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An Afrocentric Perspective on Social Welfare Philosophy and Policy

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Although much of the literature on American social welfare philosophy and policy is progressive and sincere in its objectives to dismantle poverty and economic oppression, the literature is limited in two important areas: 1) identifying American social welfare philosophy and policy as primarily Eurocentric in its worldview, and 2) applying the cultural values of people of color as a conceptual base to advance and diversify views on social welfare philosophy and policy. To address this gap, this paper draws on the viewpoints of a cadre of social scientists called Afrocentrists and applies the Afrocentric worldview to describe how it conceives social welfare philosophy and what social welfare policies it would support. It is suggested that the Afrocentric perspective on social welfare philosophy is predicated on a collective, spiritual, and morally affirming idea of societal relations and government and individual responsibility that advocates enhanced educational opportunities, guaranteed minimum income, universal health care coverage, and workplace friendly and cooperative atmospheres.

Social welfare philosophy and policy can be said to reflect the underlying philosophical assumptions of a society or culture (Gill, 1992). In as much as the underlying philosophical assumptions of a society are shaped significantly by those in power, social welfare philosophy and policy in the United States can be described as affirming the cultural themes of the dominant group. Since people of European descent, and their respective cultural backgrounds, are prominent in determining the cultural landscape of the United States, it can be argued that social welfare philosophy and policy validate a Eurocentric orientation to resource distribution, societal relationships, and morality.

Although the concept "Eurocentric" is seldom used to depict social welfare philosophy and policy in the United States,

considerable attention in social welfare policy literature has been devoted to its characteristics such as the value of individualism and the political economy of capitalism (Jansson, 1993; Ehrenreich, 1985; Piven & Cloward, 1971; Trattner, 1989). Moreover, efforts have been aimed at showing how U.S. social welfare philosophy and policy have affected people of color, but rarely—if ever—are the cultural values or worldviews of people of color used as a conceptual foundation to describe how social welfare philosophy and policy would look like. To address this gap, this paper draws on the worldview of traditional African and African American culture (i.e., the Afrocentric perspective) to a) discuss an Afrocentric philosophy of social welfare, b) compare it with what can be called an Eurocentric philosophy of social welfare, and c) examine some possible social welfare policy implications of an Afrocentric social welfare philosophy.

Overview of the Afrocentric Perspective

Over the last twenty years or so, a new generation of African American social scientists have been increasingly concerned with the hegemony and universalization of Eurocentric theories and concepts in the social sciences specifically and the broader American society generally (see, for example, Akbar, 1976, 1979, 1984, 1994; Ani, 1994; Asante, 1980, 1988, 1990; Baldwin, 1981, 1985; Baldwin & Hopkins, 1990; Boykin, 1983; Cook & Kono, 1977; Dixon, 1976; Hale-Benson, 1982; Hilliard, 1989; Kambon, 1992; Karenga, 1993; Khatib et al., 1979; Myers, 1988; Nobles, 1980). Viewing this hegemony and universalization as deleterious to the expression and validation of social science paradigms emanating from people of color, these social scientists have attempted to challenge Eurocentric hegemony by constructing conceptual paradigms that affirm the history, traditions, and visions of people of African descent. Because they place Africa, or what will be discussed below as traditional Africa, at the center of their analysis, they have been increasingly referred to as Afrocentrists. Critical to an understanding of the Afrocentric perspective is the emphasis on worldviews. Many Afrocentrists maintain that worldviews are shaped primarily by race/ethnicity and reflect a racial or ethnic group's cosmology, ontology, and epistemology. Moreover, they

believe that the differences between and among racial/ethnic groups is greater than the differences within racial/ethnic groups (Swigonski, 1996). Because Afrocentrists are especially concerned with the political and economic effects of Eurocentric cultural hegemony on both people of African and European descent, they have given considerable attention to what they refer to as the Afrocentric and Eurocentric worldviews.

Afrocentrists contend that the foundation of the Afrocentric worldview, which they believe has survived among many people of African descent including African Americans, is found in what is called *traditional* African cultural traditions of the various ethnic groups (e.g., Ashanti, Twe, Nubians, Kemites, Dogon) that predate the advent of European and Arab influences. Several scholars of African history maintain that much of what we see occurring on the African continent today is a direct result of the many years of the colonization and enslavement of Africans by both Europeans and Arabs and does not reflect the essence of the values and mores of traditional Africa (Clarke, 1991; Diop, 1991; Karenga, 1993; Rodney, 1980; Williams, 1993; Zahan, 1979). These writers further maintain that although there was diversity in traditional African values and mores, there were some important similarities in basic philosophical assumptions across the various ethnic groups. These assumptions accentuated an ontological and cosmological framework that emphasized a collective and spiritual worldview. Afrocentrists, who believe that the same form of oppression afflicts people of African descent worldwide, assert that although it is important to acknowledge the diversity among people of African descent, it is more important to underscore the cultural commonalities if people of African descent are to truly advance themselves politically and economically. Thus, the Afrocentric worldview is a set of philosophical assumptions that are believed to have emanated from common cultural themes of traditional Africa and which are thought to be helpful in not only liberating people of African descent but also for facilitating positive human and societal transformation for all (Akbar, 1994; Karenga, 1993; Schiele, 1996).

Just as Afrocentrists believe that there is an Afrocentric worldview, they also believe in a Eurocentric worldview, which they assert provides the philosophical foundation for the U.S. and many

European nations. Afrocentrists recognize the diversity among people of European descent, but maintain that there are some common cultural themes that cut across the diverse groups. These themes primarily are what they see as an overemphasis on a materialistic and fragmentary view of world elements and phenomena. However, for this paper's purpose, European American culture, with its additional feature of individualism, is seen as the quintessence of the Eurocentric worldview. Afrocentrists say that this overemphasis on individualism, materialism, and fragmentation has led to inordinate inequality and exploitation and has devalued the worldviews of people of color generally and people of African descent specifically. From a social welfare perspective, Afrocentrists would identify the Eurocentric worldview as the primary cause for the seemingly uncaring and callous character of U.S. social welfare philosophy and policy, and would maintain that social welfare philosophy and policies based on Afrocentric concepts would foster more humane societal relationships and equitable distributions of opportunities and resources.

Afrocentric Social Welfare Philosophy

The Afrocentric basis of social welfare has as its basic mission the guarantee of equal opportunities for all people in a given society to maximize their talents and skills. Everyone is believed to have the civil, but more importantly the moral, right to work, descent housing, and adequate food and clothing. As Williams (1993) maintains, Afrocentric economic philosophy contends that the definition of profits implies a surplus only after all human needs of all people in the society have been adequately met. To elaborate on Afrocentric social welfare philosophy, three fundamental assumptions are examined: 1) *individual identity is a collective identity*; 2) *poverty is an intolerable consequence of society's lack of commitment to collective welfare*; and 3) *there is a mutually dependent and morally affirming concept of government and individual responsibility*.

Individual Identity as a Collective Identity

In the Afrocentric paradigm, individual identity is viewed as a collective identity (Akbar, 1984; Kambon, 1992; Schiele, 1994;

Mbiti, 1970). The notion of isolated or insular identity, characteristic of the Eurocentric worldview, is rejected and replaced with a more fluid and holistic view of identity that sees the individual as embedded in his or her social group. Although the emphasis is on collectivity, the Afrocentric viewpoint does not reject the notion of uniqueness (Akbar, 1984; Gyekye, 1992; Ogbonnaya, 1994); rather, it repudiates the idea that the individual can be understood separate from others (Akbar, 1984; Ogbonnaya, 1994). Whereas heavy emphasis in the Eurocentric worldview is placed on overcoming relationality and dependency, the Afrocentric worldview celebrates and cultivates relationality and interdependence (Gyekye, 1987; Ogbonnaya, 1994).

The focus on collectivity or collective identity in the Afrocentric paradigm also highlights the union of the material with the spiritual self (Myers, 1988; Kambon, 1992; Ogbonnaya, 1994). As Asante (1980) conveys, "the continuity from material to spiritual is the universal basis of the Afrocentric viewpoint" (p. 50). From an Afrocentric perspective, spirituality "can be defined as that invisible universal substance that connects all human beings to each other and to a Creator or a Supreme Being" (Schiele, 1996, p. 287). Collective identity in this regard means that every individual is a composite and a reflection of the spiritual world of ancestors and the material world of the living.

The implication of this collective, spiritual view of human behavior for social welfare philosophy is that 1) insular individualism is believed to be invalid, 2) objectification of human beings is unnecessary, and 3) materialism is brought in balance with that which is spiritual or nonmaterial. Individualism is considered invalid because if human identity is deemed a collective identity, there is less of a need to attribute success or failure to the "lone" person. Success and failure are viewed as collective success and failure. Rather than identifying individual defects within the person, characteristic of Eurocentric individualism, attention is aimed at revealing the elements in the collective, group self that may need to be altered or eliminated to further the collective advancement of all. The Afrocentric paradigm reminds us that the "the total results of one's efforts are due to aids, circumstances, and powers entirely beyond one's own control" (Williams, 1993, p. 156), and, if the lone individual has done her best and still

fails, that failure must be shared by all (Williams, 1993, 1987; Karenga, 1996).

Unlike the Eurocentric worldview's reliance on objectification as a major means of knowing, objectification in the Afrocentric paradigm is unnecessary because it rejects the notion that people can and should be emotionally and spiritually detached from others (Ani, 1994; Kambon, 1992). To acknowledge emotional and spiritual connectedness to others can prevent indifference and passive insensitivity that frequently enables appalling social events such as poverty and human oppression. Though emotions towards others can be unfavorable, when balanced with spirituality, one has greater potential to transform unfavorable emotions into favorable ones, unless the negativity of the emotion is justified. The point here is that if people tap into their inherent capability to connect to others in a spiritual way, the likelihood of condoning or participating in acts that create material injustice decreases.

A last result of the collective, spiritual view of human identity is that materialism is brought in balance with the unseen. Albeit the material needs of people must be met, and their material attributes important, the Afrocentric thrust of spirituality reminds us that much of human self-worth and self-definition transcends the material. When assessing human self-worth, the Afrocentric viewpoint maintains that human attributes such as compassion, peacefulness, and morality, that can exist in spite of one's material acquisitions and attributes, are very essential. Moreover, because the Afrocentric model's concept of collective identity is multidimensional and time limitless, the material realm of the present is viewed as just one of many aspects of human identity and potential. In this regard, the Afrocentric paradigm asserts that a society with abundant material and technological opulence, but with inadequate collective compassion, cannot be considered an advanced civilization (Akbar, 1984).

*Poverty Is An Intolerable Consequence of Society's
Lack of Commitment to Collective Welfare*

Within the Afrocentric framework, poverty is intolerable. This is because in traditional African philosophy, the emphasis is on securing the collective welfare of everyone in the community (Karenga, 1993; Gyekye, 1992; Williams, 1993, 1987). The collec-

tive rights of the community are believed to supplant the rights of any one individual (Menkiti, 1984; Williams, 1987). However, as Gyekye (1992) contends, the emphasis on collective rights in traditional African thought does not connote that individuals are prohibited from asserting their evaluation or re-evaluation of the community structure. It only means that in traditional African thought, there is absence of a uncompromising and extreme orientation to individual rights that significantly compromises individual obligation to, and consideration of, the concerns and welfare of others (Ani, 1994; Schiele, 1994; Baldwin & Hopkins, 1990).

Unlike the Eurocentric worldview's emphasis on distributing the most rewards and resources to those who are considered to have contributed the most, the Afrocentric worldview maintains that rewards and resources should be distributed equally, so long as everyone in the community has contributed to their fullest potential (Williams, 1993, 1987). Instead of punishing people who may have less resources and talents, the Afrocentric viewpoint ensures that those with less resources and talents can have equal access to the benefits and technology of the entire community or society.

Critical to an understanding of the Afrocentric viewpoint's communitarian focus is the disavowal of the Eurocentric notion that some individuals are more special than others and that since they are special (i.e., appear to excel in valued human work and activity), they should be treated differently from, and afforded more privileges than, others. The Afrocentric viewpoint maintains that despite the variance in talent and abilities, all people who attempt good are special because they are partial manifestations of the supreme goodness and wisdom of the Creator (Mbiti, 1970; Zahan, 1979). As partial manifestations of the creator, each individual can be conceived as a necessary ingredient of human life, especially if their abilities and talents are cultivated by the larger society as well as the more intimate environment of the family and local residential community. In this regard, it is believed that all talents and abilities humans possess are equally important. This is because all talents and abilities are viewed as interconnected and mutually dependent. For example, the ability to read is connected to someone's ability to cut down trees to

develop the paper needed to print written materials. The ability to develop computer software is connected to someone's ability to convert raw materials like silicon into computer chips needed to manufacture computer software. The ability of most of us to go to work and operate in a sanitary physical environment is dependent upon someone's ability in housekeeping. If human abilities are viewed as mutually dependent, there is no need to impose hierarchies on human abilities and to justify a sociocultural ethic that supports distributing rewards and abilities unevenly, thus contributing to poverty, oppression, and inequality.

*There is a Mutually Dependent and Morally Affirming
Concept of Government and Individual Responsibility*

Within the Afrocentric paradigm, a mutually dependent and morally affirming idea of government and individual responsibility is upheld. The focus on mutual dependency is fostered by the Afrocentric notion of cooperative democracy (see Williams, 1993). Unlike the dichotomous and antagonistic view of government and individual responsibility found in many Eurocentric perspectives, cooperative democracy takes on a more unitary and reciprocal notion of government and individual responsibility. Within this framework, all units of people—individuals to very large aggregates and bureaucracies—play an equally important role in ensuring the welfare of the entire nation or community. With diunital logic (i.e. logic that emphasizes unity in polarity) as its foundation, cooperative democracy conceives that groupings of individuals are linked to each other by social and spiritual intercourse. From this perspective, it is illogical to impose an insular and unilinear view of human behavior and social events because this view negates highly complex, subtle, and polydeterministic ways the actions and thoughts of people are interrelated. A call for individual responsibility in no way diminishes or cancels out a call for government responsibility, and vice versa. Rather, government and individual responsibility are considered to be obligations that are motivated less by self-interest—which is the bases of a conflict-oriented view of government and individual responsibility—than by the essential interdependency of humans as interactive "social" beings (Gyekye, 1992).

The Afrocentric idea of responsibility also is predicated on the belief in the capability, potential, and expectation of human

beings to do good (Gyekye, 1992; Mbiti, 1970; Zahan, 1979). Rather than advancing the idea that humans have an invariable or uncontrollable urge to behave selfishly or mischievously, as is found in much of European American political thought (see Kohl, 1989), the Afrocentric paradigm embraces the concept of humans that, while acknowledging that humans can do wrong, underscores the proclivity of people to behave morally and in ways that consider the welfare of others (Gyekye, 1987; Mbiti, 1970). With this in mind, the Afrocentric idea of responsibility assumes that responsibilities are moral obligations that individuals and governments must assume. There is de-emphasis on a coercive view of responsibility, one that promotes responsibility as an unwanted chore or as an essential criterion to evaluate one's self-worth. Instead, responsibility is seen as a spontaneous human virtue that flows easily and that is aimed at advancing the welfare of the entire community or nation. For government responsibility in a democracy like the United States, this implies that legislators and executives must perceive and execute their role as that of equalizers—those who seek to ensure that every societal member has an equal opportunity to cultivate their talents and skills and to live a life that is free of undue stress related to the competitive acquisition of material resources.

For the individual, responsibility means that one is expected to regulate her behavior in a way that takes into consideration the interdependency of people. With a supportive government and community, and assumptions about human behavior that accentuate the positive potentiality of human beings, people would be less prone to feel alienated from, and suspicious of, others and the social system. They would recognize their stake in life, would feel more positive about themselves, and would have the material sustenance necessary to actualize their full potential. In this way, the Afrocentric paradigm maintains that individual responsibility increases when one feels that she is wanted, needed, and respected by others in both the immediate and wider social milieu. Only when this is achieved can one then point the finger at the individual.

Attributes of Afrocentric Social Welfare Policy

The emphasis on collectivity and reciprocal obligation in the Afrocentric paradigm lay the foundation for an Afrocentric social

welfare policy. To a significant degree, Afrocentric social welfare policy would approximate a more socialist system than the one found in the United States. Both Nyerere (1968) and Nkrumah (1970) maintained that traditional African societies were characterized more by a socialist orientation than a capitalist one. Every effort in most traditional African societies was made to equally distribute resources so that no one would go without food, shelter and clothing (Martin & Martin, 1985; Biebuyck, 1964; Nyerere, 1968). Additionally, there has been continuity between traditional African systems of help and the social welfare and self-help traditions of African Americans, which have emphasized mutual aid, status-group cooperation, and the extended family (Martin & Martin, 1985; Pollard, 1978; Ross, 1978). If an Afrocentric social welfare policy were constructed today to address contemporary social welfare needs in the United States, some possible characteristics might be 1) to enhance educational opportunities, 2) to guarantee minimum incomes to working and poor families, 3) to implement universal health care coverage, and 4) to promote workplace friendly and cooperative atmospheres.

Educational Opportunities

To enhance educational opportunities, the Afrocentric paradigm would advocate a) collective responsibility for the costs of higher education, b) making the high school training more akin to college training, and c) inclusion and affirmation of multicultural curricula. The escalating costs of higher education in the United States is increasingly rendering higher education a privilege for the affluent rather than a civil right for all. Since the Afrocentric paradigm adopts a communitarian perspective on human relations, it would possibly recommend that the costs of higher education be defrayed by citizens of the entire society through not only personal income and sales taxes but also through corporate taxes. These taxes should not be flat or universally proportional, but rather reflect the actual amount of money held by a person, household, or corporation. The higher the actual income or assets, the greater the tax. Corporations should bear a significant share of this revenue generation since they are one of the most frequent beneficiaries of the skills that education and training afford people.

Making high school training more akin to college or post high school training is a way to not only enhance educational and training opportunities for citizens, but also to reduce the cost of training. Afrocentric social welfare policy would advocate the need to make secondary school education more time efficient by rendering the training more specialized. Instead of requiring one to defer a career choice until college or even graduate school, Afrocentric social welfare policy would encourage students to make that decision around the ninth to eleventh grades, if possible. The rationale behind this is that 1) the current secondary school training in the United States can be characterized as too redundant and generalist; 2) to require one to go twelve years of school and then require that they do four (college) or even six to ten years more (graduate or professional school) can be an unreasonable request for some; 3) by the time students are in their teens, they have the capacity for formal operational thought (Newman & Newman, 1991) which enables them to intelligently muse over a career choice; and 4) if secondary school training was more specialized, the amount of money needed for higher education would be minimized and reduced. Of course, in order for this to work, employment and career standards across professions and employment settings would have to be radically altered.

Lastly, there is a need to make educational curricula more inclusive of the contributions and paradigms of cultural groups whose perspectives and traditions have been historically suppressed and absent in public education. In as much as social welfare policies seek to affirm the dignity and worth of all members and groups within a society, social welfare policies should aim to dismantle cultural oppression by insisting on cultural pluralism. Schools are often one of the first institutions in society that formally and repetitiously expose one to views and images of self and others. When views and images of self and one's cultural group are absent or disparaged in the educational process, significant psychological damage such as low global self-esteem, inappropriate labeling, and behavioral resistance can occur (Asante, 1991; Hilliard, 1987; Hale-Benson, 1982). Further, those whose views and positive images are dominant can develop low disregard for the disparaged or *curriculum absent* cultural group and can take on an exaggerated sense of their cultural self (Asante,

1991). The importance of this inequality is that too often, absent or disparaging views of one's cultural self can turn one off early to learning and achievement, thus contributing to future problems in emotional and career development for that person (Boykin, 1983; Kunjufu, 1985).

Guaranteed Minimum Income

An Afrocentric welfare policy would also support a guaranteed minimum income for working and indigent families. The guaranteed minimum income was proposed in 1969 by the Nixon administration under the Family Assistance Plan (FAP), but was never implemented. The problem with FAP, and most other income maintenance programs and proposals in the United States from an Afrocentric viewpoint, is 1) the conservative and restrictive strategies by which eligibility is determined, 2) the reliance on the practice of "less eligibility", and 3) the use of workfare as a form of punishment.

An Afrocentric welfare policy would not rely on conservative and restrictive methods to determine eligibility for assistance; instead, more relaxed strategies would be proposed that would be based on calculations of cost of living and poverty levels that relied on both the assumptions of relative and absolute poverty. Relative poverty estimates are those that assume deprivation to be "relative" to the standard of living experienced by others in a society (Karger & Stoesz, 1990). Relative poverty does not compromise on meeting basic needs of people, but it focuses attention more on equality of income and resource distribution than does absolute poverty estimates that rely on precise and quantifiable standards for survival (Karger & Stoesz, 1990). Although it is noble for any society to establish absolute criteria of poverty, the problem with current U.S. welfare policy, from an Afrocentric perspective, is that criteria used to determine absolute deprivation have been too conservative. In determining criteria for absolute deprivation from an Afrocentric perspective, one would not have to exhaust all or most of their resources, and the remaining citizenry, especially those with copious resources, would be responsible for sustaining the needy. However, if educational and training opportunities are increased early in life, there would be less need for income assistance because people would have stable work that pays them sufficiently.

The reliance on the concept and practice of less eligibility would also be unnecessary in Afrocentric social welfare policy. Less eligibility, which contends that welfare payments should be less than the lowest societal wage, is useless in Afrocentric social welfare policy because wage labor would not be placed in competition with welfare assistance, especially when the wages for labor are excessively low, and it would not be presumed that people are loathed to work or would intrinsically seek to exploit welfare benefits or others. However, given a society like the United States, which endeavors to suppress the power and positive potentiality of many, it is not surprising that people feel cheated and, in turn, seek to exploit the system that has exploited them.

Afrocentric social welfare policy would not use workfare as a means to punish people. There would be no need because Afrocentric social welfare policy would focus more on enhancing the wages of people, their opportunities to find stable employment, and their opportunities, early in their educational experience, to identify and locate a career that would bring them high job satisfaction. When people can find employment that is stable, that remunerates them fairly for the labor they produce, and that brings them considerable intrinsic satisfaction, work becomes an enjoyable activity.

Universal Health Care Coverage

Another critical feature of Afrocentric social welfare policy would be universal health care coverage. From an Afrocentric viewpoint, no one should have to be concerned that if they got sick, they would not be treated, or that they would not be able to visit a physician or other health care professional regularly. Afrocentric social welfare policy would preclude health care, and human misery in general, from being used as a means for excessive profit. A fee for service system would not be considered inherently unjust in Afrocentric social welfare. However, when profit is deemed a central feature of service delivery, considerable emphasis is placed on efficiency of services as opposed to quality of services. Although efficiency is important and is said to increase quality, quality of care in the U.S. health system is usually given less attention than is cost of and access to health care (Starr, 1994). The Afrocentric perspective would regard cost containment and access to health care as important, but also would accentuate qual-

ity of care, especially a more holistic conception of quality of care such as the relationship between care provider and care receiver, perceived satisfaction of consumer, prevention, and long term rather than short-term effects of treatment. To achieve greater balance among cost containment, access, and quality of care, an Afrocentric health care policy would approximate the National Health Service proposed by Congressman Ron Dellums in the late 1970s. It is based on the belief that health care is a right of citizenship, is a fundamental, moral obligation of society, and that the profit motive in health care compromises quality of care and unnecessarily elevates service costs.

The concept "universal" in health care policy from an Afrocentric viewpoint also would imply diversification of the theoretical models and practitioners of health care so that a "completeness" in the delivery of health care services could be achieved. Just as there is Eurocentric hegemony in the social sciences, there is also hegemony in the analysis and treatment of human health. This dominant health care model highlights treatment, not prevention, and a materialistic view of human health. The spiritual or unseen and the social/psychological aspects of human health have traditionally been ignored in the United States and are only recently beginning to receive attention. From an Afrocentric perspective, health care practices wherein a more holistic and spiritual view of human beings is recognized should be integrated in health care policies and practices. In traditional Africa, significant authority in the area of health care is given to spiritualists or mediums whose primary objectives are to use spirits, energy sources, and prayer in treatment (Brisbane & Womble, 1991). Further, since many health problems are associated with life stress, especially around financial insecurity, it is imperative from an Afrocentric viewpoint to never separate the political economy from problems of physical and mental health.

Work Place Friendly and Cooperative Atmospheres

Afrocentric social welfare policy also would accentuate the need for workplace friendly and cooperative atmospheres. Afrocentrically, work place friendly and cooperative atmosphere means 1) to provide workers with more autonomy, decision-making, and less rigid supervision, 2) to provide ample family

leave and vacation time, and 3) to provide childcare services at the workplace. Studies have shown that when the autonomy and decision-making ability of workers increases, job satisfaction increases (Kadushin & Kulys, 1995; Knoop, 1995). This finding is often explained by the assumption that people feel more comfortable at work when they feel they can be trusted and when they believe what they do is important to the organization. Afrocentric welfare policy affirms this belief and significantly rejects the validity and dominance of McGregor's (1960) theory X, which views humans as inherently recalcitrant, lacking self-regulation, and in need of constant and rigid supervision and monitoring.

Sufficient family leave and vacation time is also essential. With the overemphasis on production and efficiency in Eurocentric organizational theories (Schiele, 1990), it is no wonder that one of the most inimical issues between workers and employers is family leave and vacation time. The overemphasis on production and efficiency, which maximizes profits or conserves costs, can undermine worker health, leisure, and rest. From an Afrocentric perspective, there is a critical need to offset the focus on production and efficiency in the workplace by shortening the work week and by restructuring workplaces—such as staggering work hours—to accommodate the family and vacation needs of workers rather than the avarice of a ruling, capitalist elite.

Lastly, an Afrocentric workplace policy would advocate the provision of childcare at the workplace. With the increase in single parent families, two parent working families, and the erosion of traditional systems of childcare brought on by an ever increasing, geographically mobile workforce, childcare has become more problematic for families. The primary problems are the high costs of childcare and trusting childcare providers. Providing childcare at the workplace can take care of both these concerns. First, if childcare was provided at the workplace, the cost could be absorbed by the organization. The worker should not have to pay, because the worker is already selling his or her labor for, and contributing to, the survival of the organization. Thus, a reciprocal relationship of "service" between worker and company would exist. Secondly, by companies providing childcare on site, this might reduce the level of distrust workers may have of childcare providers and the amount of family leave necessary since the

child/children and worker would be located at the same site during work hours.

Conclusion

The current model of American social welfare philosophy and policy fails to provide material comfort and life satisfaction for all. Based on individualism, materialism, and fragmentation, this model is heavily Eurocentric in its worldview. Social welfare philosophy and policy based on Afrocentric principles is an additional avenue through which human needs can be adequately met and human possibility maximized. Its basis in a collective, spiritual, and morally affirming viewpoint on human nature and behavior is opposed to the current model and affirms several ideas of progressive social welfare thinkers. More important, perhaps, the model has great potential for dismantling cultural oppression. Because it codifies the cultural values of people of African descent into a paradigm for social welfare philosophy and policy, the Afrocentric perspective helps validate worldviews and traditions suppressed by Eurocentric cultural hegemony.

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