends of this continuum are the "side" of the individual or the "side" of the organization.</p> <p>I sense that possibly the people who are on the "Individual" side of the continuum are less win-win-win than the other. Sense some defensiveness about organizations, profit, etc.. some inherent distaste for organizations who maximize profit. Thus, earlier in the game, they might choose individuals rather than working towards win-win-win?</p> <p>Whereas the "Organization" side of the continuum fully acknowledge the delicate balance, how hard that is--take that as a very, very serious part of their work and I would bet agonize more when they are in positions where the Individual suffers. For the other group, if the organization suffers it doesn't feel like much of a big deal to them--almost like "they deserve it" kind of attitude.</p> <p>The org. group seems confident that "win" for individuals will be a "win" for organizations, and don't seem so worried about that. Whereas the vice-a-versa is not true, a "win" for the organization is suspect for those who come down on the "individual" side.</p> <p>Does the "org" group also agree more with the "change from within" philosophy? I bet this is true. And maybe not as true for the "indivd" group.</p> <p>"You can't comfort the afflicted. without afflicting the comfortable" (Diana)</p>		

Where memos are typed and logged.

Microsoft Access

File Edit View Insert Format Records Tools Window Help

Memo Entry

### Dissertation Memo Entry Form

Topics ID 17  
 16100, What are orgs? Fundamental stuff Creation Date 7/14/99, 9:20 AM

Subtitle: Participant  
 What are orgs?

Memos

The word "organization" seems to be causing trouble in this study. It is being associated with corporations, bureaucracy, profit (which clearly there is a bit of distaste about). XXXXX said XXXX doesn't use the word anymore because of all of its baggage and prefers to stick to idea of "entities or systems with a mission".

However, that could be so large and varied! I looked up "organization" in my old American Heritage dictionary:

- Something that has been organized or made into a whole
- Something comprising elements with varied functions that contribute to the whole and to collective functions
- A number of persons or groups having specific responsibilities and united for a particular purpose
- Organism: (defined as a system regarded as analogous to a living body, the social organism)

How then is a family or community any different? These things would qualify for these definitions, wouldn't they?

So, then I wonder if it is organizations related to work? What does that mean? Work hardly came up in this study--twice to be exact and both were answers I solicited. However, in both cases it seemed obvious to them that of course work! So, this could of been my interviewing and not-sharp probing more than anything. On the other hand, that it didn't come up much may be telling?

Where memos are typed and logged.

## APPENDIX D: PREPARATION FOR RESEARCH INTERVIEW

### Preparation for Research Interview

---

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this important research.

Our interview is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_.

Once again, to remind you, the research question driving this study is, "*What are the core beliefs of key scholarly leaders in the HRD profession?*" The following question will serve as the organizer for our discussion:

If the profession of HRD was excellent in all ways, what 5-7 things would be true?

Please reflect on this organizing question and complete the following blanks, making whatever notes you would like on this or an attached paper.

The profession of HRD would be excellent in all ways if \_\_\_\_\_.

The profession of HRD would be excellent in all ways if \_\_\_\_\_.

The profession of HRD would be excellent in all ways if \_\_\_\_\_.

The profession of HRD would be excellent in all ways if \_\_\_\_\_.

The profession of HRD would be excellent in all ways if \_\_\_\_\_.

The profession of HRD would be excellent in all ways if \_\_\_\_\_.

The profession of HRD would be excellent in all ways if \_\_\_\_\_.

## APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK FORMAT

Code #	Name	Turn #	Text	Notes
11300	WER	138	<i>I want to go back to the systems. Earlier I asked you why should we save the systems...</i>	
	ID X	139	Well, I don't think we always should save the system, particularly subsystems.  But clearly I think we have a deeper understanding of that in our culture. You, you know, this country is hell-bent on not preserving a system that isn't performing, so we don't have to argue that too much. I mean, we can lament about it. We can be immobilized by the whole thing.  So it seems you ought to give your best shot at making the system worth preserving and if it's not, let it go.  I mean, does Chrysler exist right now and some other...I mean, Daimler bought them out, you know, so they've become a subsystem of another system.  And I mean, the beauty of systems theory is that it helps you deal with that. It really does. I mean, is there...what's the system in terms of my work when I have doctoral students leave and go out to other places? I mean, which you talking about? A community of scholars or the system at the University of Minnesota?  Systems theory is very...such at peace with a lot of this. Things aren't necessarily...they can go away, but they don't necessarily go away. A subsystem becomes a system or a system becomes a sub-system and you're not a system any more.  Do you understand it? Is that tape recorder working?	Don't always have to save a system—particularly sub-systems.  Should give your best shot at preserving a system that is worth preserving and if it's not worth it or it doesn't work, let it go—understanding that somehow that is how it's best in a larger systems theory kind of way.  Note: Honesty is owed to individuals. Honors them.  Also see #148  Systems theory helps one to deal with this.
	WER	140	<i>Um hmm.</i>	
	ID X	141	Yes, it is. It's so slow.	
	WER	142	<i>OK. Doing O.K. Want to take a break?</i>	

	ID X	143	No. I want to know what time it is. I think I have a three thirty appointment so we're OK, right? Yeah. Am I supposed to be talking or are you supposed to be answering. Am I...it's OK?	
	WER	144	<i>Your two hours.</i>	
	ID X	145	Well, each one these...I think, what did I write. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight things. Each one of them had a whole tier of cascading stuff that...some of it's very situa...some of it, I think, is general and some of it is situational.	
10100	ID X	146	Like <i>our</i> field. You can look at the history of our field as to how it grew and how people became members of the profession and that's very different than other professions. And so when you say we should have minimal professional standards, whoa. For some fields, that's been in building very, very early. For our profession that has been resisted almost forever. And so there's a good side and bad side to that.	HRD has traditionally resisted minimal professional standards, while other fields established them very early in their evolution.
20200	ID X	147	And so there's a good side and bad side to that. I mean, the good is...I mean, so we have a field that fundamentally is dominated by subject matter experts, not people that understand HRD processes and the subprocesses, so they have expertise, if you will, and they're hired by their company because they have expertise. And where they're on a development journey and they're put into the function to get some more expertise and so in some ways we get people in the field temporarily that are quite extraordinary. On the other hand we get some of the biggest bumpkins that you could have and so that's the good and the bad.	Not having minimum professional standards has been a strength and a weakness.
	WER	148	<i>You mentioned that many practitioners don't understand the process of HRD. Can you elaborate on this?</i>	
20200	ID X	149	Well, they don't have a systematic way of doing their work.	HRD needs a systematic way of doing their work—a process by which to do

		<p>So I have defined, generically, a five stage process of analyze, propose, create, implement and assess for HRD. And then underneath if we had training and development, I'd have different words....The ADDIE model or the OD model in terms of the change model.</p> <p>So they're essentially problem-defining, problem-solving methods, OK.</p> <p>But there is a way in which you do your work in an orderly way.</p>	<p>their work.</p> <p>Note: A KEY belief for ID X!</p> <p>ID X's process for HRD is analyze, propose, create, implement and assess.</p> <p>Essentially a problem-defining, problem-solving method.</p>
20100	ID X 150	<p>So because we have people that are mostly schooled...they're not schooled...they're not trained...they're not certified in this process...they're subject matter experts. But they know how to make an insurance sale or make a BLT sandwich or something, and all of a sudden they're the HRD person.</p> <p>They don't have a process. And then even those people that are...you know, if they had a defined process...</p>	<p>Subject-matter experts, no matter their subject-matter expertise, need a common, core process to do the work of HRD most effectively.</p>
20100	ID X 151	<p>there are rival processes, there's not one way to do accounting, there's not one way to do a medical procedure. I mean, there's all kinds of ways.</p>	<p>Can be multiple processes</p>
10120	ID X 154	<p><i>So when you say minimal professional standards, describe what that means to you.</i></p> <p>I don't know. I really don't know. I just think that we have to</p> <p><i>(Transcriber's note: break in tape)</i></p> <p>I mean, I think you're really talking about the low end. You know, low end.</p> <p>I mean, I deal with what is con...I mean, my own faculty don't want to do this, the University of Minnesota. I mean, this problem is so pervasive. You know, everybody should be able to do their thing, have their own point of view. It's nuts!</p> <p>But it seemed to me that, you know, for example I teach a class at the University that teaches a defining process of training and since our faculty won't agree to test all of our students about the core knowledge of the field, I changed that course to make sure that every student went through every stage of the process on the project. Prior to that I'd</p>	<p>Minimum professional standards are just that—minimum. Some core things to be aware of, know what happens when have/do it and when don't, etc...</p>

		<p>have them go through some of the phases and then they could write a paper about...now they're going to have to...cause if they don't experience it in here, if they don't walk through every stage of the process, they won't experience it. Period.</p> <p>And so in my mind that there are some core, you know, however you define it, there are some core phases, there's important work that happens in those phases, and it should cascade to the other phases. The people ought to know what it is and ought to know what happens when you don't have it and do have it.</p> <p>Pretty low level stuff. Be aware of it. Know what happens when you have it, when you don't have it and being able to see when it's not there and when it is there and...</p>	
10120	ID X 155	<p>But the reality is if I applied that test to the people in the field, half the people would be out by midnight tonight. That's conservative. Because the profession doesn't control who enters the profession.</p> <p>And other people would argue that's a definition of a profession when the people control the entry.</p>	<p>HRD, as a profession, does not control who enters the profession.</p> <p>Controlling entry into a field is a fundamental characteristic of a true profession.</p>
10210	ID X 156	<p>Reality is that employer's control entry into our profession and they don't know anything about HRD. So here we go.</p>	<p>The reality is that since HRD hasn't controlled entry, employer's have—this is a problem.</p>
10100	ID X 157	<p>So, the unwillingness of the profession, and we're off this point... your study is right at the edge of this point where the field has resisted answering these questions about beliefs, about theoretical foundations, definitions and they're at the point of entertaining these things.</p>	<p>Note: Orgs defining HRD HRD now at point of willing to entertain questions of definition, values, ethics, etc....</p>



## APPENDIX F: SUMMARY SHEET

**Summary Sheet**

<b>Study Participant:</b>
<b>Researcher:</b>
<b>Interview Date:</b>
<b>Interview Location:</b>
Today's Date:

**The profession would be excellent if:**


---

These were taken from the text of interview.

<b>Turn #</b>	<b>Excellency</b>
(#4)	Excellency #1: practitioners acted consistently with a code of ethics
(#16)	Excellency #2: we had a model of practice that embraced the whole of the disparate field
(#56)	Excellency #3: we understand that the system is always the client.
(#116)	Excellency #4: we saw ourselves as members of the helping profession and understood what that meant.
(#142)	Excellency #5: we had a deeper knowledge of the behavioral sciences (psychology and organization sciences)
(#202)	Excellency #6: we acted as if theory really mattered, and challenged it when it doesn't work.
(#210)	Excellency #7: we articulated what we mean to line managers
(#211)	Excellency #8: we all had a Lucian Rowe sense of what difference we can make in lives of people in the organizations.

## **Beliefs I See Articulated (or thematized) in the Text of the Interview**

---

Belief is defined as a mental state or condition of placing trust or confidence in a thing, and together along with other motivational factors is involved in the direction and control of voluntary behavior.

### **Do No Harm**

- Do no harm (#5)
- As “helper” and influencing role, there is a strong moral obligation to “do no harm” (#127)
  
- Investment linked to potential to “do harm” in the system. (#112)

### **Learning as Primary Tool**

- HRD practitioners are essentially helping people who use learning as their primarily tool. (#35)
  
- Educate people in systems and make them better at learning. (#37)
- Learning is fundamental in organizations—both for individuals and systems. (#42)
  
- HRD must create opportunity (and some structure) for that learning to happen. (#52)
  
- Action science is a framework for interpersonal helping. (#119)

### **Helping Profession/Helpers**

- Excellency #4: we saw ourselves as members of the helping profession and understood what that meant. (#116)
- HRD is in organizations to serve as an aid to the system. (#61)
  
- Affect the client in some way (#21)
  
- HRD does their work through people (#123)
- Important to have the human being in mind (when conducting practice). (#23)
  
- Human interaction is central (#22)
- Interpersonal helping (at individ. and orgl. levels) is core causal competency. (#118)
  
- Role of HRD is that of helper—not the doer (#124)

## Questions that I still have AND that I would like to hear from you on:

I have highlighted many things in green in the attached interview notes. However, not all of those highlighted issues need to be addressed for this dissertation. Thus, I ask two things:

- 1) please comment on the ones that I have highlighted in yellow as they are central ideas that I think could benefit from some elaboration; and
- 2) look over the list (and add to it if you see fit) and feel free to comment on any other ones you would like to discuss further.

You can respond to me in writing or over the phone (in which case it would probably be best to make an appointment for us to “meet”). I can be reached at wendy.e.ruona-1@umn.edu or (651) 917-0505.

Turn #	Question	Your Comments/Notes
28	What does “more resilient/robust” mean?	
33	Benney? Is that right?	
33	Why “even as a change agent”?	
36	Can you elaborate on this—what does it mean that improving performance has educative intent underlying it?	
37	Learning what? Does it matter what the individ/system learns? To what end?	
47	What does this mean, “from a decision-making standpoint”?	
50	Also, somewhat subordinates expectations of others in favor of expectations from the self. What are the implications of this for management of human resources? Believe in “managing”?	

## APPENDIX G: PARTICIPANT INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUMMARY SHEET

**Instructions for Review of Interview & Summary Sheet**

Thank you, once again, for participating in my dissertation research around core beliefs that may underly HRD. I have completed an initial analysis of your interview transcript. It is now time to check back with you and allow you the opportunity to check that I'm getting it right.

**Attachments**

Transcribed Interview: I have attached the text of the interview in a column format that I am using for analysis purposes. Here's how that format looks:

Code #	Turn Number	Name	Text	Notes
Emerging themes coded on master list  * Ignore the code #'s	Sequencing text in each interview. This will help to quickly locate and track interview information within the original interview to review context etc...	Will use name if have permission.  If chose 2 <sup>nd</sup> level of anonymity then will use "code" name	Transcribed (fully) from interviews, divided into meaningful segments  • Interviewee is straight font  • Interviewer (Wendy) is in italics	Space for notes, ideas, hunches, reference to memo #, etc...

Note: On the transcribed interview I have copied some rows in cases where I wanted to code what was being discussed to be in two places. Please ignore any redundancy.

Summary Sheet: I have also attached what I am calling a "Summary Sheet". This is a synthesis of many of the important notes extracted from the interview text. It includes:

- List of excellencies you stated during the interview;
- Beliefs identified in text of interview;
- Questions that I still have for you and would actually like to hear from you on during my next round of analysis. I have a lot of questions for you, but it is unrealistic to ask you all of them, so I have narrowed it down to make it more manageable given my tight timeline.

**Instructions**

Here's what I would like you to do:

1. Review the interview text in whatever detail you feel comfortable with. You might pay special attention to the "Wendy's Notes" column where I have recorded ideas, paraphrased what I hear you saying, and/or identified questions that are of interest to me.

For my analysis purposes, I have color-coded some things in this column according to the following key:

- No color [Not highlighted electronically]: This is a powerful idea that you articulated during the interview and that might be considered a core belief. These have then been organized and synthesized in the Summary Sheet.

- Pink [Highlighted with pink electronically]: This identifies an “excellency” you articulated during the interview
- Green [Highlighted with green electronically]: Text highlighted in green are question that I had either for you or for me, or a random thought I had as I was contemplating the interview, notes, etc... Much of this you needn’t pay too much attention to. I have extracted key questions that I do want to follow-up with you on in the Summary Sheet.

Unfortunately those of you without a color printer or screen will only see shades of gray, so I hope this won’t distract you too much.

Feel free as you review the interview text to make any notes (additions, edits to your ideas, comments on my notes, etc..) you would like to discuss further with me.

2. Review the Summary Sheet. Specifically:

- Review the excellencies to ensure that they match what you think you said to me.
- Look at the compilation of beliefs that I pulled out of the interview transcript. Each belief is accompanied by a turn number so you can reference where it was in the original text. Feel free to comment on any that you would like.
- Review the questions that I have identified and would like to hear more from you on. I have extracted more questions than is probably reasonable to ask you to answer. Thus, I ask two things: 1) please comment on the ones that I have highlighted in yellow as they are central ideas that I think require some elaboration and 2) look over the list and feel free to comment on any other ones you would like to discuss further.

When you are done reviewing the interview text and Summary Sheet, you can respond to me in writing (e-mail, attachments, etc...) or we can set-up a phone conversation that works for both of our schedules. I can be reached at (651) 917-0505 or [wendy.e.ruona-1@umn.edu](mailto:wendy.e.ruona-1@umn.edu).

I know this is asking a lot of you, but if at all possible, I would request a response from you no later than **Monday, July 19, 1999**. This will best enable me to incorporate additional ideas into my final analysis. Thank you!

## APPENDIX H: SAMPLE DATABASE ANALYSIS PRINT-OUT

<b>Find Code X Report for Review</b>				<b>Code # 11100</b>	
<u>Code</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Turn</u>	<u>Review Status</u>	<u>Quote Potential</u>	<u>Index</u>
11100	7		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1262
<b>Text</b>			<b>Notes</b>		
I like the new academy code of ethics quite a bit, even compared to the old ASTD one. ___ But I think, at a minimum, if you had people with a sense of do no harm ___ and recognition that moving into areas in which you're not competent causes real harm.			Do no harm = minimum standard ___ Moving into areas where not competent causes real harm.		
11100	11		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox" value="2"/>	1265
<b>Text</b>			<b>Notes</b>		
If they have one, it's often an ethical core around the organization ___ or the job they just left, ___ or some people have a kind of ethical core around performance technology. ___ You know, I'm a performance technologist, which is OK, but that's really a content area you know, ___ it's not, you know, do no harm. You know, you can do tremendous harm with performance technology, too.			Ethics driving practice often come from organizations, jobs, "content areas" of expertise ___ Not necessarily come from a place of "do no harm"		
11100	25		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox" value="2"/>	1267
<b>Text</b>			<b>Notes</b>		
If you create electronic performance support systems, that's another one of my... I mean, it's a lovely innovation and it's completely potentially peopleless right? I mean you just build it into the machine. ___ Is there some way in which you have the human being in mind and could you... is there some ethic here around how you make their life more difficult or more efficient you know? ___ And not just the person, but the organization as well. ___ Also, 11110 (Relationship) and 12300 (Balancing Multiple Stakeholders)			Important to have the human being in mind (when conducting practice). ___ Must ask whether asking their lives easier? Better? ___ Need to have org. in mind, too. Not just about wanting better for individual, but also for organization		
11100	121		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox" value="1"/>	1269
<b>Text</b>			<b>Notes</b>		
So I think that the the cry of interpersonal helping you... it helps you see that what you want is a just relationship between a helper and helpee. (also in 11100 Helping profession) ___ And it is, you know, and it's not overly dependent, ___ you know, I'm going to get rid of you at the right time and that's healthy, you know ___ So there's a set of things you would know if you had that frame on the world. That's what I'm trying to advocate, I guess. I think that's what matters.			HRD practitioners should not foster overdependence or stay too long ___ Approaching work in a just way links with a set of things you would need to know ___ Q: For example?.		

APPENDIX I: PEER REVIEW COMMITTEE LETTER

August 10, 1999

University of Minnesota  
HRD Research Center  
420 VoTech Building  
1954 Buford Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55108

Re: Peer Review Committee for Wendy Ruona

This letter is to verify my role in Wendy Ruona's Peer Review Committee for her dissertation research. The responsibilities and actions of this role included an initial analysis of a transcribed interview in order to determine themes and to confirm or dispute Wendy's perceptions and conclusions drawn from the interview. This process included a full review of a transcribed interview, individual highlighting of themes from the interview, and a Committee meeting during which we discussed outcomes, shared ideas and provided feedback to Wendy.

The second phase of the review process involved the review and analysis of the themes and sub-themes highlighted by Wendy after entering all transcribed interviews into a database. We were each provided with a number of major themes, together with supporting rationale and the entire original data that supported each major theme. I personally read through all the data first—to get a feel for the data in each major theme and draw my own conclusions about clusters and sub-clusters pertaining to each major theme. I then read through Wendy's groupings and sub-groupings within each major theme and compared my conclusions and perceptions with those of hers. I noted agreements, disagreements and questions as a result of this comparison. I later sat down with Wendy and went through this feedback, discussing rationale, questions and other comments.

Wendy's analysis was impressively thorough and thoughtful, and she displayed an unwavering neutrality and openness to the feedback provided her during this review process. Clearly Wendy is committed to being a scholar of serious note in the Human Resource Development (HRD) field, a passion and focus which was clearly demonstrated by Wendy during this research process. I look forward to reading the outcome of this research project and have no doubt that it will make a significant contribution to the theory and practice of HRD.

I would be most willing to discuss this review process and role further should there be any related questions and/or comments.

Yours sincerely,

Susan A. Lynham  
Ph.D. Candidate  
University of Minnesota

August 5, 1999

University of Minnesota  
College of Human Development  
St. Paul, MN 55101

Re: Peer Review Committee for Wendy Ruona

The purpose of this letter to verify my role in Wendy Ruona's Peer Review Committee. The responsibilities included initial analysis of an interview in order to determine themes and dispute or confirm Wendy's perceptions and conclusions drawn from the interview(s). This process included full review of the transcribed interview and then a Committee meeting in which we collaborated, shared ideas, and provided feedback.

The second phase of the review process was the analysis of the themes once Wendy had compiled all the interviews together and inputted them into the database. We were each provided a summary of the theme, the rationale, and then the entire documentation that supported that theme. I personally reviewed the detailed information first to draw my own conclusions about the themes and sub-groups within the main idea. I then proceeded to compare my perception with that of Wendy's and found her process to be incredibly thorough and accurate. Finally, Wendy personally met with each committee member to receive additional feedback and comments.

I was impressed with Wendy's ability to synthesize the amount of information she had gathered and to then organize in such a manner that was easy to understand, categorized properly, and justified each theme's correlation to her main topic. Furthermore, I feel that Wendy's research will provide a foundation in which many in HRD will be able to expand upon. Wendy's intellect and passion for the field of HRD was evident throughout the entire process.

I would be more than willing to discuss this further should one have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Louise Harris  
Ph.D Student  
University of Minnesota



## APPENDIX J: CODING SYSTEM

## Categories of Codes with Accompanying Themes

(Key ideas within themes are enumerated)

- 11000 Role of HRD (What it does?)**
- 11100 Helping profession
    1. HRD as Helping Profession
    2. Facilitator, not Doer
    3. Do No Harm
    4. Characteristics of Helping Profession
  - 11200 Relationship between learning and performing
    1. Both Learning and Performance
    2. Need Learning to Improve Performance
  - 11300 Systems
  - 11400 Learning and Change (as underlying kind of philosophy—either within individ or org)
    1. HRD's Expertise is Learning
    2. Change is a learning process
    - 11410 What is learning/Development?
      1. Not Agreed Upon idea of Development/Learning
      2. Various Perspectives on Learning
    - 11420 Learning at Different levels
  - 11500 HRD should be Vital to the Organization
    1. Human Resources Should be more Valued
    2. HRD should Value itself and Command Respect of Organizations
    3. All Functions should be Valued by Organizations
  - 11600 Types of Problems
    1. HRD should be on-going, not just crises-initiated
    2. Problems at various levels
    3. Many reasons for problems
    - 11610 Development of people
      1. HRD is fundamentally about the Development of Human Potential
      2. What is Potential?
      3. Not about Whole Person
      4. Ideas on Development in Present and Future
    - 11620 Providing people with the resources they need to be effective (creating and aligning systems that allow for that)
      1. HRD does work around the Human Element of/in Systems
      2. Have to "see" and work for System
      3. Knowledge about Maintaining and Changing Systems
      4. Miscellaneous

11621 Limitations to Code #11620

1. How far into the System to Reach?
2. Limits to how Far HRD should Stray from Learning
3. Miscellaneous Ideas

11630 Relationship of Individual and Organizational Learning

**12000 Who Does HRD Serve?**

12100 Individuals

1. Focus on Humans
2. Put people first pays off

12200 Organizations

1. HRD is sponsored by Organizations
2. HRD should help Organization fulfill their mission/system intent
3. Organizations are not in the business of learning
4. Misc. Ideas

12300 Balance Multiple Stakeholders

1. We have multiple stakeholders
2. Aim for win/win/win
3. Reinforcing loop of development
4. Challenging
5. Lucian Rouse Sense of what makes a difference

12310 Not mgmt tool/cust. svc. model, not all about org. at expense of individs

1. Not all for management
2. Need courage to fight for what is right
3. Miscellaneous

12400 Long-Short Term

1. Balance long and short term
2. Development pays off in the end

12500 Connection to Society

1. Connected to workforce development
2. Constraint to be only at organization-level
3. Social responsibility and Societal impact

12510 HRD working in Society (+orgs)

1. Should work in the community
2. Development of human potential—anywhere

12600 Profit

1. Capitalist/Free Enterprise is Reality
2. Profit as by-product (not focus)
3. Investing in people pays off

12610 Negative connotations re: profit

**14000 People**

- 14100 Deep Belief in humans
  - 1. Basic ideas about people and how they should be treated
  - 2. Freewill and choice
- 14200 Limits to development and humanism
- 14300 People as learners
  - 1. Natural characteristics of learners
  - 2. About the learning process
  - 3. Link between individual learning and the organization
- 14400 Value of Human Resources
  - 1. Inherent worth
  - 2. Valued as resources of organization

**15000 Work**

- 15100 Meaning of for individuals
- 15200 Link between HRD & Work

**16000 Organizations**

- 16100 Characteristics of Organizations
  - 1. Not just corporations
  - 2. Organizations are important
  - 3. Organizations can be “sick”
  - 4. Challenge to meet external demands and “do the right thing”
  - 5. What is an organization?
  - 6. Miscellaneous ideas
- 16200 Culture/environment
- 16300 Treatment of Humans
  - 1. Characteristics
  - 2. Development
  - 3. Providing a “whole”
- 16400 Social responsibility

**20000 Interventions**

- 1. Systems Interventions
- 2. Proactive, on-going, long-term

3. Integrated with business

20100 Problems

1. Problem framing is key
2. Other ideas on problems

20200 Process/Methodology

1. Need for a process
2. Rival processes
3. Globally

20300 Globally

## APPENDIX K: PERSONAL DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

## Personal Disclosure Statement

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An important part of qualitative research is to ensure the researcher is highly attuned to anything that would inhibit her from fulfilling the role and its demands.

### Personal Interest

My interest in this study was first piqued during the Spring/Summer, 1998. A colleague and I took a class on theory-building and became increasingly interested with how alternative research paradigms and methods fit into the issue of building theory in HRD. At the same time, she was taking a class on philosophy in social science. We spent hours discussing philosophy—trying to really understand what it was, its components, its utility, and how it related to our work as scholars. We also discovered in this process that our own assumptions about HRD would arise in our spirited conversations and we found it difficult to uncover what those were.

Then, in Summer, 1998 I was in yet another spirited conversation about the purpose of HRD. At a get-together of some past and current advisees of Richard Swanson, I found myself head-to-head in debate with a person and it became very apparent that the issue we were debating had many more complex things underlying it than initially met the eye. The deeply-held assumptions were driving the words we were saying, but weren't being articulated. That day our group talked about what some of those were and by the end of the discussion all of us felt a little different about our initial stances on the issue we were discussing. We had moved from the "conversation having us" to a dialogue about things driving our respective stands and us "having the conversation."

That day, this study was born. The idea that core beliefs drive action is not new, but what became clear to me (and others) that day was that the field seems to be stuck on issues like performance vs. learning and is not exploring the assumptions underlying those arguments, but rather each "camp" appears as if they are digging their heels in deeper and fighting for the surface-level stuff. I wondered what the result would be if each camp were somehow able to surface their more deeply held assumptions. Would we find disconnects between the two views at almost every turn? Or, would we find that some beliefs were shared and other different? Could the ones that were shared be a foundation for future definition and clarity of HRD? More importantly, what would analysis of core beliefs underlying other on-going debates that we seem stuck-on elucidate?

The literature brought me very little assistance in investigating this issue. I was quite surprised, as I searched, that HRD had done very little scholarly discussion of this issue. There were quite a few calls for work to be done in this area, but only a few people had actually probed the topic in any systematic way. Thus, it seemed appropriate that someone try to do that. The literature review, then, motivated me to make some attempt to map some core beliefs of people that are having these discussions (like the performance vs. learning debate).

### My Experience

The decision to try to do this study was a contemplative one for me. I have taken a few key classes related to the qualitative paradigm and methods, and conducted one small-scale qualitative inquiry of 5 practitioners about their experience in using theory in their practice. This is positive in that I have been exposed to this type of research and am feeling increasingly comfortable with the nuances of the approach and the things it will demand of me. In fact, I have long felt (since VoEd 8920 where I first was introduced to the quantitative and qualitative debate and the philosophies that underlie them) that my view of the world was more philosophically-aligned with the naturalist perspective. However, out of my respect for this type of research, I know the high demands it places on things deep inside the individual. I am very excited to do the mental and reflective work required to complete this study.

### My Assumptions and Ideas/Hunches on Anticipated Findings

- I anticipate that participants interviewed for this study will at first find it very hard to identify and then share their core beliefs. I believe what will first be presented in "stances". KEY to these interviews

will be to move beyond that level of reporting and probe the beliefs that are driving that stance. This will be hard to do, for both myself who will have to be very tuned-in, as well as the participant.

- I believe that I will uncover very different assumptions and beliefs among the various participants.
- I also believe that there may be some commonalities on which the field can build.
- Many of the beliefs that are presented and discussed will be beliefs that I have strong feelings (either positive or negative) about.

#### Steps to Remain Open

- Actively reflect throughout this process. This is the beginning of my researcher's journal and is the place for me to surface my assumptions, talk about them, evaluate how I am doing in remaining open, and to figure out what to do if I discover that I'm not.
- A colleague has committed to being someone I can talk to about all this and who will even systematically serve as a peer checker during the process. Trusting our relationship and our capacity to probe deeply, I trust this and she will serve an important role.
- Audit the tapes during the data collection phase to purposefully evaluate my role in the interviews.
- Begin to identify, articulate, and map my own core beliefs. I have started to do that as a conscious attempt to acknowledge them. This is the first step towards being able to bracket them and not bring all that stuff into the interviews. Also, now that I have this part of my journal, it will serve as a place for me to reflect on new things I am considering and to reflect on my core beliefs.
- During the interviews, it will be vital for me to practice key skills related to probing for assumptions and core beliefs. The work of Senge & Bohm are helping me to learn that better, and I need to continue that journey and become more competent in those techniques.