

**OUTDOOR MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT AS ORGANIZATIONAL  
TRANSFORMATION: AN ANGLO-FRENCH COMPARATIVE STUDY OF  
PARADOXICAL EXPERIENCE IN THE APPLICATION OF ALTERNATIVE HUMAN  
RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES**

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**Abstract :**

**Issue:** Outdoor Management Development (OMD) is a controversial management development and teamwork technique that generates interesting and revealing perspectives on understanding potential transformations in embedded practices in organizational contexts. This paper explores why OMD and its “alternative” human resource development approaches, so readily engaged in English (language)-speaking organizational settings, have been less applied in French (and Francophone) organizational contexts. The work is developed from comparative cultural management field research carried out in the United Kingdom, France, Belgium and Switzerland. OMD can be described as management development interventions that take place in outdoor locations, usually in rural or mountainous situations. It embraces traditional outdoor pursuits (for example, hiking, climbing and canoeing) as well as “alternative” activities using neural-linguistic programming; theatre; or, crewing yachts in global races [Bank, 1994; Burke and Collins, 2005]. “Alternative” is the term employed herein in order to make a contrast with notional mainstream British and French management development approaches. The paper argues that, relative to the United Kingdom, the use of the outdoors in France for the development of managers or *cadres* is significantly less extensive. Nevertheless, France does have a robust tradition of “using the outdoors” in a range of contexts but seems wary of relating these experiences to human resource practices.

**Methodology:** Engaging an inductive methodological approach involving semi-structured interviews and participant observation, the argument considers why this should be the case and reveals a complex network of historical political and socio-economic motivations and situations including, although not exclusively: particular rationalisms underpinning French educational system: a technocratic approach to manager development in the *Grandes Ecoles* system; and, an organizational rationalism deeply embedded in national traditions (a *logique de l'honneur*) as some of the factors which generate a *prima facie* context markedly distinct to that of the United Kingdom [Crozier, 1964; Bourdieu, 1977, 1984; Iribarne, 1989; Barsoux and Lawrence, 1990; Crawshaw, 1997].

**Conclusions:** In French and Francophone organizational contexts, the outdoors are not perceived as a metaphor or surrogate for the office, boardroom or MBA classroom. It is a political debate in which “brain” very much occludes “brawn” - the “outdoors” is not transported “indoors”. Consequently, OMD providers often meet with cynicism and political resistance from French organizations on a much wider and replete scale than in the United

Kingdom. Ongoing transformations in the belief and power systems of French management circles [Bouffartique, 2001] are deemed potentially important for a more enthusiastic consideration of OMD.

**Key words:** OMD, French Management Development

## Outdoor Management Development – An Overview

Outdoor Management Development (OMD) is a management development approach which seeks to develop team performance and managerial competences [Bank, 1994, Burlington and Grint, 1996; Burke and Collins, 2005]. OMD usually takes place in rural or mountainous situations and employs outdoor pursuits and activities, for example, climbing and canoeing. It may also involve more 'alternative' and, for some observers, questionable and controversial activities such as theatre productions, make-believe, building dry-stone walls [Coles, 1999; Beard, 2004]. These more radical and unorthodox aspects of OMD activities have from time to time brought about strong criticism and controversy. Conlan [2002, p.43] captures this reaction describing OMD approaches akin to "wearing silly hats and playing hoopla".

Since the establishment of the *Outward Bound* organization in 1941 and its explicit inception of the concept of the outdoors as a context for personal development, OMD has attracted increasing, albeit it varying, attention. Various commentators have tentatively assessed the size of the UK market at 249 OMD companies [Calder, 1991, p.21] and 200 companies [Burlington and Grint, 1996, p.191]. There is no clearly distinct single OMD representative body from which to ascertain a categorical census of OMD organizations. Nevertheless, a range of bodies at varying times have sought to aggregate OMD interests *inter alia*: *Development Training Advisory Group*, the *Institute for Outdoor Learning* and the *European Institute for Outdoor Adventure Education and Experiential Learning*. Nevertheless, these bodies may overlap, for example, outdoor experiential learning for youth as well as the corporate. Consequently, due to: the absence of a robust industry representative body; the micro-nature of many OMD firms and their disinclination to see a need to link up actively with such bodies; combined with the genuine difficulty in clearly separating outdoor management; outdoor education and outdoor pursuit sectors, categorical and comprehensive assessments of the size of OMD activity or the 'OMD industry' are problematic. Precise financial data for revenue in relation to OMD do not exist; nevertheless, in 2005 they formed part of a total United Kingdom employer expenditure on training of £33.3 billion [Learning and Skills Council, 2005].

Nevertheless, it should be reiterated that while it would be an exaggeration to suggest that OMD constitutes a central element of the overall United Kingdom management development activity or market, it is nevertheless accepted and used in a number of situations by a wide range of firms. Typically, however, contemporary trends have witnessed a diminishing role for the use of traditional outdoor pursuits and a reduction in the duration of programmes with two to three day interventions being usual. Moreover, as a consequence of its 'alternative' credentials to purely indoor seminar based approaches, much of the literature in relation to OMD (both academic and practitioner originated) has tended to focus on demonstrating the value and effectiveness of the approach [Clifford and Clifford, 1967; Dainty and Lucas, 1992; Burke and Collins, 2005].

OMD can be viewed in the broader historical and contemporary debates on the state of British management development. Engwall and Zamagni [1989] propose the United Kingdom as a late adopter of Americanised management development approaches. These took place in tandem with a number of calls for the professionalisation and education of British management with the aim of creating frameworks and increasing levels of formal

qualification (seen as sadly lacking)[Constable and McCormick 1987; Handy, 1987]. Thus, in essence, the British management development context has evolved to embrace an amalgam of management training, education, learning/knowledge and development approaches [Garavan, 1997]. OMD, which can notionally be primarily located within the 'development' domain, has since emerged as a partner to many of these areas.

## **OMD – A Resurfacing of Socio-Historical Context.**

The discussion thus far has mapped out a *prima facie* contemporary United Kingdom OMD context in relation to management development. However, the argument proposes that in relation to introducing OMD into French settings there exist a number of historical insights, which infuse OMD making it a markedly Anglo-Saxon product. These historical factors play out in contemporary British OMD experiences yet hitherto have remained largely under-examined.

OMD literature makes passing reference to *historical* influences such as *Outward Bound*, scouts, youth movements and the military yet there is little exploration of these influences [see Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988; Bank, 1994]. Vitaly, this paper argues that this marginalisation of OMD's historical influences diminishes the significant role of socio-cultural factors in this form of training and development. It effectively obscures OMD as a fundamentally United Kingdom 'product' informed and imbued with Anglo-Saxon sense-making and socio-historical values, gazes and constructions [Weick, 1995; Watson and Harris, 1999; Urry 2002]. This has important implications when OMD is transported to alternative national cultural contexts.

It is to an amalgam of the literature on outdoor education, outdoor activities, pursuits literature and a series of popular cultural representations of the outdoors and OMD that the discussion has to turn in order to explore this issue more fully [Cook, 1976; Donnelly, 1981; Livesey, 1982; Hassard and Holliday, 1998]. The paper suggests that an even more complex set of images can be ascribed to OMD than is conventionally the case. These images embrace Lakeland Romantic poets movements which "reframed" experiences in the outdoors for many people; imperialist and colonial legacies overtones in the use of the outdoors; vestigial triumphalistic and jingoistic representations of Victorian empire-building and exploration of the 'wilderness' in the spirit of Livingstone and very British notions of Muscular Christianity, "Heroic Failure" in the mould of Scott of the Antarctic [Donnelly, 1981, p.25; Overell, 1999, p.11]:

"In utilising activities such as climbing the Outward Bound movement found an added advantage in that from its Nineteenth Century inception climbing had been attributed the qualities of character building through struggle, challenge and co-operative effort together with the moral qualities of other recently nascent sports. Added to this, climbing reflected the qualities of the popular Romantic Movement where 'communing with nature' through climbing gave rise to desirable spiritual qualities"[Livesey, 1982, p.4]

Latterly, from the 1960s onwards, the use of the outdoors for people development in the United Kingdom has witnessed, *inter alia*: psychology influences; nascent environmentalism and reworking of the militaristic-outdoors nexus with a popular cultural mystique around the

SAS infusing a melodramatic strand into OMD literature [Welch, 1997, p.7; Kingston, 1999, p.2-3]. Mant alludes to such underlying themes:

“One of the most endearing qualities of the British is their eccentric tendency to row boats across oceans, climb impossible mountains, and so on... It is not surprising, therefore, that a small but thriving industry has grown up around the development of executives through confrontation with nature. Many of these enterprises are directed by ex-military men, especially members of the SAS.... the back-to-nature movement has to be seen in context as part of a shift to education and development based on experience, and is important for that.”[Mant 1981, p.83]

Britain has thus long-valued sport as an important construct of identity for individuals and for individuals in group or social (i.e. team) contexts. This is poignantly underlined by a 2006 study which, in part, compares relative successes of French and British manufacturing. The authors' research identifies a clear propensity to associate sport and organizational success in British contexts:

“The survival of the notion that sporting success and leadership are part and parcel of the same code of behaviour was confirmed by a 2005 Mori survey of British captains of industry.... Half the 105 business leaders interviewed were found to have captained school sports teams, with 90% having assumed at least two leadership roles at school, whether prefect, head boy or deputy head” [Maclean, Harvey and Press, 2006].

This long-embedded socio-historical relationship between sport and organizational life has imbued British discourse with notions of “fair play” and a readiness to point up when things are considered “not cricket” (sic: unfair or underhand).

While in neo-forms and contexts OMD has been pointed up as much cerebral as a physical it is frequently images of the latter which resonate most powerfully. These experiential aspects of OMD sit comfortably within an Anglo-Saxon pragmatic and empirical tradition [McEwan, 2001:73-75 drawing on the tradition of Bentham 1748-1832 and Mill, 1806-1873] It is difficult to determine the degree to which any particular aspect of the above context comes into play in a given OMD experience and clearly we should be wary of drifting towards stereotypical representations as normative lived experience [Knights and Willmott, 1999]. Nevertheless, broad characterisations and appreciations of the elements that go to make up a sense of national identity and environment are a way of gaining insight into this complex phenomenon. However, the interaction of national and organizational cultures remains a contested domain [Hofstede and Peterson, 2000; McSweeney, 2002]. The argument views national and organizational settings as a complex amalgam in which interactions are symbiotic. This recognises that individual groups and ‘communities’ will, in an ethnographic sense, reflexively generate meaning through personal, group, and popular cultural narratives and these thoughts will be carried through the methodology discussed below [Berger and Luckmann, 1971; Hassard and Holliday, 1998, Gabriel, 2000; Czarniawska, 2004].

Prior to discussing the transfer of OMD approaches to alternative national cultures and contexts, it will be useful to appreciate the cultural specificity of management development. This will enable the argument to prepare the ground for a focal case illustration on the introduction of OMD to French corporate and management development contexts. The importance of appreciating wider socio-economic context in management development commentary, linked to a recognition that management practice is culturally specific, are long-

acknowledged in management development and wider literature [Crozier, 1964; Bourdieu, 1977, 1984; Iribarne, 1989; Schellenkens, 1989; Naulleau and Harper, 1993; Dany and Tregaskis, 1996; Soin and Schett, 2006]

Moreover, it should be noted that OMD has readily spread to areas where British influence is present, often in the wake of post-imperial or colonial English-speaking experience. This is underscored by the active engagement of OMD in, for example, South Africa, The United States, Australia and New Zealand [Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988; Elkin, 1991]. It is possible to suggest that historical cultural alignment has played a major role in this evolution. In recent decades, there have been a number of moves to expand OMD into national settings beyond these traditional national contexts. This has been undertaken in a number of ways, primarily, through larger OMD providers attempting entry into new markets but also through the implementation of corporate multinational and 'glocalised (sic: global + local)' management practices. Underlying these processes are assumptions that such practices will have transferability, applicability and acceptability. This may not be automatically the case.

### **Management Development in France: Prelude to OMD in a Non-Anglo-Saxon Context.**

In order to examine the introduction and reception of OMD in France it will be valuable to make a number of salient points on Gallic management development. While continuing professional development is valued by French management (for example, recent expenditure amounted to some 218 billion euros [INSEE, 2002]), it is French management (education) experience comprising: the *grandes écoles*; the *cadres* they produce; and the underpinning philosophy of an embedded system of these socio-historical contexts which are seminally significant [Crozier, 1964; Bourdieu, 1977, 1984; Iribarne, 1989] It is important to note, *a priori*, that French management education is a highly regulated and bureaucratic system [Kumar and Usunier, 2001]. The two principal routes to becoming a *cadre* are through the education route (universities but primarily *grande écoles*) i.e. *recruited* as *cadre* or, alternatively, through *promotion* to *cadre*. Barsoux and Lawrence [1990, p.12] underline that "qualifications are clearly the favoured currency". Entry to one of the numerous but nevertheless select *grande écoles* is achieved through fierce competitive examination. These examinations are often preceded by two years special preparation course on top of the baccalaureate. It should be noted that although entry to business programmes is possible with a range of baccalaureate, many application processes state a preference for the mathematics and reasoning focused 'Bac S (formerly Bac C)'. The baccalaureate and entry preparation course combination routes result in a complex network of *grande écoles* entry requirement pathways. An illustration of the power of the phenomenon is that two of the most celebrated *grande écoles*, *La Polytechnique* and *L'Ecole Nationale d'Administration* provide approximately fifty per cent of the directors of France's leading 200 companies, many of the political elite and most of the top civil servant posts [Barsoux and Lawrence, 1990; Crawshaw, 1997; Tieman 2004]. A good command of mathematics and logic are seen as important attributes for prospective students. This valuing of the cerebral is seen as central and enduring:

*"A long-standing feature of French society is the high premium it places on intellect. Where America extols money, West Germany work and Great Britain blood, France has nailed its flag to the post of cleverness..."* [Barsoux and Lawrence, 1990, p.30].

In particular, within French companies technically trained *cadre*/*'ingénieurs'* are accorded high prestige and are frequently the occupants of senior positions. The beneficiary of the label *cadre* forms part of a distinct senior managerial and social grouping in French firms and, indeed, wider society. In comparison with a British context it may be argued that Oxbridge (i.e. Oxford and Cambridge Universities) generate comparable elites and societal effects. However, equally it can be suggested that particular socio-historical conditions produce these elites, just as similar yet differing particular conditions work to produce and sustain 'cadres' within a French context [Barsoux, 1997; Jeffreys, 2001]. It may be possible to see an alignment of manager status with middle-class identity in both British and French contexts, however, this seems less straightforward and delineated in the British example. French management culture, centred on the phenomenon of the *cadre* is located within a consistently institutionalised set of socio-economic conditions or 'habitus'. [Bourdieu, 1977, 1984] Bourdieu expounds the idea of 'habitus' as concerned with the implications of systems of acquired disposition (for example values and behaviours acquired through upbringing and education) and their influence on principles which organise actions in organizational and wider settings. These aspects have been eloquently pointed up within Iribarne's concept of the *logique de l'honneur* recognising the influence of profound inherited cultural traits and the need to take account of these in organizational contexts. Consequently, these factors create a particular Anglo-centric or Gallo-centric management development context.

Anglo-American organizational thinking has variably permeated French management [*inter alia*: Amado, 1991; Dany and Tregaskis, 1996] Moreover, since "Americanisation" can be viewed as a hegemonic global influence in relation to management theory and practice [Engwall and Zamagni, 1998] an insight into its impact may indicate the likelihood of adoption of alternative management development approaches such as OMD. Indeed, it has been suggested that the French management development systems response to the influence of American models has exhibited a *resistance* mode: "It [France] proved impervious to the transplanting of American business schools similar to that shown by Germany and Japan, but as a result of an entirely different logic." [Engwall and Zamagni, 1998, p.13] Nevertheless, in spite of the apparent reluctant adoption of external approaches, an important recurrent contemporary theme in commentaries on French managerial identity is malaise and transformation [Boltanski, 1982, p.40, Barsoux and Lawrence, 1990, p.19-20; Bouffartique, 2000, 2001] In an era of transition, alternative means of developing and exploring manager identity in France may be timely and questions have been raised about the appropriateness of the French management education for the twenty-first century [Crawshaw, 1997, p.191; Kumar and Usunier, 2001].

### **Methodological Approach: Examining OMD in France**

The research adopts an interpretive methodological stance [Crix, 2004]. This incorporates a reflexive acknowledgement of the blurred subject-object role of the researcher in the research process. [Bourdieu, 1977] His/her role is in not only producing data but also to be produced him/herself as a consequence of particular historical and contemporary contexts. (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000). In constructing its approach, the work is mindful of Iribarne's (1989) conceptual development of the need to recognise and demonstrate sensitivity regarding culturally specific facets produced through particular behavioural and discursive effects and interactions.

The data were gathered in France and the United Kingdom over two periods involving four French field-site visits between 1993 and 1996 and three between 2002 and 2005. In France, the field visits were focused on academic networks (universities, *grande écoles*), training providers, business consultants and practitioners (aerospace, construction, finance and automotive). The research methods involved semi-structured interviews and (participant) observation and the data were analysed using an inductive sense-making approach [Weick, 1995]. Between three and five manager respondents across functional areas were interviewed in each organization. In an attempt to contextualise the work in a broader Francophone experience, interviews (a combination of telephone and face-to-face) were also carried out with training providers in northern Belgium and the French-speaking canton of Switzerland. The United Kingdom background comparative data have been gathered longitudinally from companies and OMD programmes from 1995 to the present.

### **United Kingdom Interview / Participant Observation Sample**

UK-Based OMD Providers *	13	
<i>UK Client Base</i>		11
<i>With French Clients</i>		2

- *Corporations*: A wide range of employees from United Kingdom-based organizations have been contacted and engaged with during the three periods of the research project both directly in organizations and on OMD programmes.

### **French Interview/ Participant Observation Sample**

French-Based OMD Providers	4	
French Business Consultancy Firms	3	
French Corporations	20	
Composed of:		
<i>Aerospace sector</i>		10
<i>Construction sector</i>		4
<i>Finance</i>		4
<i>Automotive</i>		2

### **OMD in Francophone Contexts: Scope and Market?**

As already indicated, while France has traditionally invested substantially in continuing professional development, there is nevertheless a paucity of specific and discernible data regarding the extent of OMD in France. The research identified a limited number of individual French providers. Equally, there is minimal evidence of United Kingdom based companies seeking to enter the French market. This appears to be primarily an issue of



company size. With most British firms operating at micro-firm level, there are, *de facto*, very few OMD providers with the infrastructure to be able to attempt foreign market entry in any concerted manner. The French field research repeatedly triangulated a general lack of engagement with OMD programmes and a predilection for classroom-based seminars. Part-Francophone countries (for example, Switzerland, Belgium, Canada) provide some interesting comparative evidence of adoption and use of OMD. Primarily this is most prevalent in non-French speaking areas. While there are cases of transfer to Francophone zones, for example Flemish to Walloon, English to French-speaking Canada, Swiss German to Swiss French-speaking areas this is by no means an expansive phenomenon.

## A “Gallic OMD” – Issues, Problems and Possibilities?

### Non-Convergent Frames of Reference for Management Development

It is clear that French respondents surfaced a series of pre-conditions and contexts which seemed to be playing roles in relation to attempts to engage OMD in France. (Iribarne, 1989, 1998) In particular OMD seems to be employed by British providers with little regard for the social and cultural specificities of their product in relation to French corporate attitudes and manager development ‘particularismes’. Indigenous French and Francophone OMD providers applied the approach but generally within particular parameters. For example, in the few instances where it was acknowledged as being in use, typically it was engaged only for lower echelon employee groups with the object of motivating (often in sales and marketing contexts or ‘getting-to-know-you’ induction processes). Interestingly, in Switzerland and Belgium OMD providers indicated that their market was usually in the non-Francophone geo-linguistic areas of the country. Given these *prima facie* revelations, following Czarniawska and Sevón [1996] it may be more appropriate to discuss the introduction of OMD into different national contexts as involving processes of translation and adaptation rather than imitation.

The research confirmed that approaches such as OMD were viewed by French managers as an Anglo-Saxon/US management approach. Nearly all French manager and French OMD provider respondents alluded to this. Among the manager *cadre* respondents this generated a strong sense of caution, and even a degree of resistance, in line with wider generic socio-cultural sentiments regarding Anglo-Saxon infiltrations and corruptions of French cultural environments. Interestingly, such concerns were not present for British corporate respondents perhaps largely attributable to the operation of an ethnocentric perspective in which OMD’s atmosphere was viewed as ‘normal’. Indeed, while some British managers highlighted the eccentric nature of the activities that make up OMD programmes the programmes were seen as fitting into a British management development repertoire.

‘Dr Livingstone I presume – what the bl\*\*\*dy hell are we all doing here!’ [British Manager Respondent – Telecommunications Company, 1996 – *statement on a night hike in the English Lake District satirising the search for the Victorian Explorer, Dr Livingstone in the heartlands of Africa*]

Alternatively, French manager respondents constantly juxtaposed the competitive qualification route they had followed to achieve *cadre* status with evaluations of OMD as a management development approach. Many could not see any great utility in the approach for their work:

‘I fail to see how climbing ropes and running around fields is a good preparation for the task of managing.’ [French Manager Respondent- Finance sector, 2004]

‘My time at [*grande école*] X gave me an excellent base for entry to my future career. I’m sure these approaches (sic: OMD) will be useful for some employees but I don’t think it would offer anything valuable to someone in my role’. [French Manager Respondent – Aerospace sector, 2003]

These comments exemplify notions of competing philosophical frames of references for sense-making constructed into institutional approaches for manager development. [Weick, 1995] Britain exhibits a deep-rooted historical allegiance to the role of pragmatism as an abiding mind-set in national debates and ethical and philosophical developments [McEwan, 2001]. In broad terms, this contrasts with the, although not totalising but nevertheless, potent legacy of Cartesian rationalism and idealism potentially influential within French ‘habitus’ [Bourdieu, 1977,1984; Jannoud, 2002] and which still play a substantial role in French educational systems. The contrasting philosophical approaches cast varying light on a valuing of OMD. OMD, with its blend of the physical activities followed by cerebral group review discussions is broadly accepted in British settings. The physical activities sit well against a long tradition by many of valuing experiential learning - apprenticeships, vocational qualifications or simply ‘the university of life’ at least equally to intellectual development.

‘These [OMD] courses give our people real skills to get the job done – much more than any academic approach ever could’. [British Manager – OMD Programme 1996]

Indeed, it can be suggested that anti-intellectualism towards, or resistance to philosophising, British manager development is an ongoing debate. However, within French management development contexts, the ability of a senior manager to demonstrate and exercise rational and intellectually informed decision-making is an extrinsically valued attribute. OMD activities as such are construed as crude physical events with little relevance to the requisite processes for managerial processes.

### **Resistance and Acquiescence – Separation of Work and Non-Work Domains**

French manager respondents repeatedly pointed up concerns regarding the way in which OMD programmes challenge and blur divisions between work and private physical and mental spaces. In the United Kingdom, work has infiltrated, even annexed, many private spaces resulting in long working hours, flexible (for the employer) working practices, low-job security and employer and low transition costs in shedding workers. Equally, employers have engaged a wide range of psychological approaches aimed at enhancing employee development and performance including neuro-linguistic programming, mentoring, coaching and counselling. While it can be suggested that many benefits may have been derived for both employer and employee in these activities they do raise important and serious issues regarding the right of a company to enter and adjust employees’ minds.

In France the long-standing tradition of separation of work and private space and life is less welcoming to such corporate intrusions. As one manager respondent succinctly stated: ‘Work must know its place.’(Manager Respondent – Aerospace Sector, 2005). France has a long tradition of employee legal protection and generally favourable working conditions (Fagnani and LeTablier, 2004, p.552-554). It is this respect that OMD adoption meets considerable resistance. The close communal living and the sharing of personal thoughts and identity

involved in OMD processes contravenes many of these conventions and boundaries in French life.

A further issue emergent in the data concerned the maintenance of authority and respect inherent within the status of *cadre*. Unlike British managers, *cadres* are commonly perceived as operating within a high power-distance context wherein employees see managers as remote and aloof figures [Hofstede, 1983]. The familiarity engendered and encouraged by OMD activities contravenes this manager-employee institutionalised relationship. French Manager respondents reported that certainly, at the very least, it would be necessary to run manager-only courses or alternatively programmes for a particular status tier of employees. They deemed the notion of self-depreciation or appearing foolish in front of sub-ordinate employees unanimously unacceptable. A number of French managers commented that OMD activities might be suitable for rank-and-file employees and only then for particular departments, for example, for motivational objectives only for sales teams.

‘I am sure that it [OMD] might have value for some staff [i.e. implication non-cadre] to rejuvenate motivation levels and perhaps certain other job-related skills but I think that is broadly as far as its value is likely to go’ [French Manager Respondent – Automotive Sector, 2002].

OMD often involves close and informal spatial and relational group interaction. For example, activities may involve sharing tents on overnight camps, mountain hut dormitories or operating for sustained periods of time in close-knit groups. Moreover, OMD can involve considerable physical contact, pushing and pulling group co-members through obstacle courses. While British managers seem to broadly accept, even enjoy, these arrangements:

‘Takes me back to my Boy Scout days!’ [British Manager Respondent – Construction sector, 2003].

they present severe question marks and difficulties for French participants.

### **Formation and Interactions With Popular Cultural Representations**

For British managerial participants, this ‘getting along together’ environment tends to locate well within a long tradition of historical and popular cultural traditions. Echoes of school sports teams and novelistic adventure tales akin to Ransom’s *Swallows and Amazons* and *Famous Five* high jinks interplay with literary romanticism associated with mountain country (Wordsworth). Vestigial legacies of jingoistic and imperial Victorian and Edwardian mountaineering and explorer ‘stiff upper lip’ (in the mould of Scott of the Antarctic) are updated by urban myths of SAS exploits and filmic images of the Rambo-esque genre. In a United Kingdom post-industrial context the countryside is bound up in a set of popular culturally romanticised images transformed into a commodified product and industry for leisure and tourism in which OMD fits well [Howkins and Lowerson, 1979; Newby, 1991].

There were no comparable resonances among French manager respondents. While some of these commodified aspects may be evidenced in contemporary French settings, the Anglo-Saxon associations with the outdoors did not come into play in Gallic settings and this has implications for how participants approach OMD programmes. Indeed, in France, popular cultural figures are associated with the land but this is in the context of a country with vast and rich regional agricultural backdrop, which experienced a late rural-exodus [Todd, 1991].

French psychology is profoundly connected to the notion of geographical ancestry and identity centred on *commune*, *village patrimoine* and *terroir* rather than a locale for manager development [Zeldin, 1997, p.205; Crawshaw, 1997, p.187; Lebaude, 2002, p.12]. The popular cultural references here are more likely to be literature (for example, *La Terre* by Zola, *Le Grand Meaulnes* by Fournier, *Les Lettres de Mon Moulin* by Daudet, *Jean de Florette* by Pagnol) or philosophy (*L'Education Sentimentale*, Rousseau [- cited by Magnino, 1994 in relation to French outdoor education]). French manager respondents associated holidays at second homes with countryside more than work.

‘Activities in the countryside is something I do at weekends, on a Sunday, or when I go on holiday in July or August. I cannot say it is something I would welcome within the normal range of work-related activities’. I might go on a ski-weekend with colleagues but that would it’ [French Manager Respondent – Consultancy Firm, 2005].

At its most potentially relevant, French manager respondents considered OMD irrelevant and silly to what being a manager involves. At their most heightened concern, they viewed OMD as Anglo-Saxon/US originated approach which was intrusive, manipulative of participants’ minds and disrespectful of work-private domain divides and overall potentially dangerous and destructive for corporate well-being and conventions. A few respondents even went so far as to recall ‘Strength Through Joy’ Nazi Fascist applications of physical activities in the outdoors and felt very troubled by seeing managerial training in outdoor contexts.

‘We tend to see only the manipulative aspects of these approaches’ [French Manager Respondent – Aerospace Industry, 2004].

OMD does however resonate with militaristic imperialistic and colonial infusions in Anglo-Saxon popular cultural iconography of dogged determination against the odds and elements (Nelson, Drake, Churchill) and these marry well with the Victorian-Edwardian mountaineering and poetic romanticism. For many French manager respondents the only military connotations were those associated with a now defunct regime of national service. Rather than exciting, these experiences were generally reported in terms of varying boredom, derision:

‘The army was where, quite frankly, one did sod all – it was a real waste of time’ (French Manager Respondent – Construction Sector, 1995).

A number of factors have been identified for OMD in British and French management development contexts and these are summarised in the table below.

#### Paradigmatic Constructs of OMD: A United Kingdom-France Comparative Framework Overview

<b>United Kingdom and OMD</b>	<b>France and OMD</b>
<b><u>Non-Convergent Frames of Reference</u></b>	<b><u>for Management Development</u></b>
OMD seen as a <b>‘home-grown’ product</b>	OMD seen as an <b>Anglo-Saxon/US intrusion</b>

<p>Sporting Figures seen <b>as having influence</b> and lessons for management</p>	<p>Sport and sporting figures <b>seen as distinct</b> and not necessarily as corporate role models – organizational hierarchy seen as important influence for individual</p>
<p>Propensity of Anglo-Saxon sense-making towards <b>pragmatism</b> – the experiential aspect of OMD appeals</p>	<p>Propensity of Gallic sense-making towards the cerebral and <b>rationalism</b>. Experiential not afforded a strong role over the cerebral. Notions of ‘la gross tête’(intelligence) valued.</p>
<p>Purported <b>anti-intellectualism</b> among some UK management – school of university of life rather than formal qualifications – OMD as a practical approach</p>	<p>Strong value placed on <b>intellectualism</b> within management groupings – OMD seen as not particular engaging intellect.</p>
<p><b><u>Resistance and Acquiescence-Separation</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>of Work/Non-Work Domains</u></b></p>
<p>Issues of work-life balance and the acknowledgement of <b>infiltration by the corporation into personal space/mind</b> – OMD invites this intrusion with shared accommodation/physically close experiences.</p>	<p>Strong division between public and corporate and private dimensions – <b>Reluctance to afford the company access to personal thoughts/identity</b> through review processes which are central to OMD programmes</p>
<p><b>Hofstede [1983] style power-distance relatively small</b> - lends itself to close contact and collaboration in activities (for example, employees sharing tents etc)</p>	<p><b>Hofstede [1983] style power-distance relatively high</b> - lends itself to close contact and collaboration in activities (tents etc)</p>
<p><b><u>Formation and Interactions With</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>Popular Cultural Representations</u></b></p>
<p>Countryside constructed as <b>historically romantic</b> adjusted contemporaneously <b>commodified for ‘consumption’</b></p>	<p>Countryside linked to late rural-exodus and <b>nexus with ancestral ‘commune/terroir’</b>. Also associated uniquely with holiday and recreation rather than work activities</p>
<p><b>Popular cultural representations of derring-do historical figures</b> inform mind-set (Scott of the Antarctic) and linked to values useful for work enterprise</p>	<p>Popular cultural figures associated with the land but <b>not powerfully associated with corporate</b> or work contexts. (for example Jean de Florette, Le Grand Meaulnes)</p>
<p>OMD <b>not particularly viewed as</b> manipulation or echoing <b>Fascist</b> Strength Through Joy themes – seen at times satirically as ‘Character Building’ – echoes of Victorian ‘Muscular Christianity’</p>	<p>OMD viewed as manipulation or echoing <b>Fascist</b> Strength Through Joy themes Activities often viewed with suspicion as manipulative and coercive.</p>

In summary, there are a number of issues which seem to impede the expansive introduction of OMD into French companies. There is evidence of OMD being used for French human resource development, especially among rank-and-file employees for specific objectives.

However, it is less certain that *cadres* are engaging it as a valued approach. This is largely attributable to: a continuing belief in the value of a qualification and study route to developing management skills; competing philosophical traditions and legacies which place varying value role on the pragmatic an experiential learning; competing attitudes to work and private space; and divisions in association with physical and mental parameters and differing attitudes towards the role of sport and countryside environments. While the data concerns primarily French and United Kingdom contexts, future work on internationalising OMD may seek to develop the study to achieve further inter-comparative studies between national manager cultures and their relative socio-cultural settings. Additional studies are required to explore a *prima facie* indication of more likely adoption of OMD by northern European cultures in comparison with southern European contexts. The role of multinationals (rather than national firms) in introducing new management development approaches will be a further significant catalyst to such transformation. Equally Salient within these issues is the changing power and identities of the cadres and the *possibility* of new perspectives (Boltanski, 1982:40; Barsoux and Lawrence, 1990:19-20; Crawshaw, 1997:191; Bouffartique, 2000, 2001; Kumar and Usunier, 2001). Transformations may be occurring more rapidly for some sections of the cadre community than others. Alumni of the top *grande écoles* appear likely to continue to enjoy, for the foreseeable future, the privileges afforded by the extant system, according to whose rules, they have risen to 'the top'. In this sense they may well play the "gatekeeper" role to new ideas and approaches (Engwall and Zamagni, 1998:15).

## Conclusion

OMD presents itself as a management development approach having wide applicability. This paper has sought to demonstrate the degree to which much of OMD in the United Kingdom can be argued as constructed on and operating in relation to particular Anglo-Saxon ethnocentric legacies. The export or expansion of this approach to non-Anglo-Saxon contexts raises questions concerning the validity of its underlying assumptions and cultural representations. It has identified a need to re-visit OMD in order to take stronger account of contrasting socio-cultural factors and transforming identity of organizational groupings. This will involve OMD commentators and practitioners undertaking more in-depth consideration of some of the historical and contemporary social constructions and sense-making in operation in OMD programmes in relation to organizational and national cultural specific contexts.

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