

CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

HUMPHREY BOURNE

**AN EXPLORATION INTO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
MANAGERS' PERSONAL VALUES AND THEIR INTERPRETATION OF
THEIR ORGANISATION'S CORPORATE VALUES**

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Abstract

The predominant assumption in the management literature is that corporate values are internalised into organisational members' personal value systems. Corporate values, viewed in this way, perform a controlling role in organisations, consistent with the characteristics of a deliberate strategy perspective. Theories concerning the nature of personal values challenge this assumption of corporate value internalisation. However, there is a lack of empirical research in the management field investigating the relationship between personal and corporate value systems.

In this interpretive research study, I explore managers' interpretation of their organisation's corporate values, and relate these to their personal value priorities. Senior managers from three commercial companies took part in the study: one with no published corporate values statement; one with a recently introduced statement; and the third with a well established corporate values statement. I explore how managers interpret their organisation's corporate values through the description and meaning they give to value terms, and elicit their personal values by using an adaptation of the laddering technique, and by inferring values revealed in managers' narrative of their career histories.

The findings show that managers feel they share their corporate values but interpret them in differing ways, both through those they identify as representing the corporate values, and through the meaning they give to value terms. The variation in interpretation is consistent with differences in their own personal value priorities, suggesting that managers adapt corporate values so that they more closely reflect their own. These findings challenge the notion that corporate values provide an effective means of normative control, and instead suggest they legitimise the worldview of individual managers, thus enabling differences to be accommodated within a broad framework of shared values. A model of value relationships is proposed, suggesting a way that corporate values may assist in bringing together deliberate and emergent strategy perspectives.

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1 An introduction to the research

1.1 Introduction

Twenty years ago, in their influential book 'In search of excellence', Peters & Waterman (1982) summed up their 'all-purpose' advice for management: "Figure out your value system. Decide what your company stands for" (p. 279). They argued that excellent companies achieve superior performance through conformity to a limited number of values that employees identified with and internalised. This view was supported at that time by others such as Deal & Kennedy (1982), and Pascale & Athos (1981), who noted the existence of strong corporate values were a major difference between successful Japanese companies and struggling American ones. Following these studies, others have argued the importance of corporate values as a management tool (Dobni, Ritchie, & Zerbe, 2000), and have suggested that companies with 'strong cultures' based around a set of core values are more successful than those with weak cultures (Collins & Porras, 1994; Kotter & Heskett, 1992). The principle behind this view is that the core values will be internalised by organisational members, and incorporated into their own value system, to the extent that they "either buy into their values or get out" (Peters & Waterman, 1992: 77). The supposed result is a united staff finding fulfilment and common purpose in their work (Beyer, 1981; Pruzan, 1998). Individuals whose own values do not fit with those of the organisation will be "expunged like a virus" (Collins & Porras, 1994: 9). Organisations with 'appropriate' core values that underpin 'valuable' cultures can find them a source of sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1996). Although the importance of such shared values had been noted by others including Selznick (1957) some time earlier, the impact of the corporate culture movement of the past twenty years has had a significant effect on organisational activity. It is now commonplace to find organisations of

all types declare their 'corporate values'¹ and there are examples of considerable investments being made by organisations in order to develop values that have the clear purpose of changing cultures (Turnbull, 2001).

Corporate values can be defined as a form of social values, those desired by the leadership of a social group². They differ from organisational values, which are defined as the averaged sum of the personal values of the members of a group (Schwartz, 1994a). While the predominant assumption in the corporate values literature is that organisational members internalise the values of the organisation, the personal values literature typically suggests this might not be the case. Researchers in personal values (e.g. Feather, 1975; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992; Smith, 1969) argue that they are relatively enduring, mostly established as the adult matures and thereafter largely resistant to change. Furthermore, personal values are thought to be organised into some form of hierarchical structure, whereby some values are more centrally held, and more important to the individual than others (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). This contrasts with corporate values, which are normally presented as having equal significance or importance; any sense of hierarchy has to be interpreted. Both corporate and personal values are thought to act as guides and determinants of behaviour (Rokeach, 1973), but will do so differently unless they are closely aligned. While such alignment is assumed by those coming from an integrated culture perspective (Martin, 1992), and evidence is found by some in such concepts as person-organisation fit (e.g. Chatman, 1991), there are a number of studies that question this (e.g. Adkins, Ravlin, & Meglino, 1996; Finegan & Theriault, 1997; Isaac, Cahoon, & Zerbe, 1992).

In addition to structural differences, personal and corporate values also differ conceptually. Personal values are concerned with personal preferences for end-states or modes of conduct over converse end-states or modes of conduct

¹ An internet search through the "Google" search engine, using the term 'corporate values' produces many thousand 'hits', the vast majority of which are the corporate values statements of organisations ranging from commercial companies, not-for-profit organisations, and national and local government departments.

² Corporate values are more fully defined in Chapter Two, section 2.2

(Rokeach, 1973). Personal values may have elements of that which the individual desires, and that which the individual considers desirable – both ‘want’ and ‘ought’ elements. Corporate values, on the other hand, are concerned only with the desirable, as defined by the leadership of the organisation. This study explores the relationship between personal and corporate values, and does so at the level of senior manager, where the relationship is likely to have implications for how strategy is formed and implemented.

1.2 Values and strategy perspectives

The process of strategy development is a subject of continuing debate concerning how it is best undertaken, where in the organisation it is best undertaken, and when (Lynch, 1997). In the convolutions of this debate, there are many perspectives of the strategy process (Whittington, 1993), but a broad distinction can be made between those that are deliberate, and those that are emergent (Mintzberg, 1978). Values have been evoked in both deliberate and emergent strategising: in the former as reflecting the desires of the founders and top executives of the organisation (Selznick, 1957), and as a means of control (Nohira & Ghoshal, 1994); and in the latter as part of the social and cultural contexts out of which strategies might emerge (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

The importance of values in strategy is a recurrent, although intermittent, theme in management literature, but its history reveals differences over time in the emphasis on values at the personal or corporate level. In one of the earlier references to values, Chester Barnard (1938) saw them as offering a solution to the problem of creating and managing complex organisations. Divergent interests could be minimised by socialising organisational members to have a common set of values and goals, an early indication of the potential of corporate values as a means of control. Selznick (1957) proposed that organisations distinguish themselves from others through the development of a distinctive set of values, characteristic of their identity. These values would become an integral part of organisations, there to “fix the assumptions of policymakers” (p. 55). In this,

Selznick is arguing for corporate values acting both as a component of corporate identity and as guides and determinants of behaviour for those who develop strategies.

There followed a period through the 1960s and 1970s when the emphasis in the literature swung from the corporate values of the organisation to the personal values of the chief executive and top management team (England, 1975). This coincided with an increasing interest in personal values generally, arising out of the development of research instruments (e.g. Allport, Vernon, & Lindzey, 1970; England, 1967; Rokeach, 1973), and the resulting conclusions drawn by those using them. England (1967) suggested that personal values influence both managers' perceptions of problems, and their decisions and solutions, while Guth & Tagiuri (1965) argued a clear link between the executive's values and the resulting corporate strategy. Meanwhile, Steiner (1969) claimed that "the values of top managers are reflected in the network aims of an enterprise. Whether written or not, these values have the profoundest impact on the direction in which a firm moves and the way it operates" (p. 143). This view was reflected by Sikula (1971) who also saw an organisation's operations to be largely a reflection of the values of the chief executive. Connor & Becker (1975) considered the relationship between the values of top managers and the performance of organisations. They argued that managers' values may be seen as "identical with or underlying the formation and pursuit of organizational goals", and that "in the latter view, values are seen to lie at the heart of goal setting and strategy choosing processes; in the former view, values are the goals" (p. 557).

A growing interest in corporate culture from the early 1980s led to a change of focus from the values of individual managers and executives to the values of the organisation itself. This coincided with the increasing interest in the strategic importance of shared values, argued by Pascale & Athos (1981), Deal & Kennedy (1982), and most notably, Peters & Waterman (1982). Corporate values were declared important components of the organisation's mission, together with its objectives and strategy (Campbell & Yeung, 1991), and studies showed that those

organisations with strong cultures centred around core values outperformed those with weaker cultures (Collins & Porras, 1994; Kotter & Heskett, 1992). Companies that publicly declared their corporate values were shown to perform better in terms of return on sales and in employment measures than those that did not (Bart & Baetz, 1998). A consequence of this focus on values as a management tool has been the development of the concept of 'values-based management' (Anderson, 1997; Pruzan, 1998), which aims to place the values of stakeholders, including customers and organisational members, at the centre of management decision-making.

The changing emphasis of values from the corporate to the personal and back again may relate to the differing roles that values have been described as playing in the management literature, and this, in turn, can be linked to an evolving understanding regarding assumptions behind strategy formation. Corporate values may play one or more of four principal roles in organisations³. First, corporate values can become embedded into the social structure of an organisation (Selznick, 1957) and serve to strengthen an individual's identification with it (Glynn, Barr, & Dacin, 2000). Secondly, corporate values may act as a form of normative control and as a substitute to rules and regulations (Nohira & Ghoshal, 1994; Ouchi, 1980). Thirdly, and conversely, corporate values may appear to offer liberation from control, releasing organisational members from the constraints of the rulebook and replacing it with value affinity (Peters & Waterman, 1982; Barley & Kunda, 1992). Finally, corporate values may be employed as a marketing communication tool, to give external stakeholders the impression, real or otherwise, that the organisation has values in keeping with their own (de Chernatony, 1999).

The concept of corporate values acting as a form control appears to sit most comfortably with deliberate models of strategy formation. Mintzberg identifies both the design and the planning schools as exemplars of deliberate strategy formation. In the design school, strategy is formulated as an informal process by

³ The roles of corporate values are developed in Chapter Two, section 2.3

the organisational leadership, and is implemented by others (Mintzberg, 1990). In the planning school, strategy is again centrally formulated, but formally by planning teams (Mintzberg, 1994), and also implemented by others. Corporate values represent "the beliefs and preferences of those who formally lead the organisation" (Mintzberg, 1990: 175), and they are encapsulated in the plans which others are required to implement. A key assumption of the planning school is summed up by Ackoff (1970), who introduces his text on corporate planning by stating that the fortune-teller only tries to predict the future, but "the wise man tries to control it" (p. 1). The purpose of corporate values in deliberate strategy formation is the control of the future actions of organisational members (Dobni et al., 2000).

An alternative view of corporate values, however, is that they liberate organisational members so that creativity and innovation can arise in the context of individual self-fulfilment generated by a sense of sharing of the values (Dandridge, 1983). Corporate values in such situations may act as enablers, legitimising the actions of the individual: "their attentiveness to the innovative and creating potential of employees ... enables [them] to expand, albeit within well-defined limits, their sphere of 'objective' autonomy and responsibility" (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992: 459). In this respect, they encourage the emergence of strategic initiatives from diverse parts and different levels in the organisation. In this role, corporate values may be compatible with an emergent strategy perspective.

The extent to which corporate values liberate and legitimise the actions of individual, or act as a form of invidious control is a subject of some debate (ten Bos & Willmott, 2001). In replacing rules and regulations, corporate values may simply replace formal mechanisms with a requirement for conformity of thinking, in which case they assume the role of control. However, where corporate values are conceived in such a way that they, as objects in organisations, "offer considerable latitude for definition and self-validation" (Weick, 1979: 157), then they may allow managers to feel a sense of self-worth (Pratt, 1998). In this way,

corporate values may legitimise the thoughts and actions of managers and other organisational members, fostering creative thinking, a notion that fits with the emergent perspective of strategy formation (Mintzberg, 1987).

Corporate values, therefore, may be considered as manifestations of the values of the chief executive and the top management team, or as reflections of the corporate culture. Likewise, they can act as a form of control as part of a deliberate strategy process, or as points of reference that allow freedom from control and the encouragement of emergent strategies. The extent to which corporate values play either of these roles depends a great deal on the relationship between them and the personal values of organisational members. If corporate values are assimilated into the personal values of managers and other organisational members, then they may be considered as forms of control. On the other hand, if corporate values can be interpreted in ways that allow managers and other organisational members to feel they are able to think and act in accordance with their own idiosyncratic personal value priorities, then they may help to legitimise their thoughts and actions.

1.3 Objectives of the research

The primary objective of this study is to explore the relationship between the personal values of those individuals in an organisation who are concerned with the formation and implementation of strategy, and their interpretation of their organisation's corporate values. This study is important because, although much is assumed about the role and impact of such 'shared' values, little is actually understood about how the two value systems interrelate (Hambrick & Brandon, 1988; Roe & Ester, 1999).

Theories of selection (Cable & Judge, 1997) and socialisation (Enz, 1988), together with those of corporate mission (Campbell & Yeung, 1991), assume that individuals seek organisations with matching values, or that they adopt and

internalise their organisation's corporate values after joining. The evidence for this in the literature is by no means conclusive, and there are indications that individuals do not change their personal value systems to match those of their organisation (Isaac et al., 1992; Kamoche, 2000; Kraimer, 1997). Furthermore, this assumption does not accord with theories regarding the development of personal value systems (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992), which suggest that personal values are relatively enduring. Unless individuals are fortunate enough to find employment in organisations where there exists a close match with their own values, there is likely to be some tension between their personal values and the corporate values of their organisation. This tension has not been much explored in the management literature. Some have discovered cynicism and antagonism towards corporate values (e.g. Kunda, 1992; Watson, 1994; Turnbull, 2001), but they have not related these to the personal values of organisational members. A few have considered the conflict between corporate values and personal values (e.g. Liedtka, 1989; Posner & Schmidt, 1992), but these studies have been based on survey methods, which assume similarity in the meaning of value terms.

Studies in the management literature have not specifically, and empirically, investigated the notion that individuals may interpret their organisation's corporate values in ways that are different to one another, or investigated whether any such differences may be related to differences in personal value priorities. It is widely understood, particularly in the sensemaking literature, that individuals interpret, or make sense of, their environment in ways that are idiosyncratic. For example, Smircich & Stubbart (1985) argue that "individual people occupy personal, subjective space – space in which intentions, meaning and sensibility often are quite idiosyncratic – what the world means to them" (p. 732). Idiosyncratic interpretation of the world extends to symbols (Gioia, 1986), which include corporate values. At the same time, it is understood that the way an individual interprets 'what the world means to them' is influenced to a greater or lesser extent by their personal value priorities, through the processes of perception and interpretation (England, 1967; Postman, Bruner, & McGinnies, 1948). It

would seem logical, therefore, that symbols such as corporate values might be interpreted through the filter of the individual's values (Hambrick & Mason, 1984).

In this study, I ask the question: What is the relationship between managers' personal values and their interpretation of their organisation's corporate values? The study is exploratory, so the question is necessarily fairly broad and one that is unlikely to be fully answered. It is, however, a question that allows for certain room for manoeuvre as this exploratory study unfolds. The nature of the relationship can be better understood by investigating both the ways that managers interpret their corporate values, and their personal value priorities in the same context and situation. Managers may show similarity or differences in the way that they interpret corporate values, and they may have similar or different personal value priorities. These alternatives give rise to four possible outcomes: personal value priorities and corporate value interpretations may both be similar, they may both be different, or one of the two may be similar and the other different. Each of these outcomes has implications for the nature of the relationship, and for theories concerning the role and impact of corporate values⁴.

1.3.1 The focus on senior managers

My intention at the outset was to investigate the phenomenon at those levels in organisations where the informants had responsibility for aspects of the strategy process. The more senior the manager, the greater is his or her influence, both on the development of managerial initiatives such as strategies, and on their subsequent implementation. Additionally, more senior managers have a greater role in managing the interpretation of events and symbols (Isabella, 1990; Smircich & Morgan, 1982) for those subordinate to themselves. The focus, therefore, is on the relationship between senior managers' personal values and their interpretation of their organisation's corporate values.

⁴ These themes are more fully developed in Chapter Two, section 2.6

In this study, I have usually referred to my informants simply as managers. Most of those interviewed could be described as senior, rather than middle managers, although such definitions are somewhat vague. Hambrick, Cho & Chen (1996) define a top management team as including all executives above the vice-president level, effectively those who sit on the main board of an organisation. My informants are clearly not at this level, but a number sit on subsidiary boards and are vice-presidents or directors, which implies they hold senior manager status, and most of the remainder report to a director. Floyd & Wooldridge (1992) describe middle managers as 'linking pins' who have four roles in the strategy process: they may act as champions of particular options; they synthesise information that will affect top manager's perceptions; they facilitate the adoption of new approaches; and they implement deliberate strategy. My informants displayed many of these roles in their descriptions of their responsibilities, so they may be considered middle managers. However, the 'linking pin' role may equally describe all managers whose position rests anywhere between the top management team and non-managerial staff, to some degree or other. Because the managers in this study, with very few exceptions, report either to the top management team, or to a manager who reports to the top management team, their status is that of senior management.

1.4 An overview of the findings, implications and contribution

The study took place in three commercial organisations. An initial exploratory study was carried out within a medium-sized hotel and conference service provider, here known by the initials HCC, where two middle managers and three senior managers were interviewed. Two organisations took part in the main study: 'FMCG', a major UK-based multinational provider of a group of consumer products; and 'HITECH', a large multinational, US-based high technology company. Twenty-two directors and senior managers from these two companies took part in the study. Interviews were designed to explore both the values that managers selected as representing their organisation's corporate values, and the meaning they gave to value terms, while eliciting personal value priorities, so that

the outcome of each interview was a set of ‘values-with-interpretations’ that were then analysed.

1.4.1 Findings

A key finding of this study is that the managers interviewed in each organisation interpreted their corporate values in ways that were different from one another. A further finding revealed that there exists a variety of personal value priorities amongst the managers interviewed in each organisation. Furthermore, the differences in corporate value interpretations among the managers were broadly consistent with differences in their personal value priorities. These managers do not appear to change their own value priorities to match the corporate values, but instead they appear to interpret their corporate values so that they more closely fit their own personal value priorities. There was some evidence from the accounts that managers gave of their career histories that there is a limit to which corporate values can be interpreted to fit their value priorities. Several managers reported leaving companies where they encountered corporate values so contrary to their own that it became uncomfortable to remain.

While the managers studied revealed differences in their interpretations of their organisation’s corporate values, and held different personal value priorities, many stated that they felt they shared their organisation’s values. It appears that what managers think they share is the *concept* of the corporate values, but not the detail. At the level of ‘Our Values’, agreement is high, implying a sense of ownership and belonging. The more that ‘Our Values’ are defined, however, the greater the divergence in managers’ opinion about their content and meaning. One manager’s interpretation of the corporate values might differ quite markedly from another’s, yet both would consider their interpretation to be ‘Our Values’, and both would believe they reflected their own personal values.

1.4.2 Implications

There are a number of implications arising out of these findings. First, the wide range of personal value priorities amongst senior managers, most of whom have

worked for their company for many years, suggests that selection and socialisation process do not result in managers adopting the corporate values as their own. Organisations involved in this study are not successful in ‘governing the souls’ (Rose, 1989) of their managers. Secondly, the variety in interpretation of corporate values reduces their scope for normative control. Organisations, it would seem, should not give up more traditional formal control mechanisms in favour of their corporate values. Thirdly, the finding that managers felt they shared their organisation’s corporate values, while revealing significantly different interpretations, suggests that corporate values do play an important role in uniting different perspectives. In this way, corporate values, conceptualised as a top-down function of leadership, but subject to bottom-up cognitions and practices (Spender & Grinyer, 1995), offer a way of bringing deliberate and emergent worldviews together. Finally, the saliency of, and differences between, managers’ personal value priorities revealed in this study support those such as Eden & Ackermann (1998a), who recommend the sharing of personal value priorities as part of the process of making strategy. In this way, a deeper level of understanding is achieved amongst those involved in the process, and the values that form the bases for strategic decision-making are better understood and negotiated.

1.4.3 Contribution

The study makes six contributions to knowledge. First, it contributes by proposing a theory of the relationship between corporate and personal values, thus answering the challenge put down by Hambrick & Brandon (1988). In doing so, this study contests Willmott’s (1993) claim that corporate values extend management control by “colonising the affective domain” (p. 517) of organisational members. Secondly, the study contributes by adding to the growing body of literature that challenges the assumptions of shared interpretive systems or schema (Smircich, 1983), and instead recognises differences and overlaps in individual’s interpretations (Daniels, de Chernatony, & Johnson, 1995; Donnellon, Gray, & Bougon, 1986; Langfield-Smith, 1992). In the more specific area of corporate values interpretation, this research adds to that of Bumpus &

Munchus (1996), who argue that shared values can have different meanings. Thirdly, this research contributes by confirming the saliency of managers' personal values at levels below that of the top management team. It adds voice to those who challenge the assumption that personal values of managers and other organisational members are altered to accommodate their organisation's corporate values (Finegan & Theriault, 1997; Isaac et al., 1992).

The fourth and fifth contributions are to method. This study contributes by confirming the importance of qualitative research as a means of developing theory in strategic management (Mir & Watson, 2000; Sutton, 1997). There have been few studies that have investigated either personal values of organisational members or corporate values from an interpretive perspective. This brings both together. It also contributes by adding to the repertoire of research tools available for researchers in the management field. In developing this research, a small but useful adaptation was made to Hinkle's (1965) laddering method. This enables values to be elicited during the course of a single interview that also covers other topics. This opens up the possibility of interpretive research relating individuals' personal value priorities to aspects their thoughts and actions.

Finally, this study contributes by adding to those who question the efficacy of selection and socialisation processes as means of homogenising organisational members personal values (Kamoche, 2000; Kraimer, 1997). In concluding that such processes do better at selecting out those whose values are in direct conflict with the corporate values, rather than selecting in those whose values are congruent, this research challenges those who claim the processes result in personal value adaptation (McDonald & Gandz, 1992b). It also supports Schwartz's (1996) theory of integrated value systems, which argues that values play little role in behaviour except when there is value conflict.

1.5 The structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. In Chapter One, I have introduced the core ideas, together with the research question, key definitions and a summary of the findings and contribution. The remainder of the thesis develops these core ideas and sets out the method, findings and conclusions formed.

In Chapter Two, I take up the central theme of this thesis, that of values, and in the first part of the chapter consider the nature of values and their philosophical underpinning, drawing out the differences in views and setting out definitions of personal and corporate values. Following this, I compare the role and structure of corporate values to those of personal values in order to illustrate differences in their theoretical structures and the potential for conflict in their roles. These differences in the role and structure of the two value systems form the basis for the second part of the chapter, where I investigate the contribution in the literature regarding their theoretical relationship. In doing so, I question the assumptions that pervade the corporate values literature regarding value congruity in the selection process, and value adoption through socialisation. I also consider the alternative to value congruity – that individuals live with conflicting values – and the notion, largely unexplored in corporate values literature, that individuals might interpret corporate values in such a way that they more closely match their own values. These theoretical resolutions to the relationship between corporate and personal values are presented as alternative outcomes to the research question, which is developed in the final part of the chapter.

Research of this nature requires a method that allows a manager's personal value priorities to be uncovered at the same time as his or her interpretations of corporate values, so that the resulting 'values-with-interpretations' can be analysed. In order to do this, a method of operationalising the two values constructs had to be developed, and I devote Chapter Three to a discussion of how these might be researched. I review the existing methods for understanding value systems in terms of their appropriateness for this research, and for the ontological position taken. This leads to the conclusion that personal values are best

understood when they are inferred or elicited, rather than measured using *a priori* lists of values, or by asking informants to respond to a direct question of what their values might be. From here, I review the indirect methods for identifying values, particularly the laddering method, and argue that this form of understanding personal values is appropriate to the research. I then review methods used in the past for uncovering individuals' interpretation of corporate values. This sets out the broad principles for operationalising the research, which I then refine by introducing the adaptation to the laddering method that allows for these methods to be used during the course of a single interview, where time is likely to be a constraint. Finally, at the end of the chapter, I outline the key methodological assumptions that underpin the development of the method employed.

In Chapter Four, I outline the research design, considering the criteria for site and informant selection before describing the interview protocol, the use of the laddering method in the interview situation, and the methods used to analyse the resulting data. In Chapters Five and Six, I report on the findings from the fieldwork, which involved an initial exploratory study and a main study. The initial study had the combined purposes of carrying out a preliminary exploration of the relationship between the two value systems, and of testing the methods developed to that point. Following analysis and writing up of this study, I sought feedback and this raised some concerns about the methods used to elicit personal values, which I shared. The solution was the development of the laddering method for use in a single interview, and which I combined with the method for inferring personal values used in the exploratory study. The findings of this exploratory study, however, raised some interesting features about the relationship between the value systems, and these are reported in Chapter Five.

Chapter Six sets out the findings of the main study, carried out among senior managers in two large organisations, here named FMCG and HITECH. After introducing the two organisations, I devote the first part of the chapter to considering the personal values elicited by the laddering method, discussing

managers' responses to the value priorities they revealed and comparing the results with those inferred through the accounts they gave of their career history. I then turn attention to the findings of each of the case studies, reporting managers' interpretations of corporate values, differences in their personal values, and how the two interrelate. I present the findings by directly quoting the managers from the tape transcripts, as well as displaying data in 'ladder maps', tables and figures. It will be seen that at FMCG, where a new corporate values statement was introduced only two years before the interviews took place, there were differences in managers' selection of values statements, as well as differences in the meaning given to particular value terms. In HITECH, however, all managers related to the same corporate values statement, which was strongly supported in its generic form, described here as the 'HITECH code', but differences showed up in the values managers considered to make up the corporate values, and in the meaning given to some of the value terms.

In Chapter Seven, I discuss the findings in the context of values theory developed in Chapter Two. This discussion leads to my setting out a proposed theoretical model of the relationship between an organisation's corporate values, and managers' personal value priorities. I consider the implications, both for the role of corporate values in organisations, and for values in perspectives of strategy formation discussed earlier in this chapter. I then briefly set out the implications that the findings have for practice. In the final part of the chapter, I consider the contributions that this research makes to theory, method and practice, before highlighting its limitations and suggesting some key areas for future research.

2 On personal and corporate values

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the various literatures on values in order to set out the focal point of this research study. In the first section, I discuss the nature of values, working towards a definition of personal and corporate values, and then consider their roles and structures. Differences in these roles and structures suggest potential for tension between the two value systems, and in the second part of the chapter, I explore the contributions from management and social psychology fields that offer explanations to how such tension are resolved. The conclusion is that not all possible explanations have been fully explored, and this suggests a gap in our understanding, which I develop by posing the research question and considering the possible outcomes of its asking.

2.2 What are values?

Some fifty years ago, Clyde Kluckhohn wrote that “much of the confusion in discussion about values undoubtedly arises from the fact that one speaker has the general category in mind, another a particular limited type of value, and still another a different specific type” (Kluckhohn, 1951: 412). Not much has changed in the intervening years. In the late 1960s, Smith (1969) wrote: “We talk about altogether too many probably different things under one rubric ... and we are embarrassed with a proliferation of concepts akin to values” (pp. 96-97). This state of affairs remains the case today. In her extensive review of the values construct, Meg Rohan makes reference to the nursery rhyme character when she says:

“The status of values theory and research suffers because the word *values* is open to abuse by non-psychologists and psychologists alike. ... [People] seem to use

the word *values* in Humpty-Dumpty fashion: they make it mean just what they choose it to mean.” (Rohan, 2000: 255)

The use of the term ‘values’ as a plural noun is relatively recent; it did not appear in the Oxford English Dictionary until the 1930s. Himmelfarb (1995) traces the origin of its usage to Nietzsche, writing in the late nineteenth century who used it to differentiate his concept of existential ‘values’ from the related term, ‘virtues’, which were thought to be God-given. Much of the confusion regarding the concept of values can be traced to this link with virtues, which are more concerned with ideals that people are encouraged to live up to, rather than principles or beliefs concerning their ways of living.

A question regarding the nature of values is whether they are concepts in the human mind, or whether they exist independently and somehow appear as properties of physical or abstract objects. Frondizi summed up the debate in the form of a question: “are things valuable because we desire them, or do we desire them because they are valuable?” (Frondizi, 1971: 19). The latter position is argued by the German philosopher, Max Scheler:

“There are authentic and true value-qualities and ... they constitute a special domain of objectivities, have their own distinctive relations and correlations, and, as value qualities, can be, for example, higher or lower. This being the case, there can be among these value-qualities an order and an order of ranks, both of which are independent of the presence of a realm of goods in which they appear, entirely independent of the movement and changes of these goods in history, and ‘a priori’ to the experience to this realm of goods” (Scheler, 1973(1916): 14-15).

Scheler conceives a hierarchy of *a priori* values, with those pertaining to the senses, the pleasant and unpleasant, forming the base, superseded by vital feelings such as health, sickness, old age and death. Above these lie the spiritual values of the beautiful and ugly, the just and the unjust, and truth, but above all are the values of the holy and unholy, realised in ecstasy and desperation. Scheler’s view is that values are independent of ‘goods’, but they appear in such goods. This notion of values as existing ‘out there’, unchanging over time and entirely

removed from context is less widely held in modern Western philosophy, although examples can still be found from time to time. For example, Stephen Covey's popular book on the habits of effective people is based on "principles that guide human effectiveness – natural laws in the human dimension that are just as real, just as unchanging and arguably 'there' as laws such as gravity in the physical dimension" (Covey, 1992: 32).

The idea that 'things are valuable because we desire them' is rooted in existential philosophy but is criticised by Frondizi who argues, "if every dispute over values implies a difference in taste, and there is no objective criterion to determine who is in the right, 'sin' disappears" (Frondizi, 1971: 80). At the same time, he is critical of Scheler's absolutist position that something bad is always bad, regardless of circumstance or interpretation. His conclusion is that values are 'relational notions' that could not exist without objects if they are to be perceived, but whether they are perceived is subjective. Furthermore, he argues that both object and perceiver are situated in "the complex of individual, social, cultural and historical elements and circumstances" (p. 158). In this conclusion, Frondizi is taking what Hall (1997) terms an 'integrationist' perspective of values: as 'relational notions', values require both objects and social actors in order to exist, but once created they remain social constructions independent of both; and the nature of their existence is bound up in social interaction. The integrationist perspective is implicitly or explicitly accepted in the writings of those who have influenced our understanding of values over the past fifty years or so, including, for example, Kluckhohn (1951), Allport (1962), Rokeach (1971) and Schwartz (1992) working in the fields of anthropology and social psychology. Where there are differences between these and other writers on the subject of values, it is in the nature of these constructions: are they concerned with that which is desirable, or that which is desired? The desirable emphasises the social requirement in values, while the desired emphasises the personal.

2.2.1 Values as the desired or the desirable

Kluckhohn's defines a value as "a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, ends of action" (Kluckhohn, 1951: 395). Although an anthropologist himself, his definition has been adopted by social psychologists (e.g. Smith, 1969) and management researchers (Guth & Tagiuri, 1965), and was important in the development of the concept of values put forward by Rokeach (1973) and Schwartz (1992). Kluckhohn opts for 'desirable' in his definition because "value statements are, by our tradition, normative statements as contrasted to the existential propositions to which they are closely related", arguing that the desirable includes the aesthetic and "those elements of the cognitive which reflect appraisal" (p. 398), as well as the moral. To him, values result from the need for standards both within the individual and 'roughly' agreed upon by a group, and that societies could not function if values were simply the alternative, existential 'desired'.

The concept of values as the 'desirable' is also adopted by Brewster Smith: "personal values pertain to the desirable, the preferable, rather than to the merely desired or preferred; to the realm of 'ought' rather than that of 'is' or 'want'" (Smith, 1969: 102). He, like Kluckhohn, rejects the existential view of values and shows his disapproval of the shift from absolutism towards relativism in "our modern culture". In criticising some of the more established methods for determining personal values available at the time, particularly the Allport-Vernon-Lindzey 'Study of Values' (1970), Smith objects to their focus on the preferred rather than the preferable – he appears to use the terms desirable and preferable, desired and preferred interchangeably – because they "do not come to grips with the distinction that I am presently insisting on" (Smith, 1969: 103). His argument is that values as the preferable, or desirable, are distinctly human characteristics, while values as the preferred can be found in a wide range of animal behaviour. At the same time, Smith accepts that the distinction is an analytical, rather than an empirical one. He accepts that "there is reason to expect people more often than not prefer what they think preferable, and vice versa" and that "values – as one

concretely encounters them, that is – are embedded in a context of fundamental assumptions, ‘existential’ or ‘is’, rather than ‘ought’ propositions” (p. 104). Smith argues for an ‘out there’ concept of values that precedes their adoption, and which act as standards that become incorporated into the self, and, through the particular way individuals adopt these ‘desirable’ values, together with other aspects of their personality, influence their evaluation of their own actions or the behaviour of others.

Hofstede (1980) also distinguishes between the desired and the desirable and suggests that the two represent different areas of study: the phenomenological; and the deontological, which, he says, belongs to ethics, ideology or theology (see Table 2.1). Values as the desired are differentiated by the intensity by which they are held, are phenomenological, and are concerned with an individual’s choices. Values as the desirable, conversely, are concerned with direction and with the ideological, earning approval or disapproval from others. Hofstede’s view emphasises the conceptual difference between the two types of values, and also their locus: when considered as the desired, they are concerned with the individual (‘me, you’); but when considered as the desirable, they are concerned with people in general. His own research was based the values-as-the-desired perspective, and he defines a value as “a broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over others” (1980: 19).

Dimension of a Value	Values as the Desired	Values as the Desirable
	Intensity	Direction
Nature of corresponding norm of value	Statistical, phenomenological, pragmatic	Absolute, deontological, ideological
Corresponding behaviour	Choice and differential effort allocation	Approval or disapproval
Dominant outcome	Deeds and / or words	Words
Terms used in measuring instrument	Important, successful, attractive, preferred	Good, right, agree, ought, should
Affective meaning of this term	Activity plus evaluation	Evaluation only
Person referred to in measuring instrument	Me, you	People in general

Table 2.1: Hofstede’s (1980) distinctions between values as the desired and the desirable

Hofstede's major study into the differences in value priorities of cultures indicates that his conception of cultural values is the sum of values as the desired, and not of the desirable, a perspective that is developed in section 2.2.3. Others who conceive of values in terms of the desired include Allport et al. (1970), Maslow (1970), Hambrick & Brandon (1988), and Watson (1994). In developing their theory of the nature of values, Schwartz & Bilsky (1987) use the term 'desirable', while accepting that personal values combine elements of both 'ought' and 'want'. They make the assumption that "values are cognitive representations of three types of universal human requirements: biologically based needs of the organism, social interactional requirements for interpersonal coordination, and social institutional demands for group welfare and survival" (p 551). By taking this essentially practical and social constructionist view of values, Schwartz & Bilsky imply that values serve the fundamental purpose of assisting people to operate both as individuals and as members of society. They argue that because values combine personal need satisfaction and social effectiveness, they are both representations of the desirable and the desired. Values rooted in an individual's biological needs may be (but are not always) more concerned with the desired rather than the socially desirable, while values rooted in the need to acquiesce to social institutional demands may be more concerned with the desirable, and those rooted in the need for human interaction may be concerned with either. Schwartz and Bilsky (1987) do not make the distinction explicit, accepting that values involve both: depending on factors such as personality, people live their lives in a constant flux between what they want and what they think they ought to want.

2.2.2 Rokeach's definition and concept of values

In his important study of the subject, Rokeach (1973) set out his assumptions about the nature of human values. He argues that: they are relatively small in number; all people possess the same values to some degree; they are organised into value systems; their antecedents can be traced to culture, society, institutions and personality; and their consequences will be "manifested in virtually all phenomena that social scientists might consider worth investigating and understanding" (Rokeach, 1973: 3). He defines a value and a value system thus:

“A value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence. A value system is an enduring organisation of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance” (Rokeach, 1973: 5).

Rokeach points out that values are initially taught in isolation from one another as absolutes: “such-and-such a mode of behaviour or end-state, we are taught, is always desirable. We are not taught that it is desirable, for example, to be just a little bit honest” (p. 6). Because values are initially taught as absolutes, and because maturing children encounter different values taught in this way through the family, school and other social institutions, there is an increasing likelihood that several values might come into conflict with one another. Rokeach argues that through the process of maturation, people learn to integrate isolated values into a hierarchically organised system of more and less important values.

According to Rokeach, a value is an enduring belief. A value is enduring but not fixed, otherwise there would be no possibility for individual and social change, and a value is not completely unstable, otherwise continuity of personality and society would be impossible. It is a certain type of belief, one that is prescriptive, different from those that are descriptive and from those that are simply evaluative, although it has evaluative elements (Rokeach, 1968). A value, like other types of beliefs, has cognitive, affective and behavioural components; it is “an intervening variable that leads to action when activated” (Rokeach, 1973: 7). In his definition, Rokeach states that values are concerned with modes of conduct or end-states of existence. He goes on to suggest that end-state of existence, or terminal, values can be divided into those that are self-centred and those that are society-centred, while modes of conduct, or instrumental values may be those that are moral or those that are competence related. Rokeach suggests that violation of moral values will induce feelings of guilt, while violation of competence values will induce feelings of shame. Here, Rokeach seems to be implying that values can have both aspects of the desirable and the desired. He considers Kluckhohn’s (1951) definition, which concerns conceptions of “the desirable which influences

the selection of available means, modes and ends of action” (p. 395), and argues that this represents “a definable preference for something to something else” (Rokeach, 1973: 10). Furthermore, Rokeach points out that the notion of the ‘desirable’ raises the question of for whom is it desirable, and that a person may have double or even triple standards – desirable for them but not for me. For these reasons, and for the reason that a hierarchical value system often requires selection between conflicting values, Rokeach defines values as the personally or socially *preferable*. In this way, he appears to be suggesting a way forward that is later reflected in Schwartz & Bilsky’s (1987) view that, for an individual, values are preferences that may involve both the desirable and the desired.

2.2.3 Corporate values as social values

Values can be categorised into three broad groups: personal, cultural, and social values (Dose, 1997). It is clear that personal values are those held by an individual, and these have been shown to be empirically distinct from social values (Mueller & Wornhoff, 1990). A further distinction needs to be made, however, between cultural and social values. In the following paragraphs, I shall differentiate the two, and argue that ‘organisational’ values are the cultural values of an organisation, while ‘corporate’ values are its social values.

A major area of values research is concerned with those at the level of cultures (e.g. Graves, 1972; Hofstede, 1980; Kluckhohn, 1951; Schwartz, 1994a; Triandis, 1972). It is normally accepted that cultural values are inferred from personal values averaged across members of a society. The average value priorities of societal members reflect “commonalities of enculturation”, with “individual variation around the average reflecting the range of unique personalities and experiences within the society” (Schwartz, 1994a: 92). Thus the cultural values of a society are, effectively, the averaged sum of personal values of the individual members of that society. Social values, on the other hand, are more idealised; they are those that are designated as desirable for a particular society and reflect the general modes of behaviour that an individual “should” or “ought” to exhibit; they are socially desirable phenomena (Ravlin & Meglino, 1987).

In the muddled field of values theory, these distinctions are not as clear or as consistent as one might hope (Rohan, 2000). A case in point is that of ‘work values’, generally defined as those that specifically relate to the work environment (Ros, Schwartz, & Surkiss, 1999). There is disagreement in the literature about whether work values are a subset of personal values (Agle & Caldwell, 1999; Mottaz, 1986) or are socially determined preferences (Ravlin & Meglino, 1987), while some so-called work values appear to be little more than attitudes (Beatty, 1988) and others include a mixture of attitudes, personal and social values (England, 1967; Posner & Schmidt, 1984; 1992). This general lack of clarity in the definitions used by researchers led Dose (1997) to declare that the “various perspectives on work values are like the proverbial blind men attempting to describe an elephant” (p 227).

A similar lack of clarity is found in research on ‘organisational values’. For some, the assumption, explicit or implicit, is that organisational values are cultural, in that they are the average values of organisational members, while for others, organisational values are social, in that they represent the desirable values of the dominant group in the organisation. Within the literature that investigates values at the cultural level, organisational values are considered to be those that are widely shared by the organisation’s members; that is, they are the values that exist and are reflected both as widely shared assumptions and in the culture’s artefacts (Schein, 1992). Weiner argues that “when a number of key pivotal values concerning organisation-related behaviours and state-of-affairs are shared – across units and levels – by members of an organisation, a central value system is said to exist” (Weiner, 1988: 535). Kristof (1996) argues the cultural perspective by means of an example: “if a mechanic does not perceive customer service as a value in an organisation, but the CEO perceives it as one of the organisation’s primary values, then it may not be valid to assert that an organisational value for customer service exists at the organisational level” (p. 13). However, she draws back from this extreme position by saying that ‘perfect homogeneity’ is not absolutely necessary for an organisational level value to exist. Instead, she aligns

herself with Chatman (1989) who defines organisational values as “a group product; even though all members of the group would not have the same values, a majority of active members would agree on them and members of the group would be aware of the group’s support for a given value” (Chatman, 1989: 339). This view is echoed by Katz & Kahn (1978): “it is not necessary to find a miniature reflection of the ideology of the system in the individual motivation patterns of most members in order to have an effective set of group values” (p. 390). Here, researchers appear to be taking a cultural perspective in their conceptualisation of organisational values.

Other researchers conceive of ‘organisational values’ as those that are conceived by, or at least sanctioned by, leaders of the organisation. For example, Cathy Enz defines organisational values “as the beliefs held by an individual or a group regarding the means and ends organisations ‘ought to’ or ‘should’ identify in the running of the enterprise, in choosing what business actions or objectives are preferable to alternate actions, or in establishing organisational objectives” (Enz, 1988: 287). Meanwhile, Pant & Lachman consider “the values of the organisation to mean the values of the top management team” (1998: 198). In these cases, ‘organisational values’ mean those that have been condoned by the group or its leadership, and may not accurately reflect the values of the membership as a whole. Such social values have a greater ‘ought’ or ‘should’ connotation.

This research is concerned with ‘corporate values’. Are corporate values social or cultural? To be consistent with the definitions described above, the answer depends on whether corporate values are the average values of individual members of the organisation or are the socially desirable values approved by the leaders and shapers of the organisation, and which are therefore consistent with their aims and objectives. To help answer this, I refer to the distinctions between organisational and corporate identity made by Hatch & Schultz (1997). They define organisational identity as what “members perceive, feel and think about their organisations” and argue that corporate identity “differs from organisational identity in the degree to which it is conceptualised as a function of leadership” (p.

357). Following this line of argument, corporate values, like corporate identity, can be considered as being largely conceptualised as a function of leadership and are thus social values, while organisational values are the average values of individual members of the organisation, and are thus cultural values. The distinction between organisational and cultural values is reflected in Anthony's (1994) view of culture. He distinguishes between an organisational culture as something an organisation is, from a corporate culture as something that managers should aspire to.

2.2.4 Summary

In this section, I have suggested that the term 'values' is open to multiple interpretations, but that a central contention surrounds their nature as objective and concerned with the desirable, or subjective and concerned with the desired. The situation is further complicated by the level of values being considered. Personal values are those of the individual, while cultural values are the averaged personal values of a culture, and social values are those conceptualised as a function of leadership. Because personal values may be made up of both the desired and the desirable, Rokeach (1973) describes them as 'preferences', and because cultural values are the averaged sum of a population's personal values, they may also be considered preferences. Social values, on the other hand, are concerned with the desirable, and they carry 'ought' or 'should' implications for members of a group. Following the examples set out by Anthony, (1994) and Hatch & Schultz (1997), 'organisational values' are the cultural values of a group, while 'corporate values' are its social values.

2.3 The role and structure of corporate values

“Values are determinants of virtually all kinds of behavior that could be called social behavior – of social action, attitudes and ideology, evaluations, moral judgments and justifications of self and others, comparisons of self with others, presentations of self to others, and attempts to influence others. Boiling all this down to a more succinct theoretical statement, it can perhaps be stated that values are guides and determinants of social attitudes and ideologies on the one hand and of social behavior on the other.” (Rokeach, 1973: 24)

The role of values as guides and determinants of attitudes, ideologies and behaviours is apparent in both the literature on corporate values and that on personal values. The simplicity of this statement, however, is not borne out in the views expressed in the literature. There appear to be differences in the emphasis placed on the different roles of corporate values, which are exacerbated by the lack of structure exhibited in organisation’s statements of their corporate values. Furthermore, similarity in the roles of corporate and personal values suggests that tension may exist between the two systems unless they are closely aligned. In this section, I review the major roles that corporate values might play in an organisation, and then consider their structure and the degree of conflict that can be found in corporate values statements. This review of the role and structure of corporate values is then compared in the next section with a similar review of personal value systems. The purpose of these reviews is to highlight the differences that may lead to conflict between the two value systems.

2.3.1 Role of corporate values

A number of roles for corporate values can be found in the literature, each of which has implications for their place in the strategy process. Corporate values can act as the defining characteristics of an organisation’s identity; they can act as the ideological control of members; they can act as enablers for individual responsibility; or they can simply be a marketing ploy designed to persuade

stakeholders that the organisation holds certain desirable standards, which may or may not be the case.

Selznick (1957) argues that the values of an institution are set out from its foundation, and that they reflect those of the founders, or policymakers:

"The formation of an institution is marked by the making of value commitments, that is, choices which fix the assumptions of policymakers as to the nature of the enterprise – its distinctive aims, methods, and role in the community. These character-defining choices are not made verbally; they may not even be made consciously. When such commitments are made, the values in question are actually built into the social structure" (Selznick, 1957: 55-56)

Through being built into the social structure, corporate values become part of the identity of the organisation (Albert & Whetten, 1985). These values will be incorporated into its emerging culture and identity (Hatch, 1993; Schein, 1985), and will act as a 'normative glue' (Morgan, 1986) which holds the organisation together. While such values may have started out as being those conceptualised as a function of leadership, they may become embedded into the culture of the organisation, and transform into organisational values. Having made this transition, corporate values as identity can be difficult to change, and may require both the efforts of charismatic leadership (Weiner, 1998) to start the change, and a shift in the underlying assumptions held by organisational members to embed change (Schein, 1985). Organisational members themselves identify with their organisation (Gioia, 1998; Pratt, 1998), so changes in corporate values, like change in corporate identity, while possible, are difficult to accomplish (Gioia & Thomas, 1996).

Corporate values have been described as both a means of control and a means of liberation from control. Their role in controlling behaviour in an organisation is well reported in the literature. It can be traced from Barnard (1938), who saw 'shared values' as a solution to the problem of managing complex organisations, Etzioni (1965), who considered their role in forming a normative organisation, and Ouchi (1980), who argued their potential to "erase the possibility of

opportunistic behaviour” (p.138). Dobni, Ritchie & Zerbe (2000) recently described corporate values as a “tool of control that informally approves, constrains, or prohibits behaviours” (p. 94). Nohira and Ghoshal (1994) investigated headquarters control of subsidiaries, comparing the efficacy of shared corporate values as a means of control with ‘differentiated fit’, or the appropriate balance of centralisation and formalisation according to the subsidiary circumstance. They found that there was little difference in the outcomes, measured in terms of return on assets and growth, when headquarters used either corporate values or differentiated fit as primary control methods, but that there were significant improvements where headquarters used both. The business ethics literature has also identified the role that corporate values play in controlling or guiding ethical behaviour (Griseri, 1998; McCoy, 1985), while Pruzan (1998) notes that corporate values are often introduced “as a new way to maintain classical power” (p. 1381).

The role of corporate values as a means of control is attacked on ideological grounds by Willmott (1993) because “improvements in productivity and quality, it is argued, flow from corporate cultures that systematically recognise and reward individuals, symbolically and materially, for identifying their sense of purpose with the values that are designed into the organisation” (Willmott, 1993:515-516). This manipulation of the individual employee, as Willmott sees it, “aspires to extend management control by colonising the affective domain” in a way that he describes as “incipiently totalitarian” (p. 517). The view taken by Willmott is that organisations use corporate values as a more insidious form of control than is the case with rules and regulations. The extent of this control is demonstrated by Campbell, Devine & Young (1990), who state that “in recognising the importance of values ... we have done no more than acknowledge the weight of academic, consultant and management opinion that values can both motivate employees to behave in a desired way and provide employees with meaning that can make work fulfilling and worthwhile” (p. 51).

The idea that values can provide employees with ‘meaning that can make work fulfilling’ can be viewed as Willmott’s colonisation of the affective domain, or as liberation from the rules that stifle organisational members. This latter view is the basis of the notion that corporate values can act as an enabler, and it is the interpretation that Peters & Waterman (1982) adopt. Barley & Kunda (1992) suggests that the enabling aspect of corporate values is intended to work in the employees’ favour:

“Although shared beliefs and values might blur the boundaries between self and organisation, such commitment was said to imply no loss of individualism or autonomy. In fact, strong cultures were said to actually enhance autonomy, since well-socialised employees could be entrusted to act in the organisation’s best interest.” (1992: 383)

The enabling role of corporate values is also accepted, albeit reluctantly, by Alvesson & Willmott (1992). They concede that corporate values can provide the encouragement for releasing the innovative and creative potential of employees, which “other philosophies of management control deny” (p. 459). Dandridge (1983) suggests that an unfolding understanding of the relationship between a person’s values and those of his or her organisation can lead to greater fulfilment at work. The difference between corporate values as a means of controlling from the centre and corporate values as enablers that allow for creative ideas to emerge from organisational members echoes the difference between Mintzberg’s (1994) view of planned strategy formation controlled from the centre, and emergent strategy formation arising from the creative thinking of organisational members.

A fourth role for corporate values may be as a marketing communication device to customers and other external stakeholders, which, in its most cynical form, may have little or no resemblance to those values in use within the organisation. It is not surprising that this potential role for corporate values is rarely discussed, but has to be inferred. In discussing the external issues of brand management, de Chernatony (1999) suggests that the desired brand values – those that will result in superior brand performance – set the parameters for employee behaviour, and thus the values that they adopt. This ‘market-led’ perspective effectively places the

formation and development of corporate values in the hands of the customers who seek brands that reflect their own value priorities (Howard & Woodside, 1984).

It is probable that in the majority of organisations, corporate values take on more than one of these four roles of identity, control, liberation and marketing communication. The emphasis is likely to differ from organisation to organisation, and this paradoxically, will depend upon their corporate values. Organisations that espouse such values as diversity, freedom and individual responsibility might be expected to place corporate values in a liberating role, while those that espouse authority, conformity and order might place them in a controlling role.

2.3.2 Structure of corporate values

Corporate values are always presented in plural form, as are other forms of shared values – you never come across organisational members talking about ‘our corporate value’. Their plurality raises the question as to what sort of structure a corporate value system might have. Theoretical models of personal value systems contain the notion of a hierarchy of values, whereby some values are of greater priority to individuals than others (see section 2.4.1). Cultural value systems are also considered hierarchical because the value priorities of a culture are the averaged sum of its members (Schwartz, 1994b). This, however, is not the case with corporate values, which represent those values considered desirable by an organisation’s leadership, and are normally presented without any hierarchy.

One of the few models that considers the structure of organisational values, and which might be translated to corporate values, is Quinn & Rohrbaugh’s (1983) Competing Values Model. In this model, the values of organisations are conceived to fit along two dimensions: that of flexibility versus control; and that of internal versus external focus (see Figure 2.1). This reveals four dominant value types: human relations, internal process, open systems and rational goal. These types will each compete with another to some extent, with greater scope for conflict between the opposites: flexibility versus control; and internal versus

external focus. This model has been used to map the values of an organisation, and to compare them with members' personal values in order to assess congruency (e.g. Kalliath, Bluedorn, & Strube, 1999), or to relate values to organisational structure (Buenger, Daft, Conlon, & Austin, 1996). In these cases, the values measured have been organisational values, measured as the average of a sample of the membership, and the results can be mapped onto the model in order to identify the dominant values in an organisation.

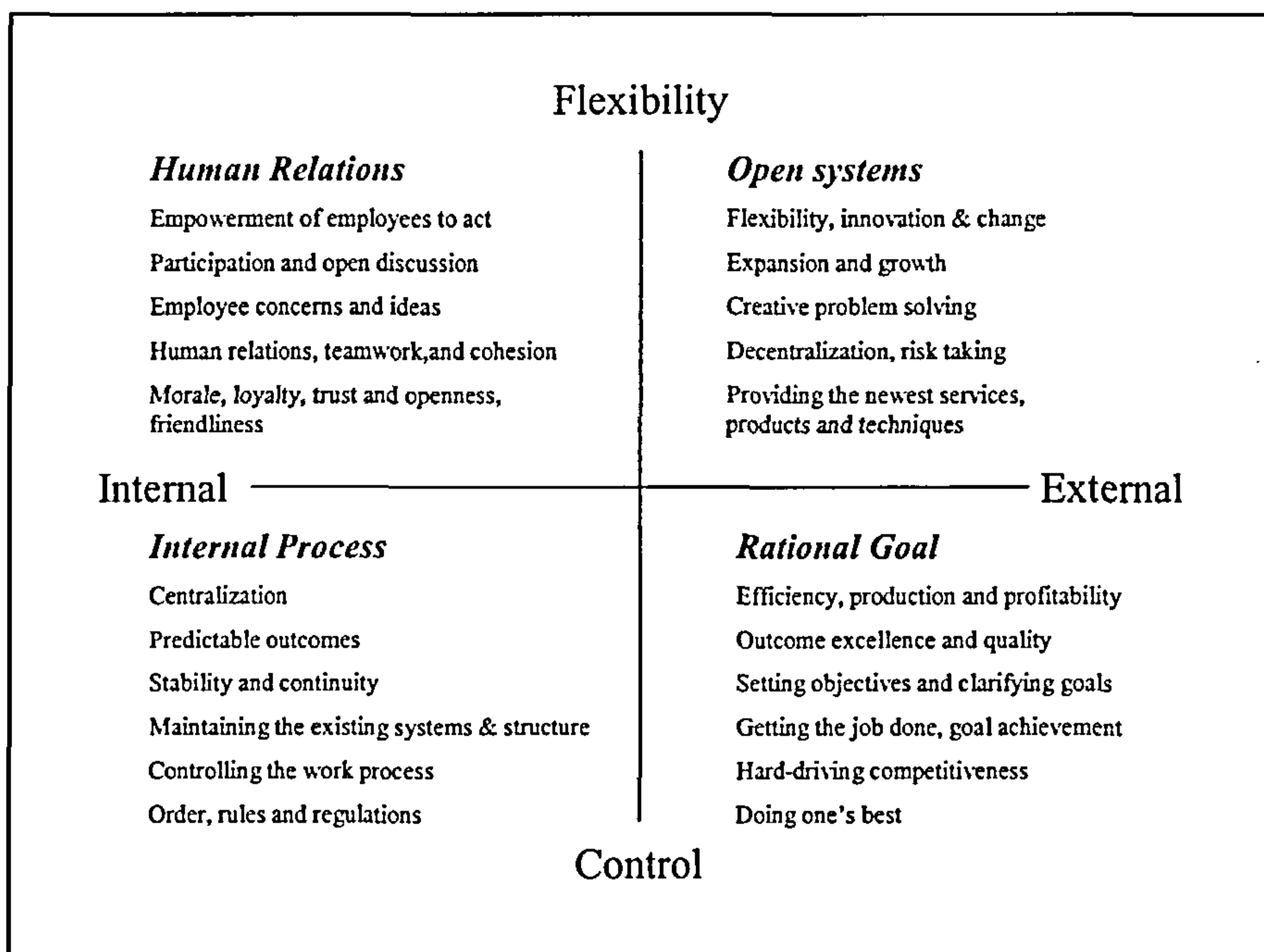


Figure 2.1 The Competing Values Model (adapted from Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983)

Corporate values differ from organisational values because they are determined by the leadership of an organisation, and not the average of its members. Furthermore, statements of corporate values do not indicate which are the more important, so no hierarchy is declared. The Competing Values Model can be a useful tool to illustrate the extent to which conflict might exist between corporate values. Corporate value statements are now widely published in corporate documents, and many examples can be found posted on the Internet. In Table 2.2, the corporate values of five companies, taken from statements posted on the Internet, are compared (see Appendix A for full statements). In none of the

examples are the values prioritised in any way. Those of HSBC emphasise internal processes and rational goals, with some human relations, from the four categories in the Quinn & Rohrbaugh Competing Values Model, while those of Intel also include values from three of the four categories. In these examples, many of the values can be considered competing. The corporate values of Whirlpool, on the other hand, are all in the human relations category, while those of Microsoft and Kodak contain values from two of the four categories. In these examples, there is likely to be less conflict between individual corporate values.

Company	Corporate values (stated)		Comments
HSBC	Integrity Truth and fair dealing Hands-on management Quality and competence Minimum bureaucracy Fast decisions and implementation	Group's interests ahead of individual's Delegation & accountability Fair and objective employer Merit Compliance with laws Environment, local community	High on <i>control</i> , Low on <i>flexibility</i> Includes internal process, rational goal and human relations values, but no open systems.
Intel	Customer orientation Discipline Quality	Risk taking Great place to work Results orientation	High on <i>external</i> , lower on <i>internal</i> . Includes all but internal processes.
Microsoft	Customers Innovation Partners Integrity	People Entrepreneurial culture Diversity Community	High on <i>flexibility</i> , low on <i>control</i> . Includes open systems and human relations values.
Kodak	Respect for the dignity of the individual Integrity Trust	Credibility Continuous improvement and personal renewal Recognition and celebration	High on <i>flexibility</i> , low on <i>control</i> . Includes human relations and open systems values.
Whirlpool	Respect Integrity	Diversity Teamwork	All values are in the human relations category.

Table 2.2: Corporate values statements of five large companies (source: Internet)

These examples illustrate that statements of corporate values can include those that are likely to conflict with each other. At the same time, such statements have no relative structure. They do not indicate the intended hierarchy of the values;

they do not say that such-and-such a company values customer service, for example, a bit more than empowerment of employees. Statements of corporate value list those that are considered desirable, sometimes with a paragraph of explanation, but do not indicate priorities. In situations where there are competing value terms, the lack of any hierarchical system makes it difficult for organisational members to decide appropriate actions. This is likely to weaken the role of corporate values as a means of normative control.

Corporate values may serve the purpose of providing a sense of identity, of controlling or liberating the organisational members, or of communicating to stakeholders. Furthermore, corporate values are always several in number, often contradictory in nature, and do not declare their priorities. There is no assurance that such values can be internalised or instilled into the membership of an organisation so that each member shares the values in the same way. It is difficult to see how an individual might absorb their organisation's corporate values into their own personal value system, which, in contrast, is structured and broadly coherent in nature. In the next sections, I shall consider the structure and role of personal values in some detail.

2.3.3 Summary

Corporate values are concerned with the desirable, conceived as a function of leadership, and may have one or more of the four key roles of characterising corporate identity, of a tool of control, of a liberating device, or of a marketing communication tool. Which of these are the actual roles is itself largely dependent on the assumptions and values of the organisation's leadership. The specific values in an organisation's corporate values statement are presented without any hierarchical structure.

2.4 The structure and role of personal values

While corporate values are presented without structure, personal value systems are thought to be arranged in some form of hierarchy, although there is some difference in opinion about its actual form. Their role as determinants of social attitudes, ideologies and behaviour arises from their function in affecting an individual's perception and choices of action. In this section, I consider theoretical structures of personal value systems that lead to explanations of how certain values have greater influence on perception and action. I then consider theoretical models that show how personal values affect behaviour, and consider cognitive and environmental contexts and situations that can obscure the relationship between an individual's personal value priorities and observable outcomes. The purpose of this section is first, to indicate the difference in the structure of personal values compared with corporate values, and secondly, to explain their effect on personal behaviour. The conclusion I draw from this and the previous section is that there is potential for conflict between an individual's personal values and the corporate values of his or her organisation.

2.4.1 Theoretical structures of personal value systems

Rokeach (1973) states in his definition of values that a value system is organised along a continuum of greater and lesser priority. In his method for determining an individual's personal value system, the Rokeach Values Survey, respondents are required to rank in order those values they consider to be more or less important as guiding principles in their lives from an *a priori* list of instrumental and terminal values. This ipsative approach assumes a clear order of value priorities in a continuum, or columnar structure; one value is placed above another, and no two share the same place in the structure. Others argue that it is more appropriate to have respondents rate each value on some numerical scale each value according to its importance as a guiding principle (Maio, Roese, Seligman, & Katz, 1996; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). Implicit in the adoption of rating over ranking is the assumption that an individual's value system can contain two or more values of the same level of importance, so the shape of the structure is no longer columnar.

This means that, theoretically, all values could be held with the same degree of importance by an individual. This is unlikely to be the case, however, because it would make value-based preferences impossible. The conceptual structure of a value system viewed from this perspective is somewhat egg-shaped, with relatively few values held either as very important, or as having no importance, and a larger number held somewhere in between.

Sagie & Elizur (1996) conceive of a value structure whereby types of values are grouped together according to their point of focus: those to do with religion, work, optional activities, and life in general. The assumption underlying this concept is that our value system is organised into discrete areas, and these are activated according to the object of interest, reflecting Scheler's (1973) conception of a values hierarchy arranged according to type. The resulting structure, according to Sagie & Elizur, is conceived as a cone, with religious values occupying the summit, and life-in-general values, the base. There appear to be limitations in this model, the most significant of which is that it was conceived before being tested, and the test assumed its existence by dividing, *a priori*, a questionnaire into the predetermined groupings. It does, however, propose an alternative structural relationship in personal value systems to the columnar and the egg-shaped and illustrates another theoretical structure. Musek (1993) also conceives personal values as falling into discrete areas, but divided by 'want' and 'ought' type.

There is a general acceptance that values are concerned with opposites or converses: Kluckhohn (1951) suggested that approval and disapproval are the manifestations of values; while Rokeach (1973) explicitly includes the terms in his definition of values; and Watson (1994) defines values as "ideas about what is good and what is bad, right and wrong" (p 74). Crosby, Bitner & Gill (1990) and Kilmann (1981) also consider value structures to be organised into polar dimensions. With this being the case, it is surprising that none of the preceding theoretical structures are based on opposites or converses, but are instead based simply on relative importance and implicitly assume that all values are positive for the individual. Schwartz (1992; 1994b; 1996) investigated the relationships of

Schwartz's focus of interest has been to establish the extent to which this structure can be considered universal and to this end he has investigated populations in some 49 countries (Schwartz, 1999) finding that the overall structure holds, with few exceptions, as a general shape representing the spatial distance between value types. Because of the consistency of these structural relations, two basic dimensions appear: in one dimension, 'Openness to Change', comprising the self-direction and stimulation value types, opposes 'Conservation', comprising security, conformity and tradition; in the other dimension 'Self-Transcendence', comprising benevolence and universalism, opposes 'Self-Enhancement', comprising power and achievement (hedonism was found to share elements of both self-enhancement and openness to change). The research suggests that motivational differences between value types are continuous rather than discrete; once a value type is known to be a priority, it is possible to hypothesise the relative importance of other value types for the individual (or population) concerned. Thus, for example, if it is known that 'tradition' is a priority value type for an individual, one can expect him or her to be somewhat opposed to the notion of 'hedonism'. It is interesting to note the similarities between Schwartz's model of value types and the Quinn & Rohrbaugh (1983) Competing Values Model. Where Schwartz has the dimensions of self-enhancement versus self-transcendence, and openness to change versus conservation, Quinn & Rohrbaugh have internal versus external focus, and flexibility versus control.

Schwartz's theoretical conception of personal value systems is attractive for a number of reasons. It conceptualises a value system to be based on opposites, thus conforming to Rokeach's definition of a value. It also reflects the theoretical assumptions in Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1955), which form the basis for the method for determining values employed in this thesis (see Chapter Three). Furthermore, it intuitively makes good sense in that experience suggests that a person who holds self-transcendent values to be of uppermost importance cannot at the same time hold self-enhancement values with anything approaching the same degree of importance without entangling themselves in gross contradictions, and likewise for values in any other plane in the structure. This does not rule out

the possibility of a person holding contradictory values, but does suggest that such contradictions will only occur with those that are less centrally held in the person's value system, and that at its poles, an individual's personal value system will be broadly coherent.

These models of personal value structures, reflected in the value priorities of cultures, suggest that the more important a value is, the more it is likely to act as a determinant or guide for behaviour. Corporate values, however, do not typically have such a structure; they are presented as though each value is of equal importance. There would seem to be the potential for conflict between hierarchically structured personal values and unstructured corporate values.

2.4.2 Theoretical roles of personal values in affecting behaviour

While there have been a number of studies into the effects of personal values on individual behaviour, evidence has not always been convincing (Williams, 1979). Theory suggests that personal values affect both what individuals perceive and choices of action in response to perceived situations. In his theoretical model of 'specific time-space behaviour', England (1967) proposes two types of values: operative values that have the greatest influence on behaviour; and intended and adopted values, those that may be professed, but do not directly influence behaviour. Both affect individuals' perceptual screening through the processes of selecting, filtering and interpreting incoming data, but only those that England describes as 'operative' have an influence on behaviour channelling.

The effect of personal values on perception was originally established by Postman, Bruner & McGuiness (1948), who conducted a laboratory experiment where subjects were exposed to a series of value and non-value words flashed up on a screen for a very short time, and their recall of these words were compared with previously determined value priorities. The experiment showed that subjects recalled those value words that were relevant to their personal value priorities more readily than they did other value words, leading Postman et al. to conclude

that “value orientations act as a sensitiser, lowering thresholds for acceptable stimulus objects” (1948: 151).

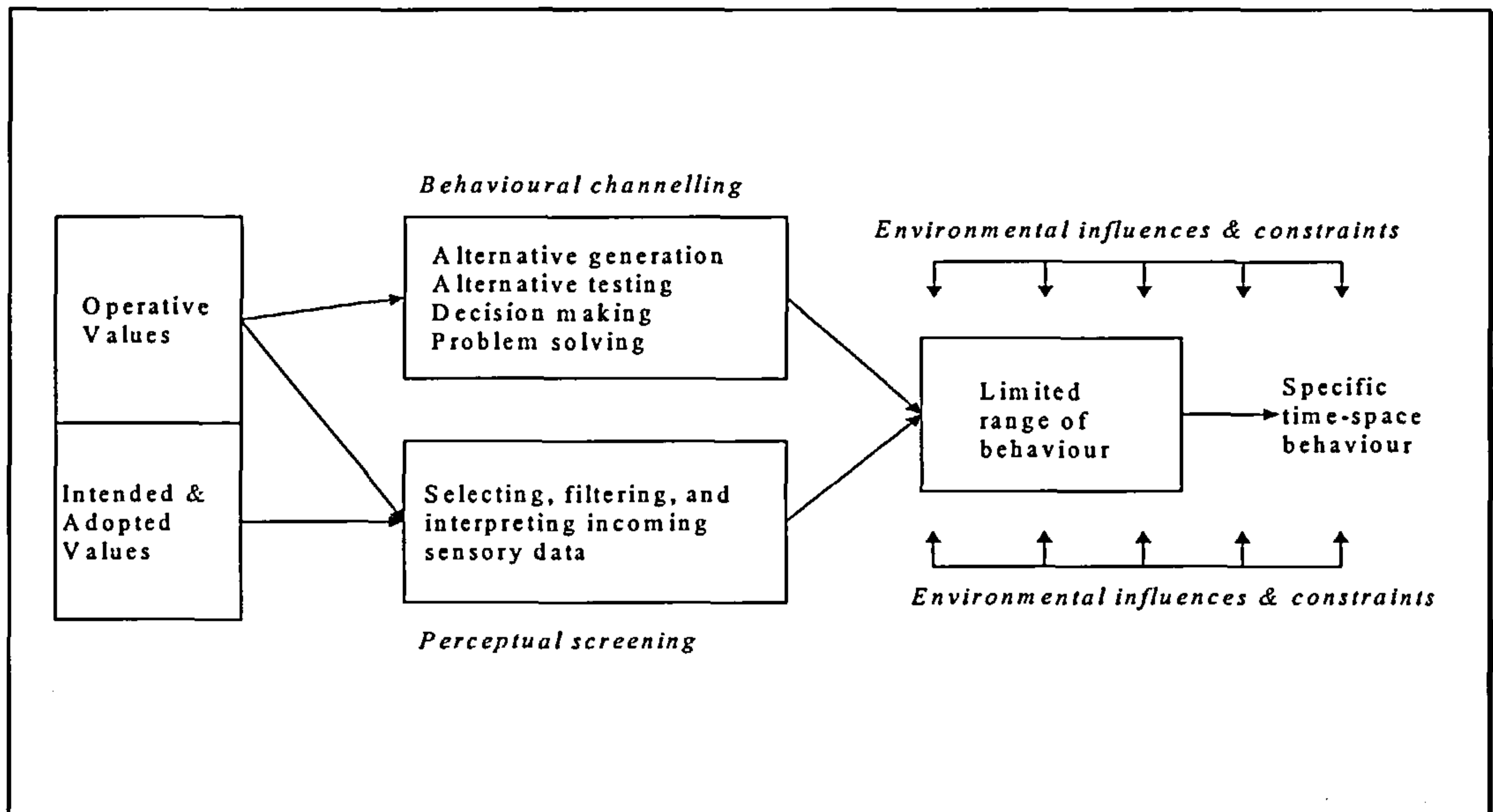


Figure 2.3: England's Theoretical Model of Specific Time-Space Behaviour (Source: England, 1967)

In England’s model, the two determinants of behaviour – perceptual screening and behaviour channelling – come together in relation to environmental influences and constraints to reduce the options to a limited range of potential behaviours, from which the eventual specific behaviour “in such-and-such a way at given time and under certain conditions. Values are one part of the story, but not the whole story” (England, 1967: 55). This model conceives of values influencing the screening of incoming data, a view also present in other theories of decision-making, such as Beach’s Image Theory (Beach, 1990; 1997) and Hambrick & Mason’s (1984) bounded rationality theory of strategic choice. In this latter model, values, together with the individual’s cognitive base, act as the first level screen of incoming environmental stimuli that reduce the number of stimuli reaching the individual’s limited field of vision. These stimuli are further reduced by means of perceptual selection and are then be interpreted “through a filter

woven by one's cognitive base and values" (p 195). Hambrick & Mason view values as:

"something that, on the one hand, can affect perceptions but, on the other hand, can directly enter into a strategic choice, because theoretically a decision-maker can arrive at a set of perceptions that suggest a certain choice but discard that choice on the basis of values" (Hambrick & Mason, 1984: 195).

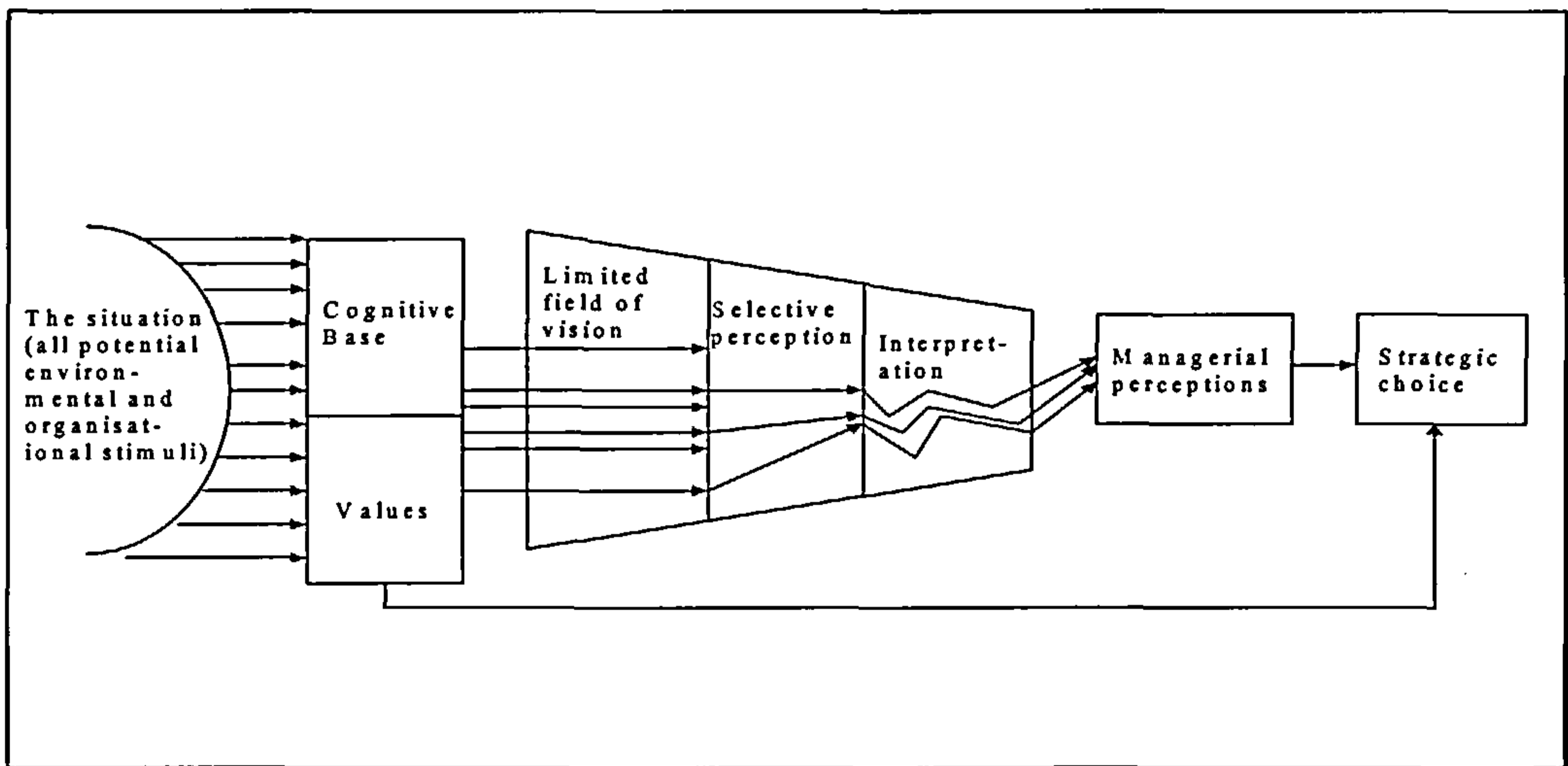


Figure 2.4: Strategic choice under conditions of bounded rationality (Source: Hambrick & Mason, 1984)

Both Hambrick & Mason, and England conceive of values acting as both filters for perception and as adjudicator of alternatives – both what is seen and how consequential actions are seen – a view that is also suggested in Eden & Ackermann's (1988a) model of strategic direction. Feather (1975; 1990) also recognises this duality of the role of values, but argues that the individual's expectation of outcomes determines the extent to which they influence choice. Behaviour is not decided simply by an individual's value priorities, but by the cognitive and affective appraisal of likely outcomes, including that individual's perceptions of how likely he or she is to succeed in achieving the outcome.

That there is some form of link between values and behaviour is generally accepted, but there is far less agreement as to how it might occur, and empirical studies have generally failed to provide a convincing case for such a link. The

situation has not greatly changed since Williams remarked, “evidence that values do influence subsequent behaviour is not available in the quantity and with the decisiveness we would prefer, but the total research-based data are nevertheless quite impressive” (Williams, 1979: 23).

The link between values and behaviour: explanations for weak empirical evidence

Each of the above theories considers personal values as influencing behaviour through the filtering of external stimuli, and as arbiter of choice between alternative actions. Both England (1967) and Feather (1990) claim that values are just one arbiter of choice, and that others may have a greater effect on the outcome. The actual behaviour may be limited by environmental constraints and influences, which is one explanation for the weak causal links that empirical studies typically show. Other explanations can be found in differences in how values are internalised by individuals, in conceptions of value systems, in the meanings ascribed to actions by individuals, and differences in the ways that values are measured.

Smith’s (1969) proposal that values can be internalised, for some, as ‘superego requiredness’, a process of defensive identification, but for others as ‘self-requiredness’, and applied with flexibility, appropriateness and rationality, points to one explanation for weak causal links. Baron & Spranca (1997), for example, found that for some people, certain values can be absolute, or deontological in nature and violation will engender feelings of anger and refusal to compromise. Meanwhile, Maio & Olson (1998) suggest that for some, values are no more than truisms, and until such individuals have incorporated these truisms into their value systems, they will have little affect perception or choice. Together, these may explain some of the variation in relating values to behaviour. In his study of the values of politicians, Tetlock (1984) found that those on the far left or right of the political spectrum were more likely to hold absolute values than those whose political position was toward the centre, and who might find they have two or more competing values triggered by a single situation. In a later study (Tetlock, Peterson, & Lerner, 1996), he and others developed a model for understanding

how politicians, and others in the public eye, make value trade-offs in an attempt to resolve such dilemmas. They argue that such people will consider the social acceptability of trade-offs and the views of the audience they are accountable to, as major, if not the overwhelming, influences on their reasoning process.

The notion of trade-offs between values supports the view that personal value systems may contain values of equal importance. If value systems were columnar, as Rokeach (1973) implies, there would be less need for trade-offs. Schwartz argues that “individual values may play little role in behaviour except when there is value conflict – when a behaviour has consequences promotive of one or more values but opposed to others that are also cherished by the person” (Schwartz, 1996: 1-2). Schwartz has shown correlations between opposing value types and propensity for, or against, such behaviours as: co-operation between individuals; voting behaviour; and willingness to engage in social contact with outsider groups. For example, in the a study of co-operative behaviour amongst individuals with differing value systems, the value type ‘power’ is negatively correlated with co-operation, and the value types ‘benevolence’ and ‘universalism’ are positively correlated, while the remaining value types show little correlation in either direction. These findings support the view that many value types have near-zero associations to an issue in question, while others will be activated. Where there is no strong association between an issue and the individuals value priorities, then values will have little impact on attitude or behaviour.

Seligman and Katz (1996) argue that different values can be called upon to justify contradictory positions. It is, as they say, not unusual for an individual to be against capital punishment and in favour of abortion (or vice versa) at the same time. Their suggested explanation is that the two issues are framed in separate ways: for some, capital punishment is an issue of ‘sanctity of life’ and abortion an issue of women’s ‘free choice’; while for others abortion is an issue of ‘sanctity of life’, but capital punishment an issue of ‘retribution’. The way that individuals frame the issue triggers different values, and thus different views about outcomes.

Armstrong (1979) illustrates the point by suggesting that a person who values sanctity of life may find themselves in a position where they support the killing of another who threatens that value; on the surface it appears to be contradictory, and Armstrong warns of the danger of interpreting which values relate to a particular behaviour.

There are, it seems, a number of explanations that have been put forward to explain the weak links between values and behaviour at the level of the individual, and each may well be valid. In addition to such explanations, Boyatzis, Murphy & Wheeler (2000) suggest that concern for social desirability may contribute to inaccuracy in reporting of value preferences, thus further weakening the empirical evidence of a link between values and behaviour in any one study. The data overall, however, are as Williams (1979) pointed out 'quite impressive', and the role of personal values is, as suggested by Rokeach (1973), that they act as guides and determinants for virtually all kinds of social behaviour.

2.4.3 Summary

The differences in the roles and structures of corporate and personal values are based in the differences of their nature. Corporate values, described in the previous section, are concerned with the desirable and conceived as a function of leadership. Corporate values may characterise the corporate identity, they may be used as a form of normative control, or, conversely as a liberating device, or they may act as a marketing communication tool. The way that corporate values are presented in organisations suggests they have no hierarchical structure: each value is held with the same degree of importance. In contrast, personal values are concerned with the personally preferred, and while they are initially learned in isolation, they develop into a system. Personal values are structured so that certain values have priority over others, and these value priorities influence the individual's perception and choice amongst alternatives. It is, however, difficult for the outsider to be sure which value is connected with what choice, as the ways that situations are interpreted and values are triggered are complex and subjective.

	Corporate values	Personal values
Nature	Concerned with the Desirable: 'should', 'ought'	Concerned with the Preferred (which may include elements of the desired and the desirable)
Focus	Social, directed at the organisational members and other stakeholders, conceived as a function of leadership.	Individual, directed at the self, conceived through early socialisation and maturation.
Role	As a characteristic of corporate identity; as means of control; as liberating from control; or as communicating device.	Influence on what is perceived and as arbiter of choice
Structure	Flat and often conflicting	Hierarchical and largely coherent

Table 2.3: Key differences between corporate and personal values

These differences in the role and structure of the two value systems are likely to give rise to a number of tensions. There may be tension between the control and liberation roles of corporate values, and between competing items in an organisation's corporate values, exacerbated because they are presented as being equal. Similar tensions may exist in an individual's personal value system, but these are largely resolved through the hierarchy of value preferences, which is likely to result in a relatively coherent structure of most and least important values. The relatively coherent structure of personal value systems and the lack of structure of corporate values systems may give rise to further tensions, even where many of an organisation's corporate values reflect an employee's personal values. In the next section, I shall consider how these tensions are thought to be resolved, and in doing so, I shall draw out the key gaps in our understanding, and from these, the question this research intends to answer.

2.5 The relationship between personal and corporate values

“A general assumption, underlying most of the research and theorising on values, has been that shared values expressed at the collective level on the one side, and individual values ... are somehow interrelated, although its causality is still a debated issue” (Roe & Ester, 1999: 2)

Corporate values are implicitly or explicitly reflected in the strategies and actions of organisations (Becker & Connor, 1975). At the same time, personal values also influence strategies (Kotey & Meredith, 1997; Pant & Lachman, 1998). Both are considered to influence strategy, and yet little is known about how the two value systems interrelate. In discussing the values of executives, Hambrick & Brandon (1988) commented: “we know of no recent theories or research which have studied the interplay between personal and social values” (p. 6).

This interplay between personal and corporate values – which are a form of social values – has not been subject to much scrutiny by academics, and yet the increasing attention given to corporate values by organisations (Yeung & Yeung, 1995) suggest that this is an important area of research. Furthermore, senior and middle managers’ responsibility for the formation and implementation of strategies suggest that the interplay is particularly important at this level in the organisation. As Hambrick & Brandon point out: “pursuing a strategy that runs counter to one’s values is to elicit half-heartedness or, worse, even the inward hope that the offending initiative will fail” (1988: 25). In this section, I discuss research that has investigated the relationship between personal and corporate values, particularly those theories concerned with value congruence and conflict.

2.5.1 Theoretical harmonisation of personal and corporate values

In their account of how values are formed and transformed, Lacey & Schwartz (1996) argue that people frequently encounter institutions that embody values that are both complementary and in conflict with their own. Some people, they argue, might find themselves living the greater part of their lives in institutions that

advocate values which contradict their centrally held personal values. In some cases, people may find themselves in organisations where there is a gap between the values articulated and those that are manifest in action, a situation that Argyris & Schön (1978) express as 'espoused theories' compared with 'theories-in-use'. Lacey & Schwartz propose five 'paths to equilibrium' that individuals may follow when confronted with such value conflicts. Some may take the "path of realism" (p. 327), and adjust their own values to suit those of the organisation. Others may resign themselves to the conflicts, marginalize themselves from the institutions, or try to change the values of the institution by first gaining a position of power and then exerting it to alter the values, or they may try to alter the values from below. Mintzberg (1996) offers four ways that individuals identify with what he calls the 'missionary organisation', or one with an emphasis on ideology. They may already share the values, and so are *naturally drawn* to the organisation. The organisational leadership may *select* and promote only those who exhibit "the stronger loyalty" to the values. Alternatively, identification may be *evoked* through a process of socialisation and indoctrination. Finally, Mintzberg suggests that identification can be *calculated* by individuals "not because they identify naturally with them, nor because they even necessarily fit in with them, but simply because it pays them to identify with the beliefs". In such cases, he argues, the identification is fragile and "disappears as soon as an opportunity calculated to be better appears" (Mintzberg, 1996: 372).

The option of attempting to change the values of an institution from within, as Lacey & Schwartz suggests, is not likely to be a common one for many of its members. Furthermore, individuals are not bound to work institutions in the same way as they may be bound to others, such as their family, and so are able to avoid contact with them. There would appear to be four principal means, therefore, by which differences between the personal value priorities of individuals and the values of an organisation might normally be resolved. The first of these is through the process of selection whereby organisations select individuals that appear to have values consistent with their own, and vice versa. Secondly, individuals may adjust their own value priorities so that they more closely match

those of the organisation. Thirdly, individuals may live with a degree of conflict between their values and those of the organisation. A fourth option, not considered by Lacey & Schwartz, or by Mintzberg, but consistent with a sensemaking perspective (Weick, 1995), is that individuals may interpret the corporate values in such a way that they more closely match their own personal value priorities. In the following pages, I review the extent to which prior research suggests each of these satisfactorily explains the way that differences between these two value systems can be accommodated.

2.5.2 Selecting on the basis of corporate and personal match values

Much of the work on theories of person-organisation fit is concerned with the matching of personal and organisational values through the process of selection and, subsequently, socialisation. The literature is not consistent in its definition of organisational values, as I indicated earlier in this chapter, with some researchers defining them as the cultural values, and others as those deemed desirable by leaders, (corporate values), but the principles are similar. Adkins, Russell and Werbel (1994) found that recruiters screened potential employees on the basis of perceived congruency between the values of the candidate and those of the organisation. Similarly, Cable & Judge (1997) found that interviewers assess congruence between applicants' values and their organisations, and that these assessments have a significant effect upon hiring recommendations. In the both studies, the perception of the recruiter or the interviewer is identified as a critical influence. Those seeking positions in organisations, like selectors, may also make decisions on the basis of value congruency. One consequence of the role of personal values as determinants or guides for evaluation is that individuals will tend to select career paths and organisations in which to work on the basis of anticipated value congruence (Roe & Ester, 1999; Rokeach, 1979).

Selection on the basis of value congruency can, of course, continue beyond the actual date of appointment; those holding personal value that conflict with the corporate values may choose to, or be made to leave. Collins & Porras (1996) focus on the characteristics of organisations with 'strong cultures', which Wilmott

(1993) defines as those that lack “contamination by rival ‘ends’ or values to which the discretion of employees might otherwise be ‘mis’directed” (p. 522). In such organisations, according to Collins & Porras, “only those who fit extremely well with the core ideology and demanding standards of a visionary company will find it a great place to work. If you go to work for a visionary company, you will either fit and flourish – probably couldn't be happier – or you will likely be expunged like a virus. There is no middle ground” (1996: 9). While this might be somewhat overstated, O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell (1991) explored the fit between accountants and MBA students with their organisations in a longitudinal study, and found that where there was value congruence, job satisfaction was higher, and job turnover lower.

Value congruence between individuals and organisations is thought, therefore, to have some influence on selection and subsequent retention, but evidence suggests it does not result in organisations having workforces with homogenous values. Studies that consider personal or ‘work’ values have consistently shown variation in the value priorities of organisational members (Adkins et al., 1996; Buenger et al., 1996; Clare & Sanford, 1979; Finegan & Theriault, 1997; Liedtka, 1989; Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1989; Oliver, 1990; Watson, 1994). If selection processes were to screen out those whose personal values differed from the corporate values of an organisation, one would expect to find greater homogeneity in the personal values of those who are employed. This suggests that simple value congruence is an inadequate explanation for selection and subsequent continued employment; differences in corporate and personal values do not appear to be resolved by the selection process.

2.5.3 Adapting personal values to fit the organisation

The idea that individuals adapt their personal values to suit those of the organisation is an implicit assumption in much of the literature. The leadership of an organisation presents its employees with the values that they have determined they should hold; Nielsen & Rao (1987) cite Pondy's (1978) description of leaders as those “who shape the values and frames of organisational members” (p. 524).

Campbell, Devine & Young (1990) argue that corporate values “can motivate employees to behave in a desired way and provide employees with meaning that can make work fulfilling and worthwhile” (p.51), a situation that can only arise if employees either happen to hold such values already, or if they adopt them as their own. For corporate values to act as effective means of controlling employees in the absence of rules and regulations, it follows that they must be in some way internalised or adopted by these employees. In a study of sales and service personnel, Harris (1990) found that many felt pressured to modify their personal values in order to achieve their company goals while a characteristic of the ‘clan’ mode of control in organisations, described by Ouchi (1980) implies a form of indoctrination:

“Common values and beliefs provide the harmony of interests that erase the possibility of opportunistic behaviour. If all members of the organisation have been exposed to an apprenticeship or other socialisation period, then they will share personal goals that are compatible with the goals of the organisation.” (p. 138)

An assumed effect of the socialisation process is that it will alter the personal values of individuals so that they more closely match those of the organisation. In developing their theory of organisational socialisation, Van Maanen & Schein (1979) argue that individuals arrive as outsiders, bringing with them “values and ends that are at odds with those of the working membership” (p. 211). Socialisation is the process of moving from outsider to insider. At one point, Van Maanen & Schein appear to reject “any implicit or explicit notions that certain organisationally relevant rules, values, or motivations must be internalised as ‘blueprints for behaviour’ if they are to participate and contribute to the organisation’s continued survival” (p. 216). They then contradict themselves, however, by suggesting that the process of moving from the outside to ‘insider’ positions of permanent member and leadership,

"must involve the social rules, norms and values through which a person’s worthiness is judged by members of that group. ... To move along this dimension [from outsider to insider] is to become accepted by others as a central and working member of the particular organisational segment and this can normally

not be accomplished unless the member-in-transition demonstrates that he or she too shares the same assumptions as others in the setting as to what is organizationally important and what is not" (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979: 222).

It would appear that for organisational members to reach central positions of the organisation, and to become leaders, they have to share corporate values. Perhaps the situation is not so acute: in her study of value congruity and power, Cathy Enz (1988) found that it was top managers' and heads of departments' *perception* of value congruity that determined the power of influence that the departments held. In this study, Enz did not explore the extent to which expressed values were actually shared, leading her to surmise "it is possible that expressing similar values is more closely linked to power than sharing values" (p. 300), echoing Mintzberg's (1996) 'calculated' identification with the corporate values. This implies that power-hungry managers may pretend to share corporate values in order to gain influence. Kraimer (1997) presents a model suggesting that value congruence determines the outcome of the socialisation process. It indicates that the closer the values match was before an individual joined a company, the more the socialisation process would succeed in adapting his or her personal values. Where an individual held strong beliefs in his or her own values, however, Kraimer found that the socialisation process did not succeed in adapting such values. This finding was later reflected in a separate study by Kamoche (2000), and will give heart to those such as Willmott (1993), who challenge the morality of organisations which require employees to internalise their values.

To what extent do individuals adapt their personal value systems to match those of the organisations they belong to? The view that they do, found in much of the corporate and organisational values literature, is based on the assumption that individuals' personal value systems are sufficiently malleable that they will bend as that individual moves from one organisation to another. This assumption is not supported by social psychologists investigating the development and change in personal value systems. Their theories suggest that once value systems have formed, they are not so easy to change. It is accepted that the individual learns

values through a socialisation process that begins in early childhood, and they are taught first by parents, then by the various institutions and social groups that the child encounters (Kluckhohn, 1951; Lacey & Schwartz, 1996; Rokeach, 1973; Smith, 1969). Values are initially learned as absolutes, but exposure to different institutions and social groups means that conflicts between values that cannot be accommodated at the same time are inevitable. This means that the maturing individual is required to make choices about the priorities he or she places on these conflicting values. Gradually, he or she builds a system of values whereby they are ordered in terms of their relative importance so that as new situations are encountered, he or she is able to make assessments based on this developing value system. In certain situations, or through the process of maturation, the individual will from time to time have cause to reassess and realign their personal value system, so that value priorities change. Early socialisation, however, is considered to have the greatest influence on an individual's personal value system (Rokeach, 1973).

Smith (1969) argues that value systems develop out of both social and personal 'requiredness'. Social requiredness is what is required of persons in order that they may be accepted into the group and is taught first by parents and then others in the process of socialisation. Personal requiredness is the process of internalisation of values, and Smith suggests two types: superego requiredness, and self-requiredness. The former refers to the way that, for some, values can be "inflexibly held, irrationally applied ... rather than explicitly formulated" and are internalised with "only the most primitive cognitive discriminations" (p 108), and are, in the fashion of Freud's 'superego', acquired by the process of defensive identification. Personal values, argues Smith, in "persons who approach more closely the commonly formulated ideals of maturity and good functioning" are characterised by self-requiredness, "they are applied with more flexibility, appropriateness, and rationality" and "since they are integrated into the self rather than sealed off in an infantile form, they are open to progressive modification and elaboration" (Smith, 1969: 109). Smith is here suggesting that the extent of value change and application will vary according to the personality of the individual.

This idea that personal value systems are modified and elaborated by people of ‘maturity and good functioning’ suggests that change is affected by maturation, although how this occurs is not clear. Maio & Olson (1998) suggest that, initially, values are accepted as little more than truisms and they only become internalised when individuals are forced to analyse these truisms, after which they gain a cognitive, affective and a learned dimension, which enables them to be integrated into that individual’s value system. Weber (1993) considers value system development to be a consequence of the process of moral development (Kohlberg, 1969), a view supported by Feather (1988), and de St Aubin (de St Aubin, 1996). Maslow (1970), on the other hand, considers value system change to be a consequence of changing needs, and that these act as the driving force:

“For a basically deprived person the world is a dangerous place, a jungle, an enemy territory populated by those whom they can dominate and those who can dominate them. Their value systems are of necessity, like those of any jungle denizen, dominated and organised by the lower needs, especially the creature needs and the safety needs. Basically satisfied people are a different case. They can afford out of their abundance to take these needs and their satisfactions for granted and can devote themselves to higher gratifications. This is to say that their value systems are different, in fact *must* be different.” (Maslow, 1970: 148, original italics)

Maslow’s concept of changing needs resulting in changing value priorities suggests a progression, albeit for different reasons to Weber’s moral development. Both imply that personal value systems undergo – in the ‘good functioning’ individual – a seemingly inevitable transition from being dominated by the self and the immediate social group, and by a concern for personal security and survival, to those values that transcend the self and the immediate group. How far individuals actually go on this journey of personal transformation or indeed where they start, is dependent on personal and social circumstance, which is likely to vary widely, but it does suggest at least the scope for significant change to an individual’s personal value system over the course of a lifetime. Changes in personal value systems do not necessarily follow this idealised pathway. Rokeach

& Ball-Rokeach (1989) found that over the period from 1968 to 1981, American value priorities shifted in the direction of personal competence, and away from collective morality, and suggested that this might have resulted from “the simultaneous activation and frustration of values derived from different levels of human motivation” (p 783).

Change in personal value systems, therefore, is not necessarily unidirectional, nor is it inevitable. Furthermore, the rate of change over a person’s lifetime is not considered to be constant. The greatest change is likely to occur during the ‘age of reason’, a stage in the maturation process where the individual resolves his or her own preferences from amongst those of others, with later changes less likely to occur without very good cause. A major reason why individuals are reluctant to change value systems in later life is that, because values are central to belief systems from which are derived attitudes, any change in value priorities will have consequential changes in other, less central beliefs and attitudes, and so will trigger a significant disruption to the individual’s entire belief system (Rokeach, 1968).

Evidence for value stability or change appears to be mixed. While Rokeach & Ball Rokeach (1989) found that Americans, “underwent dramatic value changes” (p. 775) in a decade beginning in the mid-seventies, others found that American managers have not, as a group, changed their values much over the past thirty-five years. Following England’s (1967) survey of over a thousand American managers, which concluded that the majority held ‘pragmatic’, success-oriented values, Posner & Schmidt (1984) found the same over a decade later. A small change towards cooperation was noted by the same researchers on a follow-up study (Posner & Schmidt, 1992). However, their findings were not supported in Oliver’s (1999) further follow-up, which found that managers’ values had not changed significantly since England’s original study. Similarly, a study with over a thousand American managers by Luske & Oliver (1974) indicated that only four out of sixty-six work values measured shifted in intensity during an eight-year period. The combined effect of these studies indicates that, at the cultural level,

there has not been a significant change in the personal values of American managers overall, and while this does not account for any change that might occur within individual managers over the course of their career, it does indicate relative stability in personal value priorities of managers.

The assumption, implicit in corporate values literature, that individuals will adapt their own personal value priorities to match more closely the values of the organisation does not appear to gain much support from the theory of values development. Once personal value systems have been formed through an individuals' early socialisation experiences in family, school, church and community, they are not easily changed (Rokeach, 1973). Where changes do occur, these are likely to be gradual and associated with maturation, explained in different ways, but with similar outcomes, by Maslow (1970), Kohlberg (1969) and others. In the management literature, Chatman (1989; 1991) found that person-organisation fit, measured by value congruence, improved over length of tenure, but this was not supported by Finegan & Theriault (1997). They found that "there was no tendency for employees' values to become more similar to those of the organisation the longer they were employed by the corporation" (p. 720). Similarly, Isaac, Cahoon & Zerbe (1992) found little evidence to suggest that employees adapted their values to the 'big brother' of their organisation, leading them to conclude that "little brother maintains complete control over personal values" (p. 102).

2.5.4 Managers live with conflict between their and their organisations' values

Pruzan (2001) describes an exercise he carried out with a group of managers from a large multinational organisation where they were set two tasks. First, the managers were assigned to small groups and asked to identify their five most important personal values from a list of about fifty. Following this, they were asked to identify their organisation's five most important corporate values from the same list. When each of the groups lists were compared "it was obvious to all that there was absolutely no correspondence between these two sets of values for

any of the groups” (p. 274), leading Pruzan to question whether, in some organisations, executives metaphorically hang their personal values on the hook together with their coat on entering the office. This story is not research, and if it were, it could be criticised on a number of accounts, not least the fact that managers had to negotiate each of the lists, so that neither would represent any one managers’ actual priorities. It does, however, suggest that managers are capable of, and may be required to, live with conflict between their personal values and their organisation’s corporate values. Managers may identify with the values of their organisation in a calculated manner (Mintzberg, 1996), as a form of impression management (Chatman, Bell, & Staw, 1986). A similar sentiment is conveyed by Abravanel (1983) who evokes the image of members ‘wearing’, rather than internalising, their organisation’s ideology:

“Active membership and effective participation in modern organisations require a ‘putting on’ or ‘wearing’ of the accepted ideology (or a competing ideology where one coexists). In an important sense, ‘membership’ requires that participants allow a given ideology to dominate their definition of reality in their official roles, and if they are ambitious, in their unofficial roles as well. In order to be upwardly career mobile, it is helpful to become a purveyor of the dominant ideology and to accept one’s incumbent obligations” (1983: 277).

Liedtka (1989) considered the effect of ‘value equilibrium’ in both managers’ personal values and in those of their organisations. She found that conflict was commonplace, while complete congruence of managers’ personal values and those of the organisation was only apparent in a minority of her respondents. In an ethnographic study, Kunda (1992) explored the culture of a high technology engineering company, known for its well-established corporate values, and found evidence of disagreement, often manifesting itself as cynicism amongst technical and managerial staff, but was not able to relate this to their personal values. Later, Posner and Schmidt investigated how well managers understood both their own and their organisations values, and the extent to which they were positive about the latter (Posner & Schmidt, 1993). They concluded that managers were most positive about their work when their values were both clear to themselves and in congruence with those of the organisation. The group who were least positive

were those who were clear about the values of the organisation, but were uncertain about whether they matched their own, leading the authors to conclude that “alienation is fostered when people meet organisational demands, but do so with some degree of ennui about the consistency between their behaviours and their beliefs” (p. 346).

Conflict between managers’ personal values and their organisations corporate values may become more apparent when the corporate values are changed. Watson (1994), for example, found considerable dissatisfaction amongst middle managers with what they saw as new values being imposed by their company’s new owners. Many reacted with strong emotion towards the new owners, and to the imposition of values that negated the previous corporate values. In a more recent study, Turnbull (2000; 2001) explored the responses of managers of a large UK organisation to the efforts to introduce new corporate values, and found different types of reaction. The largest categories of managers were those who were sceptical, or who were ‘untouched’ because they did not see the change affecting them. The smallest were the highly supportive ‘evangelists’, and those who were openly cynical about the new values. This suggests that in this group of managers, a few found the new values matched their own – or they were playing a power game – and a few found they were strongly against their own, while the majority were not overly fussed one way or the other. This, again, tends to support Schwartz’s (1996) view that it is only when an individual’s most importantly held values are triggered that a behavioural reaction occurs.

The principle of cognitive consistency holds that individuals tend towards harmony, balance and consonance in terms of “mental representations of their beliefs, attitudes (and values), and attitudinally significant behaviours, decisions and commitments” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993: 455, original brackets). There are a number of theories that explain how cognitive consistency might be achieved, including, for example, balance theory (Heider, 1958), consistency theory (Rosenberg, 1960), and most notably, dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957). Where there is conflict between the personal values of a manager and his or her

organisation's corporate values, cognitive inconsistency is likely to exist, and the manager will be motivated to seek harmony, balance and consonance. It would seem from previous research, however, that for many managers, differences between personal and corporate values might not be a major issue if they are relatively minor. In such situations, differences do not engender sufficient sense of disharmony or conflict for the manager to be motivated to act in observable ways. Change in the corporate values may provoke greater reaction amongst those who feel that the new values conflict strongly with personal values, resulting in the cynicism identified by Turnbull (2000), and in some cases, in career choices that involve leaving the organisation (Isaac et al. 1992).

2.5.5 Managers adapt, prioritise, or select corporate values that fit their own

The assumption that individuals adapt their own personal values to fit their organisation's corporate values is common. The opposite idea, that individuals adapt corporate values in such a way that they more closely match their own, has received little attention in management literature. There are a number of reasons, however, why such a means of values conflict resolution might be plausible.

Several studies that investigate value congruity have concluded that perceived value congruity is more significant than actual congruity. (e.g. Balazs, 1990; Beatty, 1988; Enz, 1988; Finegan & Theriault, 1997; Weiss, 1996). Finegan & Theriault, for example, found that "employees subjective impression of the values behind the code [of ethics] combined with personal values to become a better predictor of the evaluation of the code than objective measurement". This led them to conclude that "person-organisation fit only predicted evaluation when the employee's own perception of the organisation was correlated with his or her personal values" (Finegan & Theriault, 1997: 720). Perception is subject to a number of 'distortions' such as figure-and-ground reversal and perceptive selection (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1994). Executives employ 'perceptual filters' that may be influenced by their personal values (Starbuck & Milliken, 1988). Perceived congruity between personal and corporate values may, therefore, be

somewhat different to actual congruity. Personal values affect perception (Postman et al., 1948), and so may influence the extent to which particular corporate values are noticed.

Little attention in the management literature has been given to the interpretation of value terms by individuals. Homant (1970) investigated the extent of agreement on the meaning of value and non-value words, and found that there was a significant difference in the meaning given to terminal value terms, or those concerned with end-states of existence. Rather less difference was found in the meaning of instrumental, or mode of conduct value terms. More recently, Bumpus & Munchus (1996) investigated the meaning given to value and non-value words in the workplace, and also found that there was greater difference in the meaning attributed to value words. This led the authors to warn that “organisations should be aware that shared values do not necessarily imply shared meanings for those same values” (p. 170). Following his investigation into personal values in the work situation, Feather (1979) concluded that “one should recognise that particular values may be defined in rather different ways by different individuals and groups” (p. 140).

In her account of story telling in an organisation defined as having a ‘unitary reality’, where there is considered one true belief system, Boyce (1995) found that in spite of this “there was a dissonance between the shared meaning of organisational members and that of the president” (p. 132). This suggests that even where one might expect meaning to be unequivocal, differences can be found. Gioia (1986), also coming from a sensemaking perspective, recognises that shared experiences, and by extension, shared values, may be interpreted differently by individuals. He argues that managers must make use of symbols to create meaning, which is then shared: “symbolic management, therefore, is first and foremost the management of the language used to describe the organisational values and aspirations. The task of management thus becomes the task of managing the symbols that provide labels, explanations and meanings to members of the organisation” (p. 67). The sensemaking perspective, with its close

connections to symbolic interactionism (Weick, 1995), recognises that individuals interpret their environment in idiosyncratic ways, and enact that created environment. Corporate values may be viewed as symbols, which are “inherently ambiguous; members of a culture can give different meanings to the same symbol as well as use different symbols to convey the same meaning” (Hatch, 1997: 220). Symbols, according to Morgan, Frost & Pondy (1983) “assume principal significance as constructs through which individuals concretize and give meaningful form to their everyday lives” and people “realise their reality by reading into their situation patterns of significant meaning” (p. 24).

It would appear that the notion of shared meaning is one of degree. Some, such as Smircich (1983) insist that “the stability, or organisation, of any group activity depends upon the existence of common modes of interpretation and shared understanding of experience” (p. 55). Others (Donnellon et al., 1986; Langfield-Smith, 1992; Weick, 1979) accept there are differences in interpretation of meaning, leading Huff & Huff (2000) to suggest that, in spite of the attractiveness of shared frames of references in social groups, “direct overlap in schematic representations is unlikely” (p. 17).

The theoretical roles of personal values in influencing behaviour (described in section 2.4.2) accept that they influence the individual’s perception of his or her environment. It would seem that there is good reason to suspect that individuals might interpret the corporate values of their organisation in ways that are consistent with, or reinforce their own personal value priorities. It is noteworthy, therefore, that so little attention has been given to this, as Hambrick & Brandon (1988) have pointed out. This is particularly the case given the rise in interest in the concept of values-based management, whereby the corporate values becomes a principal, if not the principal, management tool (Anderson, 1997; Collins & Porras, 1994; Nohira & Ghoshal, 1994; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Pruzan, 1998).

2.5.6 Summary

None of the four ways suggested above concerning the harmonisation of corporate and personal values would alone appear to provide a full and satisfactory explanation of what might actually occur. A more likely explanation is that each is a partial explanation of how managers, and other employees, are able to operate effectively within their organisation. The relationship between the two value systems is, however, not well researched and there is a particular gap in our understanding of how managers interpret their organisation's corporate values. Furthermore, there is an additional gap in our understanding of the relationship between interpretation of corporate values and the interpreter's own personal value priorities.

2.6 The research question

The purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between managers' interpretation of their organisation's corporate values and their own personal value priorities. By investigating the ways that managers working in the same organisation interpret their corporate values, and relating these interpretations to their personal value priorities, I am intending to add to our understanding of what happens when these two value systems are brought together. The question posed in this research is:

What is the relationship between managers personal values and their interpretation of their organisation's corporate values?

The question directs the research towards the task of developing a theory of this relationship, and also determines some of the requirements of the research. It is necessary, for example, that the two sets of values be explored in conjunction with each other; a manager's interpretation of his or her organisation's corporate values needs to be investigated at the same time and in the same context as are his or her personal values in order to reveal insights into the relationship between the two. This has implications for the research method and, in the next chapter, I explore

the options for development of such a micro-level method for investigating the two value types.

The possible outcomes of the research are that managers studied within the same organisation may interpret the corporate values in ways that are similar, or different to each other, and that they may reveal personal value priorities that are similar or different to each other. The potential relationship that result from these outcomes can be illustrated in a simple matrix (Figure 2.5).

		Managers' interpretation of corporate values	
		Similar	Different
Managers' personal value priorities	Similar	<i>Indicative of selection or socialisation leading to homogeneity</i>	<i>Weak relationship between the values.</i>
	Different	<i>Weak relationship between the values. Indicative of calculated fit?</i>	<i>If correlated, indicative of adaptation of corporate values to suit personal value priorities</i>

Figure 2.5: Possible relationships between personal and corporate values

One outcome might be that managers in the study hold similar personal value priorities and interpret their organisation's corporate values in similar ways. This would indicate homogeneity in both personal values and in corporate value interpretation. This would occur if the selection process ensured close personal values matching, and the resulting similarity in personal value priorities led to similar interpretations of the organisation's corporate values. Alternatively, this would occur if the socialisation process resulted in individual managers adapting their personal value priorities to fit the corporate values. A second outcome might be that managers interpret their organisation's corporate values in similar ways, but that they held different personal value priorities. This would indicate a weak relationship between personal and corporate values. One possible explanation of

such a finding would be that managers adopt a calculated identification with the corporate values (Mintzberg, 1996), and that any dissonance experienced is compensated by the advantages of being seen to identify with the beliefs. A third outcome might be that managers hold similar personal value priorities, but interpret their organisation's corporate values in different ways. If this were to be the finding, it would again suggest a weak relationship between the two value systems. It may support the view that a match of personal values is important in the selection process, but would indicate that there was some other, greater influence on managers' interpretation of corporate values, than their values.

The fourth outcome, that managers hold different personal value priorities and interpret their organisation's corporate values differently to each other, can occur in two ways. The personal values and interpretations of corporate values may be unrelated, both between managers and at the level of the individual manager. This would suggest a weak relationship between the two value systems, and that interpretation is stochastic. On the other hand, the personal value priorities and the interpretation of their corporate values may be correlated at the level of the manager, but different between managers. This would indicate that managers do hold different personal value priorities to one another, and would thus challenge the view that selection and socialisation results in value congruence. It would also indicate that managers interpret their organisations corporate values so that they match more closely their own personal value priorities. Because personal value priorities remain different from manager to manager under this outcome, and because the interpretation of corporate values are related to those personal value priorities, a logical conclusion in such an outcome is that the meaning of the corporate values had been adapted.

By exploring the relationships between these two value systems in groups of managers working for the same organisation, and thus with the same corporate values, I hope to form some conclusions regarding the nature of the relationship and the implications that this might have for the role of corporate values in a strategy context. The extent to which managers interpret corporate values

differently will have an impact on the extent to which such values can “provide the harmony of interests that erase the possibility of opportunistic behaviour” (Ouchi, 1980: 138). An outcome where differences in interpretation of corporate values match personal value differences may be viewed as one that enhances their role in liberating individual managers. By providing a *sense* of shared values, even where *meaning* might not be shared, corporate values can act as an enabler for managers, legitimising their perspective and allowing for creativity in the formation and implementation of strategy.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that personal and corporate values are conceptually different in a number of ways. Personal values are concerned with subjective personal preferences for modes of conduct or end-states of existence over their opposites or converses. They may include elements of what individuals prefer and what they think they ought to prefer. A personal value system evolves through a person’s life, although significant changes are less likely to occur after adulthood without significant adjustment to his or her entire belief system. A personal value system is organised into a hierarchy whereby some values take precedent over others, and is broadly coherent. Personal values affect what the individual perceives and the choices he or she makes, although the relationship between values and behaviour are often obscure and depend on idiosyncratic ways in which situations are read. In contrast, corporate values are conceived by the leadership of an organisation and represent the desirable modes of conduct and end-states of existence that organisational members should adopt. A corporate value system is typically presented as a flat system with each value item holding equal status, but which might have conflicting implications.

The differences between personal and corporate values suggest that conflict between the two systems may be commonplace. In the second part of the chapter, I considered the ways in which such conflict might be resolved, and congruity between personal and corporate values might occur. Value congruence may occur

at the point of selection, with organisations seeking employees whose values match the corporate values and vice versa. Congruence may occur through the socialisation process, as individuals' personal values change to match the corporate values. Alternatively, conflict may not be resolved and individuals may live with the difference between their personal values and their organisation's corporate values. Finally, individuals may interpret corporate values in such a way that they more closely match their personal values. The objective of the research study is to investigate the relationship between the two value systems in order to understand better how they might relate. In order to investigate such relationships, it is necessary to uncover the personal value priorities of individual managers, and to explore their interpretation of their organisation's corporate values in such a way that the two value systems can be compared. This has implications for how the research is operationalised. In the next chapter, I consider the ways in which this research can be undertaken, and the methodological implications of the chosen methods.

3 Operationalising personal and corporate value constructs

3.1 Introduction

The objective of this research is to investigate the relationship between managers' interpretations of their organisation's corporate values and their own personal values priorities. In the previous chapter, I argued that the two value systems under investigation are conceptually different: personal values are personal preferences for certain end-states or modes of conduct over their opposite or converse (Rokeach, 1973); while corporate values are concerned with those 'desirable' end-states or modes of conduct, conceptualised as a function of leadership. These differences in how values are conceptualised at the personal and corporate level are important when considering how they might be researched. As a personal preference, a personal value is a subjective construction that may have idiosyncratic as well as shared characteristics. In stating this, I am disagreeing with Scheler's (1973) view that "a value precedes its object" (p. 18), and is independent of people or things. Personal values are personal to the individual, and they are emotional and aesthetic, as well as objectively intellectual (Kluckhohn, 1951). Corporate values are social constructions that have an objectified, shared reality, and are concerned with 'the desirable'.

In this chapter, I consider various ways that values have been researched in order to develop a methodology that has a coherent relationship between the ontology, epistemology and resulting research design. Methods for researching personal values broadly fall into two categories: those that ask direct questions of individuals; and those that employ indirect methods to infer values without directly asking the question of individuals. Similarly, methods for researching corporate values can also be categorised into those that directly ask individuals to describe their organisation's corporate values, and those that attempt to deduce the values from analysis of documentation or observation of organisational processes.

In the following sections, I shall review these approaches in terms of their underlying assumptions and their strengths and weaknesses for this research study. This review leads to my choice of inferring and eliciting personal values by indirect means, and particularly by means of ‘laddering’, while investigating individual managers’ interpretation of corporate values by direct questioning and probing. In the final part of the chapter, I consider the methodological implications of these choices and the ontological assumptions I make. The research design for this study is then set out in the next chapter.

3.2 Direct methods in personal values research

Direct methods for measuring personal values involve asking individuals to report their personal value priorities in response to a direct question. The most usual form used in psychology and management research has been the survey, of which there are several examples. A lesser-used method is the direct question in an interview setting, and there are few examples of research studies that have used this method alone. The assumptions that underlie this approach to investigating personal values are: that they are objective; they have a one-to-one correspondence with reality; the relationship between a value term and its meaning is consistent from person to person; and that individuals know their own values and can report them accurately (Trice & Beyer, 1993). The researcher working under these assumptions asks individuals to report their values, either from *a priori* lists, as in surveys, or by open-ended questioning.

3.2.1 Survey-based direct methods

A number of survey-based methods have been employed in researching personal values. Principal among these are: the Allport-Vernon-Lindsay (1970) Scale of Values; the England (1967) Value Survey; the Rokeach (1973) Value Survey; the Kilmann (1974) Insight Test; Hofstede’s (1980) Value Questionnaire; the List of Values (Kahle, 1983); the Quinn & Rohrbaugh (1983) Competing Values Model; Ravlin & Meglino’s (1987) Comparative Emphasis scale; and the Schwartz (1992)

Value Survey. Each of these methods have the common assumption that values can be objectively measured, but there are differences in assumptions relating to the range of possible values that individuals might hold, and notions of values as 'the desirable' or 'the desired'. The Allport-Vernon-Lindsay (1970) Scale of Values, for example, is based on Spranger's (1928) assumption that personality has its roots in the value priorities of individuals. Spranger identified six 'types of men' – the theoretical, economic, aesthetic, social, political & religious – from which the scale was developed. This was despite Allport et al.'s recognition that these types assumed an ideal view of personality. They accepted that the instrument has no categories for hedonistic or the expedient types of personality, so limits what can be measured. The 'Scale of Values' instrument, therefore, is constructed out of one particular idealised view of personality and its associated value priorities.

Similar limitations can be found in all *a priori* survey instruments to a greater or lesser extent, for they are based on the designer's ideas of the possible range of values that individuals might hold. A variety of factors may influence this, including designers' concepts of the nature of values, their experiences and ethnocentricity, and the need to produce manageable survey instruments. The commonly used Rokeach Value Survey has been criticised by Braithwaite & Law (1985) because it fails to include 'physical well-being' and 'human rights', and by Kitwood & Smithers (1975) who were concerned that the value of 'truth' was missing, as was 'health and vitality' and 'personal power'. This last item was excluded, apparently, because Rokeach did not think that anybody would own up to having such values; his understanding of human nature, and perhaps his bias toward a North American viewpoint is translated into his measures of human values (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). Rokeach (1973) argues that his survey balances the need for coverage with the practicality of ranking several items in order of importance, and he arrives at thirty-six value items divided into two lists of eighteen terminal and eighteen instrumental values. Schwartz (1992), meanwhile, asks respondents to rate fifty-four items, arguing that these capture a full enough range for inter-cultural comparison. Conversely, Kahle's (1983)

appears to take parsimony to an ultimate degree in the List of Values, giving respondents just nine value types to relate to. All surveys differ in the number and range of value items included, a consequence of which is that personal value priorities revealed by such instruments are to some extent dependent on which is used (Hofstede, 1980).

Value surveys may also fail to differentiate between the 'should' or 'want' nature of values. The extent to which the researcher is measuring values as 'the desirable' or 'the desired' may depend on the wording in the survey instructions, the way these are interpreted, and the researcher's perspective. Some surveys are quite clear, such as Ravlin & Meglino's (1987) Comparative Emphasis Scale, in which respondents are instructed to "respond in terms of the way they felt they *should* or *ought* to behave" (p. 669, original italics). Others are not so clear: Rokeach's value survey instructs respondents to rank list terminal and instrumental values in order of importance "as guiding principles in your life" (Rokeach, 1973: 27), while Schwartz instructs respondents to rate items "as guiding principles in my life" (Schwartz 1992: 17). It is questionable whether all individual respondents would interpret 'guiding principles' in the same way: for some, they may represent their wants or preferences, while for others they may represent what they should or ought to have as guiding principles. This is likely to be the case because researchers themselves are interpreting values differently: while Rokeach conceived values as the preferable, his value survey was used by Feather (1975) from the perspective of the desirable, and by Schwartz & Bilsky (1987) who accepted that values may be either. It is arguable that differences in interpretation of values as desired, preferred or desirable are not of great importance when such survey methods are used to determine value priorities in large populations, but they become more important when these survey methods are employed in research studies that aim to relate personal values with individual perception, action or behaviour. Not only are an individual's personal values preferences as 'wants' or as 'oughts' likely to be different but, as Bazerman, Tenbrusel and Wade-Benzozi (1998) contend, the 'want' self is likely to make different decisions to the 'ought' self.

The question of social desirability (Phillips & Clancy, 1972) – respondents' tendency to give answers that make them look good – is also pertinent when surveys are used in studies that attempt to relate personal value priorities with behaviour, attitudes or perceptions. Social desirability has been shown to be a minor problem in large scale studies (Feather, 1975; Kristiansen, 1985; Rokeach, 1973) where anonymity is assumed. Schwartz, Verkalaso, Antonovsky & Sagiv (1997), however, warn of the increased likelihood of social desirability in responses when respondents anonymity is less certain, or when “people may be motivated to present particular value priorities” (p. 16-17). This situation is likely to occur more often in studies where the number of respondents is relatively low and the studies are combined with behavioural exercises. For example, Finegan's (1994) study into judgements of ethical behaviour involved just 69 students, quite possibly attending her own class. Some respondents in such a situation might be tempted to portray their values in a way that enhances their own self-presentation (Boyatzis, Murphy, & Wheeler, 2000).

Methods that require respondents to rank or rate value priorities from prescribed lists or statements assume commonality in the meaning of the value words, which is not necessarily the case. Schwartz & Bilsky (1987) found that the term ‘freedom’ tended to be associated with the motivational domain of ‘security’ by Israeli respondents, but with the domain ‘self-direction’ by German respondents, indicating a significant difference in meaning between the nationalities, and one that may be related to situation and culture. Kitwood & Smithers (1975), in commenting on the Rokeach survey, suggest that the value items are “open to a number of constructions by the respondent” (p. 177), and this is likely to be the case in all surveys where the value terms are presented in similarly brief phrases. As described in the previous chapter, Homant (1970) found differences in the meaning given to, particularly, terminal or end-state of existence value terms. Bumpus & Munchus (1996) tested the variation in meanings given to both value and non-value words and found that “there is more agreement on the meaning of

non-value words than on the meaning of value words defined either by word associations or critical incidents” (p. 190).

3.2.2 Interview based direct methods

Allport (1962) considered a number of ways in which values can be measured or interpreted using various tests and survey instruments, and included direct questioning of informants in interviews among the methods. There are, however, few examples of studies that have used such an approach for determining value priorities in psychology and management research. Methods for determining personal value priorities include open-ended or semi-structured interviews (e.g. Liedtka, 1989; McDonald & Gandz, 1992a; Scott, 1959; Smith, 1949). In comparison to survey methods, qualitative methods allow informants to describe their values using their own language. Furthermore, the researcher is able to direct the interviewee towards a notion of values as the desirable or the desired, and can probe for the meaning attributed to value words, so that a more accurate reflection of the informants’ values is possible. On the other hand, the issue of social desirability is likely to be more pronounced than with surveys. The open-ended nature of qualitative research limits the scope for aggregation of data for cross-informant analysis and where this is attempted, it may involve the exclusion of idiosyncratic data in the course of forming general categories during analysis, which can reduce its potential for rich description.

In the interview setting, the researcher is able to direct the questions towards values conceptualised as either the desired or the desirable, and examples of this can be found. For example, Smith (1949) asks his informants to describe their values in a way that implies ‘the desired’ as his question runs:

“I have a question here about what you think is important in life. It’s a little hard to put into words right off, I know, but from your own experience, what would you say are the most important things to you? What sorts of things mean the most to you?” (Smith, 1949: 478-9)

Here, Smith asks the question in the most general of terms: as he puts it, “the question [is] intentionally rather bumbling” (p. 478), and encourages the informant the freedom to describe whatever is the most important, and from his or her own experience. This suggests ‘the desired’ or ‘want’ interpretation of the values concept, which is, incidentally, noteworthy considering his later pronouncements on the nature of values (see page 20). Even so, there are indications in the excerpts from his interview data reported in the article that some informants interpreted values as the desirable, as did the one who identified “Man’s liberty ... Man’s health”, while others appear to interpret values as the desired, as in wanting “to be with my wife and family and have a good job. That’s enough” (Smith, 1949: 480).

In contrast, Scott (1959) is clearly looking for informants’ view of the ‘desirable’. He asks informants first to pick out two friends that they admire most, and then asks: “what is it about the first person that you particularly admire?” (p. 302). The question is repeated for the second person and following this, his informants are asked to pick out two people who they “have very little use for” and the reasons why they think these people bad. By focusing on informants’ views of what is admirable or bad in other people, Scott is eliciting that which they consider to be the desirable in others, but not necessarily values that they desire for themselves.

A danger of asking informants to describe their values in an interview situation is that they will be motivated to reveal those that they consider the more socially acceptable. In an interview, the interviewees’ responses form part of an interaction structure, which may include presenting themselves in a socially acceptable way (Smith, 1995). While some informants with less than desirable value priorities may experience no wish to blunt their priorities through the words they choose, or the values they admit to, many are likely to soften or enhance their image when sitting in the same room as an interviewer. Social desirability is likely to be more of an issue in the interview than with the more impersonal survey methods. A further difficulty in asking the direct question of values is that people often find it difficult to express them. Smith (1949) recognised this in the

way he put his question, described above, acknowledging that putting values into words unprompted is difficult for people to do. The two issues of self-presentation in an interview situation and the difficulty of isolating personal values in response to the direct question, might explain why few researchers have opted to uncover individuals' personal values in this way, and why there are no recent studies using this method.

3.2.3 Summary

Survey methods best suit studies in situations: where the ontological assumption is of a single, objective concept of values; when there is assumed common understanding of value terms; where large samples are surveyed; when the aim is to find generalisations in populations; and when the values elicited are being studied alone, as in cross-cultural studies of value priorities. In such situations, differences in the conceptualisation of values as the desired or the desirable, and differences in meaning attributed by respondents to value terms will tend to be ironed out through the size of the sample. Where the ontological assumption is of a relative, constructed concept of values, then the qualitative interview allows for exploration of meaning of value terms, but it is constrained by the interaction process itself where self-presentation influences responses, and by the difficulty that people encounter when attempting to isolate and express their personal values.

3.3 Indirect methods in personal values research

Kluckhohn suggested that the subjective nature of personal values, which include emotive and aesthetic judgement, “requires a *verstehen*, rather than *erklären* interpretation” (Kluckhohn, 1951: 396). He argued that “some of the deepest and most persuasive of personal and cultural values are only partially or occasionally verbalised and in some instances must be inferential constructs on the part of the observer” (p. 397). A *verstehen* approach is consistent with an ontological assumption of a constructed reality, and implies that the researcher seeks to understand values through the indirect approach of interpreting the words and

actions of those he or she is studying. This leads the research in the direction of observation and the use of lay language in order to uncover meaning. It requires, as Harré & Secord put it, that researchers should, “for scientific purposes, treat people as if they were human beings” (1972: 84). The two principal approaches to uncovering personal values indirectly are by inferring values through the actions and accounts of informants (e.g. Gamble & Gibson, 1999; Mangham & Pye, 1991; Watson, 1994), and by eliciting the values in an individual’s personal construct system (Kelly, 1955) through the method known as ‘laddering’ (e.g. Armstrong, 1979; Gutman, 1982). In the following pages, I discuss the inferring of values briefly, before giving a fuller account of the laddering method.

3.3.1 Inferring personal values

Kluckhohn suggests that values can be “discerned by careful analysis of selections made in ‘choice’ situations” (1951: 408), and investigation of these choice situations can be supplemented by other methods, such as hypothetical selections, questionnaires and simple experiments. In his ethnographic study of managers in a UK telecommunications company, Watson (1994) employed some of these methods in uncovering the personal values of managers as well as asking the direct question. He describes his rationale and method as follows:

“For any individual to give an account of themselves and their life, they are bound to give some indications of what values they hold or, in so far as these may differ, what values they wish to be seen as holding by those they are addressing. To say who you are is closely related to saying what it is that you ‘believe in’. The researcher, using the sort of detailed personal accounts which I collected during my research, should readily be able to infer value positions on the part of those studied. But some questions are more likely to elicit insights about values than others.

The most direct questions I asked in my core interviews were those of ‘What is the most important thing in life to you?’ and ‘Can you identify any personal values and beliefs which you think are relevant to the way you work?’ The former question can produce revealing answers, but, equally, can elicit what we might call the ‘standard respectable’ answer, typically alluding to spouse and

offspring, or the platitudinous answer referring perhaps to ‘happiness’. A valuable way to get insights into values, in addition to these more direct questions, is to ask people what they would name as their ideal job, if they could have any job in the world.” (Watson, 1994: 75)

Here, Watson is using three methods for eliciting personal values: inferring values from detailed personal accounts; asking direct questions; and asking aspirational questions from which personal values can be inferred. The approach of inferring values through the accounts and comments of informants was also the method used by Mangham & Pye (1991) in their investigations of the ‘doings’ of top managers in UK organisations. They make the point that they are not attempting to measure values, and what they learn is “representative” rather than “exhaustive” (1991: 162). In a similar way, Gamble & Gibson (1999) use discourse analysis of interview transcripts to infer the personal values of Chinese executives. The degree to which an individual’s personal values can be inferred from their accounts, comments, and perhaps actions, will depend to a large degree on the length of time that the individual is studied, the questions that are asked of him or her, the trust in the relationship and the ability of the researcher to interpret the individual’s interpretations. This implies that inferring personal values is better suited to long interviews and participant observation techniques, and requires a high degree of interviewing or observation skill.

3.3.2 Laddering

The term ‘laddering’ refers to a method for eliciting higher-level abstractions of the constructs people use to organize their world. Originally developed by Dennis Hinkle (1965), the method is based in Kelly’s (1955) Personal Construct theory and was first used in the field of psychology and psychotherapy (e.g. Adams-Webber, 1979; Wright, 1970). Laddering has been used to elicit managers’ work values perceived as relevant to decision-making in strategic management, first by Armstrong (1979) and thereafter in a stream of research undertaken by Eden and his associates (Eden & Ackermann, 1998a; Eden, Jones, & Sims, 1979). A version of the method has also been developed for use in consumer research (e.g. Gutman, 1990; Walker & Olson, 1991) and in some areas of human resource

management (e.g. Jolly, Reynolds, & Slocum, 1988). I shall consider laddering and its base in Kelly's (1955) Personal Construct Theory in some depth because it is the primary method chosen to elicit personal values in this study.

Kelly's Personal Construct Theory

The basis for laddering is in Kelly's Personal Construct Theory (1955), which, contrary to the theories of psychology predominating at that time, took an integrative and holistic perspective such that Kelly rejected adherence to the labels 'behavioural', 'cognitive', 'motivation', or 'learning'. To him, these were all useful but limiting constructs, and merely working hypotheses of reality, not reality itself. His underlying assumptions included the notion of a universe that is real and that we are gradually coming to understand, and that people's thoughts are also real. Correspondence between the reality of the universe and the reality of people's thoughts is continually changing as 'man-the-scientist' rejects constructs which prove poor approximations of reality in favour of those that do so better. "What we think we know is anchored only in our own assumptions, not in the bedrock of truth itself, and that world we seek to understand remains always on the horizon of our thoughts" (Kelly, 1977: 6). This led Kelly to the assumption that all interpretations of our universe are subject to revision or replacement and to his philosophical position of 'constructive alternativism'.

Personal construct theory suggests that we seek to understand our universe through templates that we ourselves create and then attempt to fit with our experiences. Often the fit is not that good, so we attempt to improve it by adding to, or adapting those constructs which make up our templates. We simplify the organization of these constructs by subsuming subordinate ones into superordinate systems to create a hierarchy of constructs. Personal Construct Theory itself is presented in the form of a fundamental postulate and eleven corollaries. The fundamental postulate states that "a person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events" (Kelly, 1955: 46), and argues a forward-looking model of mankind who develops from experience a network of pathways for understanding the world.

Of the eleven corollaries that add body to the fundamental postulate by describing the scope, means, structure and commonalities of personal construct systems, the three particularly pertinent to the laddering method are the Organization, Dichotomy and Choice corollaries. The Organization corollary states that “each person characteristically evolves, for his own convenience in anticipating events, a construction system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs” (1955: 56), thus we each build a personal – and most likely, unique – system in which we group constructs in a way that minimizes incompatibilities and inconsistencies. The system is hierarchical in nature, with superordinate constructs subsuming a larger number of subordinate constructs, so that at the higher levels the constructs are more abstract and encompass an ever-greater breadth and depth. The Dichotomy corollary states, “A person’s construction system is composed of a finite number of dichotomous constructs” (1955: 59) and Kelly argues that constructs are implicitly dichotomous, or bipolar, in nature: to say something is ‘good’ is also to imply that it is therefore different to something that is ‘not good’. An individual adds to his or her stock of bipolar constructs as he or she experiences the world and builds better templates of it. Finally, Kelly’s Choice corollary states that:

“If a person’s processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events, and those ways present themselves in dichotomous form, it follows that he must choose between the poles of his dichotomies in a manner which is predicted by his anticipations. We assume, therefore, that whenever a person is confronted with the opportunity for making a choice, he will tend to make that choice in favour of the alternative which seems to provide the best basis for anticipation” (Kelly, 1955: 64).

This suggests that should a person be presented with a choice between, for example, something that she construes to be ‘exciting’ and another she construes to be ‘routine’, then she will make that choice on the basis of the outcome she thinks preferable on the bipolar construct ‘exciting-routine’. Putting these three corollaries together, people create templates of their world by means of a finite (but large) number of dichotomous constructs, which they organize hierarchically

and for which, when they need to choose, they will have a preference for one pole compared to the other. The laddering method follows the reasoning that it should be possible to find points of entry into a person's construct system and then follow the network up the hierarchy to superordinate constructs or down to the subordinate.

The most familiar application of personal construct theory in management research has been in the use of the 'repertory grid' method, developed by Kelly (1955) for exploring personal construct systems. Repertory grids are frequently used in cognitive mapping research (Brown, 1992; Huff, 1990) in order to better understand, for example, how problems are construed (Eden & Jones, 1984), how managers categorize competitors (Reger & Palmer, 1996), and in understanding organizational learning (Bood, 1998).

Hinkle's development of the laddering method

The original development of the laddering method came out of a study into the implications that a change in preference for one end of a bipolar construct to the other has on other parts of an individual's construct system. Dennis Hinkle (1965) developed his theory of construct implications by investigating the structural relationships within an individual's construct system. In so doing, he devised methods for uncovering the range of implications of a change in preference to a given construct – how many other constructs might also have to change, including those subordinate or superordinate to it, in the person's construct system. In order to understand the implications of a change in the preferred end of a bipolar construct at superordinate levels, Hinkle first had to devise a method to elicit these superordinate constructs and it is this that became known as 'laddering'.

In Hinkle's laddering, the process begins in the same way as in repertory grid method, with a number of 'elements' being uncovered and constructs generated. Elements can be people, things, ideas etc., but in Hinkle's case, he asked his subjects to name people with whom they were in contact. Constructs are then generated by means of the 'triadic sort' (Kelly, 1955) where three elements are

presented to the subject who is asked to say in what way two are similar, but different to the third. Hinkle asked the subject to indicate which end of the resulting bipolar constructs he or she preferred, and he then describes the laddering method as follows:

“The subject is now asked to construe the superordinate implications of his subordinate constructs. His first subordinate construct is selected and he is instructed as follows: ‘Now, on this construct you preferred this side to that side. What I want to understand now is why you would prefer to be here rather than there (pointing). What are the advantages of this side in contrast to the disadvantages of that side, as you see it?’ The subject will now generate a construct dimension that has a preferred side. (Subject 4, for example, said that he preferred to be reserved in contrast to emotional, because being reserved implied being relaxed while emotional implied being nervous; thus relaxed – nervous is his first superordinate construct in the preferred self-hierarchy). The subject is stopped and the same question is asked of the construct which he has just generated. The subject will again generate a construct with a clearly preferred side. The same question is now asked of this construct. The process is continued until (1) the subject can no longer generate a construct dimension or (2) until he has generated ten such superordinate constructs which he regards as being clearly different, though related, from one another and for which he has indicated a clear side preference” (Hinkle, 1965: 32-33).

Hinkle’s principal interest was in the development of his ‘implication grid’, and not the laddering method itself, beyond satisfying himself that it allowed him to tap into a construct hierarchy “about one’s preferred self at various subordinate points”. He did, however, consider that “the specific information yielded by this hierarchical technique is enormously suggestive of further theoretical research” and that those constructs at the higher levels of abstraction were “of fundamental importance” and that they were perhaps “essential for understanding the world of another human being – or ourselves” (Hinkle, 1965: 34).

Following Hinkle’s development of the laddering method, its early applications were confined largely to practical client work and studies in psychology, and examples are reported by Bannister & Mair (1968), Fransella & Bannister (1977),

and Adams-Webber (1979). Much of the focus of this work was in the exploration of construct systems for patient therapy. One of the first uses of the laddering method for eliciting values was in Armstrong's (1979) investigation into values and decision-making. This work formed the basis for much of Eden's work into organisational cognition (Eden & Ackermann, 1998a; Eden et al., 1979). At about the same time a similar use of the laddering method to elicit values was adopted by Gutman (1982) in the field of consumer research.

Laddering and personal values

The laddering method was developed to access a person's ever-higher levels of abstractions of constructs concerned with his or her preferred self. If these ladders follow pathways concerned with value judgments, then it should follow that the upper levels of superordinate constructs correspond with values (Horley, 1991). When it is the individual's preference that is being sought, rather than that of a social group or a third party, then it should follow that such constructs correspond with personal values.

In his elaboration of the Choice corollary in personal construct theory, Kelly argues that an individual "builds his life on one or other of the alternatives represented in each of the dichotomies. That is to say that he places relative values upon the ends of the dichotomies. Some of the values are quite transient and represent merely the convenience of the moment. Others are quite stable and represent guiding principles" (Kelly, 1955: 65). The correspondence between superordinate constructs and values was also indicated by Hinkle who argued that subjects were asked to "delineate some of their most fundamental commitments" and that they were "rank ordering these commitments in terms of a scale of values – or overarching principles of choice" (Hinkle, 1965:34). Later, Bannister & Fransella described a personal construct system as "the repository of what people have learned, a statement of their intents, *the values whereby they live* and the banner under which they fight" (Bannister & Fransella, 1986:14; my emphasis).

Rokeach defines a value as “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence” (Rokeach, 1973: 5). Those that are personally, rather than socially preferred signify personal values. Rokeach’s definition has been widely adopted (Horley, 2000) and might have found favour with Kelly himself as it is presented in dichotomous, or bipolar terms: one state of existence, or mode of conduct, is deemed preferable to its opposite or converse. The dichotomous nature of values is a consistent theme. Frondizi (1971) states that “a basic characteristic of values is polarity” (p. 10), and Kluckhohn indicates this polarity by suggesting, “always and everywhere men are saying ‘this is good’; ‘that is bad’; ‘this is better than that’; ‘these are higher and those lower aspirations’” (Kluckhohn, 1951: 403). Others, such as Kilmann (1981) and Crosby et al. (1990), have argued polarity of values. Watson (1994) also describes values in terms of their bipolarity: “I define values ... as ‘ideas about what is good and what is bad, right and wrong’ ... personal values amount to the assessments of what is ‘right and wrong for me’, what is ‘good and bad for me’” (1994: 74).

Rokeach regarded values to be ‘enduring beliefs’, consistent to the individual over time and resistant, although not completely impervious, to change. He found that from test to retest, those values ranked most and least important changed the least, while those ranked in the middle did so the most (Rokeach, 1973: 39), suggesting that a person’s core values are the more enduring. In a similar way, Hinkle’s (1965) study of the implications of constructs found that superordinate constructs were relatively more stable and showed a greater resistance to change than did lower order constructs, a finding that has been supported in subsequent studies (Adams-Webber, 1979: 54-59). The finding is consistent with personal construct theory’s organization corollary in which Kelly suggests that the higher the construct, the greater number of other constructs would have to be changed if that one were to do so. Fundamental changes to a person’s personal construct system at a superordinate level are not likely to occur frequently, and often only do so at some emotional cost.

There are two other similarities between Rokeach's concept of values and Hinkle's superordinate constructs. First, it is notable that Rokeach defines a value in terms of its personal 'preference', the noun form of 'to prefer', while Hinkle employed its adjective 'preferable' to elicit his subject's higher order constructs. This further supports the view that, by asking people to state which one they prefer between bipolar constructs, Hinkle was indeed tracing a value construct to its most superordinate, and enduring level. Secondly, both Rokeach's notion of a value structure and Hinkle's notion of a structure of constructs are based on hierarchies, with those values or superordinate constructs at the top being the most central to the individual.

In spite of the differences in philosophical assumptions underlying personal construct theory and the more motivational perspective taken by Rokeach, superordinate constructs elicited by determining an individual's preferences in choosing between bipolar constructs accord with Rokeach's definition of values. This parallel between superordinate constructs and values has also been argued by Armstrong (1979) and by Gutman (1982).

3.3.3 Summary

In this section, I have indicated that the methods for inferring or eliciting personal values through indirect methods are consistent with a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology. Inferring personal values through observation and interpretation of the accounts given by social actors involves the researcher in interpreting underlying values, while eliciting personal values through the laddering method exposes that part of a social actors personal construct system that he or she is willing and able to reveal. Later in this chapter, I describe how the laddering method was combined with the use of inference techniques to identify managers' personal value priorities, but first I consider the ways in which interpretation of corporate values might be explored.

3.4 Exploring interpretations of corporate values

Corporate values are defined as those values that are conceptualised as a function of leadership. As such, they may be explicitly expressed in documents, or inferred in the actions of the leadership and can be viewed as socially constructed concepts intended to be shared by members of the organisation. My objective is to explore individual managers' interpretations of these socially constructed values. In this section, I briefly review the principal methods that have been employed in researching corporate values. Following this, I discuss the underlying assumptions that need to be considered when seeking to understand the ways that managers interpret corporate values, in order to argue for a coherent method of operationalising this part of the research study.

3.4.1 Methods in corporate values research

A number of studies have investigated both the personal values of employees in organisations and their perceptions of corporate values using survey research methods. Balazs (1990) used an adapted version of the Rokeach values survey, asking respondents to rank the listed values first, "in the order most important to you", and then "in the order you perceive as most important to your work organisation" (p. 174). Her objective was to investigate value congruency in two organisations and she concluded that it was more apparent in the more 'socially responsible' of the two organisations studied, but noted a relative lack of commitment to the values, which may, she thought, be explained by "incomplete socialisation" (p. 178). Chatman (1989; 1991) devised a Q-sort method to investigate value congruence between new entrants and their organisation. Respondents sorted 54 value items according to their importance as characteristics of an organisation they would like to work for, which, as Chatman argued, reflected their own personal values. In order to assess fit, these were compared with the Q-sort of "a broad representation of organisation members" who were asked, separately, to answer the question, "how much does this attribute characterise your organisation's values?" (Chatman, 1989p. 341). Other studies include those of Kalliath et al. (1999) who used Quinn & Rorhbaugh's (1983)

Competing Values survey, asking respondents to rate each value term for self, department and organisation, while Liedtka (1989) asked respondents to rate 15 value items on a Likert scale according to their “importance as a guiding principle for your organisation as it exists today” (p. 812).

Like the surveys that are designed to determine personal values, these have the weaknesses of limiting the values to those that the researcher has defined *a priori*, and of the variation in meaning that may be given to value terms. It may also be that each of these weaknesses is exacerbated by the need for respondents in most studies to fill out two surveys, one for themselves and one for their organisation. In order to compare the two value lists, each has to have the same items and this tends towards a simplification of the survey lists. In Balazs’s study, for example, she uses only the terminal values from the Rokeach Value Survey, thus excluding all instrumental values from her survey. Such adaptations to the Rokeach Value Survey have been criticised by Connor & Becker (1994) because of their potential to damage its integrity.

The above studies use survey methods to measure corporate values by direct means. There have been rather fewer studies that have sought to infer corporate values through analysing documents or through accounts and actions of organisational members. Content analysis of organisations’ documents was carried out by Kabanoff, Waldersee & Cohen (1995) in order to relate corporate values with members’ description of organisational change. In a later study, Kabanoff admitted that there were problems in measuring values espoused in documents, particularly in terms of their truthfulness, and they suggested that such an approach would be improved by triangulation “with surveys and other approaches such as qualitative observation, interviews and case studies” (Kabanoff & Nesbit, 1997: 69). Rokeach also considered content analysis of documents as a means of measuring institutional values, together with a number of other methods, such as measuring the personal values of institutional gatekeepers or clients, and measuring gatekeepers’ or clients’ perceptions of the corporate values (Rokeach, 1979).

In her study of evolving interpretations as change unfolds, Isabella (1990) conducted two semi-structured interviews with managers, and in the first, she “collected data about managers’ career histories, and perceptions of the significant operating values and beliefs of the company” (p. 11). The questions she used to gain insight into managers’ perceptions of their organisation’s values included: Tell me about what this organisation is like; what are its values, from your point of view? What is important to this company? How do you know it is important to this company? What does this company do well? What are your concerns about this company? (p. 40). Unfortunately, there is no discussion on her findings in regard to these questions in the paper, but it is broadly consistent with that suggested by Schein (1985) who recommends the use of critical incidents and managers’ reactions to these through their stories and accounts of the organisation’s history. Others have used participant observation techniques: Watson (1994) spent a year with a failing UK telecommunications company, and uncovered past and present corporate value priorities while working within the organisation; and Turnbull (2001) investigated middle managers’ responses to a new corporate values programme over a period of 18 months during its inception. In her study, Turnbull investigated these managers’ views of the new values, and explored for meanings that managers gave to value terms.

Earlier I noted that individuals could find it difficult to identify their personal values when asked a direct question (Trice & Beyer, 1996). This is also the case when individuals are asked to describe their organisation’s values, although the problem is not insurmountable. McDonald and Gandz (1992a) employed semi-structured interviews in their study of values relevant to business research. They found that:

“In most cases it was difficult to have respondents articulate their organisation’s shared values without considerable probing. There were only 3 cases out of the 32 organisations represented where interview respondents were able to produce detailed documentation with respect to their organisation’s shared values. Most respondents required time to become reflective” (McDonald & Gandz, 1992a: 224).

The questions suggested by Isabella, combined with probing and allowing informants time to become reflective, as suggested by McDonald & Gandz, when taken together form a basis for understanding managers' interpretation of corporate values. A combination of direct questioning, probing for stories that express values being supported or violated, and allowing time for reflection would appear to provide the accounts from which managers' interpretations of corporate values can be understood. This is similar to the approach used by Kamoche (2000) in uncovering the meaning given to corporate values by managers in his study of culture transmission and management development in a UK-based multinational company.

3.5 Operationalising the values constructs

How values are conceptualised have implications for the way that values research is operationalised. Where values are conceived as objective constructs, then direct methods, such as surveys, are suitable methods for measuring values, but they are less suitable when values are conceived as having subjective meaning. In the previous chapter, I argued for a definition of personal values as personal preferences, which may contain aspects of both the desired and the desirable. This suggests that they have subjective meaning for the individual. Conversely, I argued that corporate values represent desirable modes of action or end-states conceptualised as a function of leadership. This implies that corporate values have a more objective status, at least on the surface: while being social constructions, they exist 'out there' as shared realities; they are 'objectified' (Hatch, 1997: 42). The purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between managers' interpretation of their organisation's corporate values – those shared realities – and their own subjective personal value preferences. This implies the need for different methods for exploring each of the types of values, but which can be brought together in analysis.

3.5.1 Operationalising personal values

Direct methods for operationalising personal value priorities do not accord with the way that I have defined personal values. The most common of the direct methods, the survey, limits the range of values to those conceived *a priori*, and assumes a common meaning of value terms. Surveys do not allow for exploration, interpretation or elicitation of the meaning of values to the individual, and so limit the resulting picture of an individual's personal values to that which can be objectified and summarised in a short sentence. Direct questioning of an individual for his or her value preferences in an interview does allow for probing in order to elaborate on the meaning of those values identified. The method is, however, constrained by first, the difficulties in being able to identify one's own personal values in response to the direct question, and secondly, the pressure to conform to norms in the exposed social interaction of the interview.

The indirect method of inferring personal value priorities from the accounts that individuals give of their career histories, as outlined by Watson (1994) is dependent on the individual revealing his or her reactions, reasons for decisions, attitudes to incidents and other evaluative actions so that the researcher has data from which to infer values. Such revelations are more likely to occur in an environment of trust and confidence and this can take time to build, so the approach is more suitable when the researcher and informant are in extended contact, as with participant observation and depth interviews. To infer personal values is also to place the onus on the researcher's interpretation of informants career history data, and this has implications for the trustworthiness of the conclusions. These disadvantages need to be considered, but there are also some advantages in balance. First, the informant is not directly revealing his or her value priorities, but instead these arise out of the accounts being related. They are, as Watson (1994) points out, more real and less subject to modification than are responses to direct questions. Secondly, because they arise out of accounts, stories, and responses in the interaction, there is a greater likelihood that the subjective meaning of the values will be revealed. Additionally, because the values are inferred from the individual's interpretations of their own actions, they

are manifested in the choices made, and are thus more closely linked to action than is the case with those identified by direct methods.

The laddering method has many of the same advantages: values are not directly revealed, but arise out of seemingly innocuous constructs; the ladder, with opposite poles recorded in each construct, reveals the subjective meaning of value constructs; and they are manifest in choices made, as Kelly's (1955) Choice Corollary states. In addition, the laddering method reduces some of the disadvantages of inferring from career histories. It is a specific exercise designed to elicit personal values, and so is not dependent on informants revealing their values in the course of an account of their career histories. Providing informants agree to the exercise and cooperate in carrying it out, it will provide data specifically related to their values. Additionally, the result of the exercise includes a record of those ladders elicited: the data are more clearly recorded, and the need for researcher interpretation is greatly reduced. The laddering method requires a high degree of trust between interviewer and informant, perhaps more so than in inferring values from career histories, as it quickly exposes individuals' "most fundamental commitments in their present life" (Hinkle, 1965: 34) and the process can be discomfoting. The need for interviewer skill and sensitivity in carrying out laddering exercises has been emphasised by Fransella & Bannister (1977), Stewart & Stewart (1981), Reynolds & Gutman, (1988), and Grunert & Grunert (1995).

In the initial exploratory study for this research, I inferred managers' personal values from the accounts they gave of their career history. In the main study, I used both career histories and the laddering method, thus was able to triangulate by method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to do so, however, I found it necessary to adapt the laddering method so that it was more suitable for use in the context of a single interview where time was a constraint, and where managers' interpretation of their corporate values was also investigated.

Adapting the laddering method for this study

The two principal forms of the laddering method used in management research at this time are Gutman's (1982) 'means-end chain' model, and the version used by Eden and his colleagues (Armstrong, 1979; Eden et al., 1979; Eden & Ackermann, 1998a). These versions have both been adapted from Hinkle's (1965) original in order to suit better the purposes for which they were employed, but for reasons explained below, neither quite meets the needs of this particular study.

Gutman's Means-End Chain model is an adaptation of Hinkle's laddering method designed for use in advertising and marketing research. Gutman organizes sub- and superordinate constructs into 'attributes, consequences and values' in his 'means-end chain' model. Attributes are directly applicable to products or services, which are elicited by using Kelly's triadic-sort technique, while consequences are superordinate constructs which link attributes to values, the most superordinate of constructs. Gutman's description of his technique resonates with Hinkle's:

"Respondents are asked which pole of their dichotomous distinctions they most prefer. Then they are asked why they most prefer the pole they do. The answer to the question typically leads to distinctions involving product functions and consequences from use that become the basis for generating still higher-level distinctions. The procedure is repeated until respondents can no longer answer the question. Quite frequently respondents reach a level where they are talking about terminal values such as those indicated by Rokeach" (Gutman, 1982: 66).

The means-end chain method has predominantly been used in marketing and advertising research. Reynolds & Gutman (1984) investigated the consequences and terminal values associated with breath-freshening products, while the method has also been used in: the development of an advertising strategy for beer (Reynolds & Rochon, 1991); investigations into the consumption styles related to cigarettes (Valette-Florence, 1997); the goals associated with the purchase of greeting cards (Walker & Olson, 1991); and the effect of consumers' values on price sensitivity (Baker, 1996). Means-end chain has also been used to investigate

the effects of personal values on performance judgments in the appraisal process (Jolly et al., 1988).

Gutman's version initially contained much of Hinkle's laddering method. In both cases, the first bipolar construct was elicited by triadic sorting, from products and people respectively. Likewise, the first higher order construct in both was elicited by asking which pole the interviewee preferred, and both continued to ladder until the interviewee could no longer give an answer to why there was a preference. In Gutman's version, however, the opposite pole to the preferred at superordinate levels was not elicited, so that beyond the initial bipolar construct, only the positive pole is recorded. Further adaptations to the technique became necessary because of differences in the purposes of laddering: while Hinkle was interested in exploring the implications of change to construct hierarchies in individuals, Gutman and subsequent users of the means-end chain model have been predominately interested in commonalities amongst the 'consequences' and 'values' constructs in large populations. This has resulted in significant changes to the technique being reported in the literature. First, in order to manage the data more easily, and to reduce the time taken to complete laddering exercises, it became acceptable to separate the triadic sorting of elements into constructs, so that individuals may be asked to ladder from pre-determined bipolar constructs, and not those derived from their own personal construct system (Jolly et al., 1988). In further studies, the uppermost levels of the ladders became standardized, so that after a number of consequences had been elicited, interviewees were asked to select values most related to these from a predetermined list (Gutman, 1990; Pitts, Wong, & Whalen, 1991). Finally, the sense of the idiographic in means-end chain became further reduced in studies where interviewees were asked to select consequences from lists prepared *a priori* (e.g. Walker & Olson, 1991). These adaptations to laddering mean that the means-end chain and its analysis using 'hierarchical value maps' (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988) are now firmly rooted in the cognitive and motivational perspectives of psychology (Grunert & Grunert, 1995). These changes in the technique have allowed for aggregation of the laddering data so that

generalizations regarding the consequences and values can be made, but they have also separated laddering from its theoretical base in personal construct theory.

The other principal research stream is exemplified by Eden & Ackermann who make use of personal construct theory and Hinkle's laddering method to develop cognitive maps representing "that part of a person's construct system which they are able and willing to make explicit" (Eden & Ackermann, 1998a: 97), and which are subsequently combined into aggregated group maps. The purpose of this is to uncover shared values, and their meanings, so that teams can better incorporate this understanding when creating strategies. Laddering is an important part of the elicitation, and the technique followed here is closely related to Hinkle's, developed largely from Armstrong's (1979) study on values and decision-making. The technique, described in detail by Eden et al. (1979), begins with the eliciting of constructs by triadic sorting of decisions in which the manager interviewed has been recently involved, and expressed in terms of outcomes common to two and different from the third. The manager is then asked to state his or her preferred outcome and is asked: "Why do you consider the outcome as a preferred outcome?" and "What would you reckon the alternative outcome to be if [the outcome] did not occur?" (Eden et al., 1979: 167). While these questions are in line with those encountered earlier, they can be interpreted to refer to the preferences of those other than the interviewee him- or herself. It is not clear, therefore, whether the values being elicited are personal values, those expected of the role the manager holds, or those of third parties such as people affected by the decision. This is not necessarily important for the purposes for which Eden and his colleagues make use of the laddering method, or for the type of values they are seeking to elicit, but it does represent a potential problem for those whose interest is the manager's personal values.

In this research study, I initially rejected the laddering method for eliciting personal values because it has normally been used in conjunction with repertory or implication grid, and these "can be time-consuming and boring for the respondent" (Jenkins, 1998). Similarly, Armstrong & Eden (1979) pointed out

that “an essential feature of grid methodologies in the original client setting of Personal Construct Theory was the large amount of time each individual subject needed to invest in the methodology” (p. 20). As such, I thought it not suited to interviews with senior managers where their interpretation of corporate values was to be covered as well. Furthermore, the practice of eliciting personal constructs from closely related items, as when used in conjunction with repertory or implication grids, meant that there was a risk of eliciting role values, rather than personal values. I returned to the laddering method, however, following the exploratory study, as I did not wish to rely solely upon my inferring personal values from managers’ accounts of their career histories.

A resolution to these concerns occurred to me when practicing the method as suggested by Eden et al. (1979) on volunteer students. Instead of eliciting bipolar constructs from closely related elements, I tried generating them from a wide range of elements, still grouped in threes. In this way, I suggested the volunteers think of three places they had visited on holiday, or three films they had been to see recently, as well as elements more closely related to their current work. The result was encouraging: not only did the student volunteers identify constructs that laddered to values, but they became more interested in the process than had been the case when I generated the constructs from closely related elements.

The approach used by Hinkle (1965), Armstrong (1979), and Gutman (1982) typically began with triadic sorting from elements which were closely related, thus Hinkle’s subjects were asked to select ten people close to them, while those managers involved in Armstrong’s study selected nine work decisions and Gutman asked for several product attributes. Each then embarked on the lengthy process of generating a similar number of bipolar constructs by triadic sorting of these elements, and in Hinkle and Armstrong’s case, went on to produce full implication grids. While it is important to work with closely related elements if the researcher’s interest is in the nature of the constructs elicited, or the consequences of, say, product attributes, this is not necessarily the case when the researcher’s interest is predominantly in the values themselves. Bannister and

Fransella argue that laddering “can start with any type of construct, be it about kinds of soap, opera, television program or works of art – the end product will be some superordinate construct to do with one’s philosophy of life” (Bannister & Fransella, 1986: 51). Psychologists using the laddering method will work from constructs that have been elicited during the client interview without recourse to any particular exercise to generate elements. For example, Wright (1970) illustrates the potential of the method with ladders originating from patients’ constructs that arose during the course of clinical interviews; a similar approach is described by both Neimeyer (1993) and Butt (1995) who elicit constructs from terms that patients used to describe their anxieties.

Like Bannister & Fransella (1986), I found that, regardless of the diversity of elements used to generate the initial constructs, they laddered to superordinate constructs to do with the informant’s values. It also seemed that, by encouraging my student volunteer informants to generate from such innocent elements as places visited, or movies seen, they were more confident and relaxed about ‘doing ladders’ than was the case when all constructs were generated from work related matters. It also seemed that this use of diverse elements would mean that it would tap into managers’ personal values and not simply those of the role they play; a manager is less likely to be able to answer questions consistently from the perspective of his or her role when the elements are selected with such diversity. This adaptation is small, and is similar to the version reported by those working in psychotherapy, but it does not appear to have been applied previously in management research.

3.5.2 Operationalising managers’ interpretations of corporate values

Because the focus is on individual managers’ interpretations of their organisation’s corporate values, those they select as being the corporate values form part of this interpretation. This rules out the use of *a priori* lists, as these would prompt managers to select from such a list. Inferring corporate values from the accounts that managers give of actions approved by the organisational leadership may be viable, but such a method would carry the disadvantages

outlined previously, and in addition requires the informant to give accounts from a perspective of the organisation, which may add further complications. At one point in experimenting with the laddering method, I asked volunteer students to generate constructs from the point of view of the university, and then attempt to ladder up to corporate values. It was clear that my volunteers were uncomfortable about expressing opinions about perceived constructs as they might be construed 'by the organisation'. The discomfort was even more marked when attempts were made to select a preferred construct and then ladder to a superordinate level. Volunteers felt that they were being asked to guess, and they found it difficult to think in terms of 'the university'. I tried changing this to 'senior staff' – which they then found difficult to think of as a single group. The volunteers were more confident when thinking of one particular manager, but were still aware that it was only their interpretation of that manager's preferences, and could only generate one or two superordinate constructs, but with reservations. This led me to conclude that the method would not be suitable for investigating interpretations of corporate values.

A direct approach, therefore, seems to be the most suitable for exploring managers' interpretations of their organisations corporate values. Following the lead taken by Isabella (1990) and McDonald & Gandz (1992a), who investigated individual's interpretation of corporate values by asking direct questions, coupled with probing for further explanations. Isabella used probing techniques that encouraged informants to illustrate their interpretation of corporate values with examples and stories. In his account of an ethnographic study of an organisation, Schwartzman (1993) discussed the stories that informants told of their organisation and of their own history. One type of story "invoked or illustrated particular cultural values", and he went on to note that,

"Some of the values were values that the company attempted to self-consciously produce, and some were values that seemed pervasive and yet were not explicitly mentioned as values or ideals of this particular company. Depending on the individual picked, stories about individuals were also told in ways that illustrated particular values" (1993: 63).

Schwartzman's observation echoes those made by Watson (1994) and Turnbull (2000), and indicate that individuals illustrate their understanding of their organisation's corporate values through the stories they tell. A combination of asking direct questions so that informants select those values they identify as the corporate values, and then probing for the stories that illustrate the meaning given to the value terms, should reveal their interpretation of their organisation's corporate values.

3.5.3 Summary

The way that I operationalised values in the main study, therefore, was to use the adapted version of the laddering method in order to elicit managers' personal values, and to explore the content and meaning of those corporate values articulated by the same managers in order to understand their interpretation of their organisation's corporate values. A model of the conceptual framework is outlined in Figure 3.1.

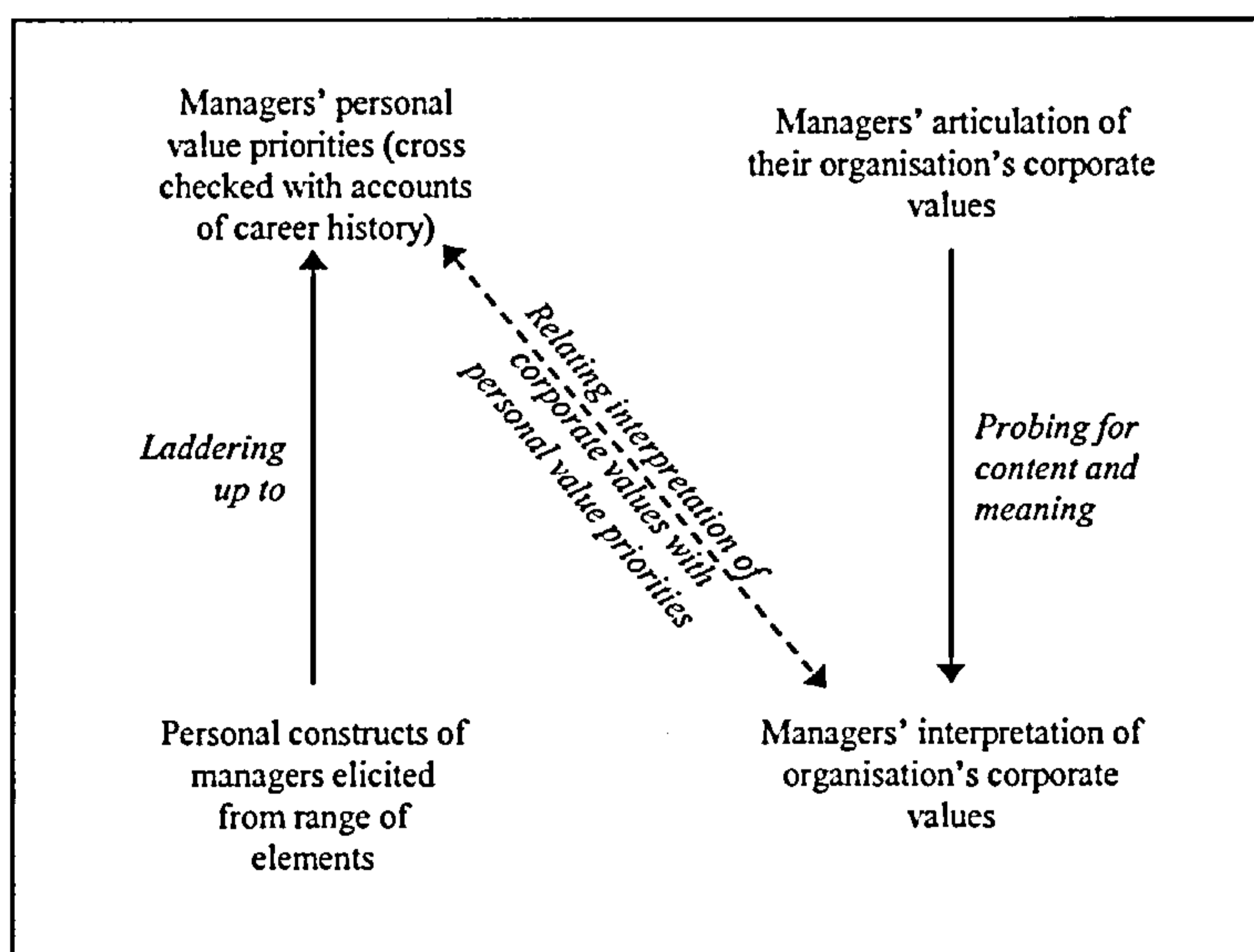


Figure 3.1: Operationalising personal and corporate values

As I noted earlier, in the initial exploratory study I inferred managers' personal values solely from their accounts of their career history, but was concerned that the method might not be sufficiently reliable given the constraints of the interview situation. I retained this method, however, in subsequent studies both because it

provides a useful indication of personal values in itself, and because it provides a form of method triangulation when used in conjunction with the laddering method. As will be seen in Chapter Six, there was a consistency between values elicited and values inferred by these two methods.

3.6 Methodological implications

The methods chosen for operationalising personal value priorities of managers and their interpretations of corporate values imply a social constructionist ontology and an interpretivist methodology. This has some implications regarding the role of the social actor, language, the researcher and the situation in which the research takes place. Putting one's finger on the characteristics of interpretive research is rather more complex than is the case for positivist research, where well-established patterns can be followed (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 1991). This is because there are a number of intellectual positions in interpretive or qualitative research, including phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, *verstehen*, naturalism, and ethogenics (Bryman, 1988). While each has certain characteristics regarding finer points of their methodology, they share an assumption of a socially constructed reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Differences begin to appear in the preferred methods, and the purpose of the research. Phenomenology, for example, is concerned with "pure truth, uncontaminated by taken-for-granted ideas, beliefs and prejudices (Blaikie, 1993: 33), while ethogenics (Harré & Secord, 1972) is a form of realism and assumes the existence of underlying mechanisms that generate observed patterns (Bryman, 1988).

In this research, I take a position that links assumptions of symbolic interactionism (Denzin, 1995) with the process of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The symbolic interpretivist position is that "social life is an unfolding process in which the individual interprets his or her environment and acts on the basis of that interpretation" (Bryman, 1988: 54), a position also taken

by Weick (1979). This position is consistent with Kelly's (1955) 'constructive alternativism' and the concept of personal constructs, whereby a person "places an interpretation upon what is construed" (p. 50), and makes choices based upon that interpretation (p. 64-65). In addition to its position on the relationship between social actor and his or her environment, the symbolic interactionist approach also regards the relationship between social actor and researcher as an interaction, with implications for context and the role of the researcher. Cossette (1998) argues that the symbolic interactionist stance places an emphasis on ascribing meaning in the context of the interactive situation. Meanwhile Schwandt (1994) quotes Blumer (1969) in stating "symbolic interactionism requires that the inquirer actively enter the worlds of people being studied in order to 'see the situation as it is seen by the actor, observing what the actor takes into account, observing how he interprets what is taken into account'" (p. 124).

Naturalistic inquiry is the term given to a qualitative approach to research undertaken in a natural setting and that is primarily inductive. Lincoln & Guba set out the flow of naturalistic inquiry in a model, which can be expressed as follows:

A natural setting demands the researcher act as a 'human instrument' building on his or her tacit knowledge and using qualitative research to engage in purposive sampling, inductive analysis, grounded theory and emergent design, iterated until redundant, and involving negotiated outcomes leading to a case report, which is both idiographically interpreted and tentatively applied. (adapted from Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 188)

There are some differences in emphasis between the approach followed by Lincoln & Guba and my own approach in this study, particularly in the extent to which iteration took place, but their model provides useful framework for discussing the key characteristics of this type of work. The notion of the researcher acting as 'human instrument' is supported by Eden & Ackermann (1998b) who suggest that, "if it is important to collect meaning then it becomes important to see the researcher as the research instrument, rather than the data collection and analysis techniques or tools as the research instrument" (p. 198). Likewise, as well as the researcher being a research instrument, the informant is

more than a “mental machine processing information” (Harré, 1995: 144). In their argument for the appropriate model of man, Harré & Secord (1972) reject the metaphors of the animal, the machine or the computer as adequate surrogate models for understanding the ways that humans think. In doing so, they are rejecting the stimulus-response model (the animal), the cause-and-effect model (machine) or the rational processor model (computer). Viktor Frankl ridiculed the conceit implicit in such models:

“I deem it to be a remarkable fact that man, as long as he regarded himself as a creature, interpreted his existence in the image of God, his creator; but as soon as he started considering himself as a creator, began to interpret his existence merely in the image of his own creation, the machine” (Frankl, 1988: 16).

Harré & Secord argue that, instead of using metaphors as models, “the only possible solution is to use our understanding of ourselves as the basis of understanding of others, and our understanding of others of our species to further our understanding of ourselves” (1972: 87-88). The implication in this and in the view of Lincoln & Guba (1985) is that the researcher uses his or her tacit knowledge and self-understanding. Tacit knowledge – that which is known but cannot be put into words – is, according to Lincoln & Guba, an important component in qualitative research. The researchers instincts and insights are necessary and useful guides to developing a research design, and in conducting fieldwork where there are few pre-determined guidelines to follow.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that personal values have subjective meaning for individuals that are best understood by using indirect methods. In this way, personal values can be inferred from the accounts and actions of informants, or elicited by the laddering method, which is explained here in some detail. I have also argued that understanding the interpretation informants place on corporate values requires an interpretive approach, whereby informants are encouraged to identify and explain the meaning values have for them through probing and

allowing time for reflection. In order to investigate both personal values and interpretation of corporate values during the course of a single interview, I have proposed a simple adaptation of the laddering method. This allows for personal values elicitation, while releasing adequate time for the exploration both into informants' accounts of their career history and into their interpretation of corporate values. These three parts form the basis for operationalising the research study into the relationship between managers' personal values and their interpretation of their organisation's corporate values. The approach used is an interpretive one, and the position taken here links the assumptions of symbolic interactionism with naturalistic inquiry. In the following chapter, I describe the process of turning this conceptual operationalising of the research study into a research design.

4 Research design

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explained the rationale that led me to propose that the relationship between a manager's personal values and her or his interpretation of corporate values required an interpretive approach. Personal value priorities, as personal constructs, can be explored by tapping into informants' personal construct system, and laddering to the most superordinate levels, which are synonymous with personal values (Horley, 1991). Exploring informants' interpretation of their organisation's corporate values can be carried out through direct questioning, coupled with probing to illuminate the meaning informants give to the values they identify. The resulting 'values-with-interpretations' provides the basis for exploring the relationship between the value systems. Such an approach assumes the individual interprets his or her environment and acts on that interpretation. It also accepts the lay accounts of the informant as authentic (Blaikie, 1993), and can form the basis for understanding (Harré & Secord, 1972).

These methods for operationalising the values constructs, as described in the previous chapter, lead to the adoption of a qualitative research design based on interviews as the most appropriate means to collecting data for analysis. In order to make comparisons between 'values-with-interpretations', manager-informants need to have common corporate values, and so a case study approach is appropriate. In this chapter, I consider the criteria for this design that resulted in an initial exploratory study, followed by a main study, involving three organisations as discrete cases. Following a description of the research design, I outline the process of gaining access to suitable case organisations and the selection of informants, before describing the timing of and protocols for the interviews in each of the companies involved in the study. Following this, I describe the approach and the process of analysing the resulting data that is reported in the next two chapters.

4.2 Criteria for the research study

There are a number of key criteria that can be considered important for a satisfactory outcome of the fieldwork research. First, that the number of manager-informants included in any organisation studied should be sufficient for comparisons to be made between different managers' interpretations of a single set of corporate values. Secondly, that more than one case should be studied in order to compare the ways that managers interpret corporate values across organisations, and to provide literal or theoretical replication (Yin, 1994). Thirdly, that the managers involved in the study should be at a level of influence and authority where they are likely to be involved in the implementation of strategic initiatives.

These criteria suggest a multiple case-study approach (Yin, 1994). The requirement for the research design is to collect data concerning the personal values of senior managers, and at the same time, their interpretation of the corporate values of their organisation, so that the resulting 'values-with-interpretations' can be analysed and compared. In order that this might be done in a way that is likely illuminate the relationship between personal and corporate values, the context needs to be bounded in some way: a data set of values-with-interpretations where there is no relationship between the managers studied would limit conclusions that could be drawn. For this reason, an essential requirement of the research design is that a number of managers interviewed should be interpreting the same set of corporate values.

Yin (1994) considers that the decision to undertake multiple cases should be based on 'replication logic', where the purpose is to discover whether similar results are obtained in each case and replication can be said to have taken place. He suggests that cases should be selected so that they either predict similar results, a *literal* replication, or they produce contrasting results for predictable reasons, a *theoretical* replication (Yin, 1994: 46). He suggests that multiple case studies can

provide more compelling evidence that is more robust than that gained from the single case study, and that single case studies better serve situations where either the case under study is critical, or it represents a unique case, or the purpose is revelatory. The principal disadvantage of a multiple case approach is, according to Yin, that such an approach may require resources beyond that of the single researcher. On the other hand, multiple case studies allow for 'replication logic' in that, if the results are similar across the cases, "replication is said to have taken place" (Yin, 1994: 45). At the same time, the use of multiple cases allows for some degree of iteration between data and theory to occur between the cases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Stake (1994) describes two broad types of case study, the intrinsic and the instrumental. In the intrinsic case study, the case is chosen for its own characteristics, which the researcher wishes to understand. The instrumental case provides "insight into an issue or refinement of theory" (1994: 237), and is of secondary interest to the phenomenon being investigated. In this study, organisations need to be selected for their instrumentality, and not for their own particular characteristics as the phenomena under study is common to organisations as a whole.

Czarniawska (1997) criticises Yin's definition of a case study for his insistence that it is concerned with 'contemporary phenomenon within its real life context' (Yin, 1994: 13), thus implying that historical accounts are outside the realm of the case. In her criticism, Czarniawska suggests that retrospective accounts are histories "edited from the standpoint of today" and that "a retrospective approach is scrutinising a construct that exists at the time of the study". This, she contrasts with 'prospective' accounts, which "studies the process of social construction in its making" (1997: 65). In this research, I am studying or scrutinising both: by exploring the accounts managers give of their career history, and investigating the meaning for an individual of corporate values, I am uncovering constructs that may be related to the past, but which exist at the time of the study. At the same time, I am uncovering social constructs 'in their making' as managers explore their own construct system in response to my questions.

The focus of this research is the manager, and, as explained earlier, it is important that those involved in the study refer to the same corporate values so that cross analysis is possible. The potential for replication logic, however, means that a multiple case approach would be a better course of action than a single case approach. Furthermore, there may be certain conditions that, if studied in isolation, would raise doubts about the extent to which generalisation, even to theory, could be considered. Such case-specific situations might, for example, include the prominence given to corporate values in the organisation, the history of the corporate values, or the number of values included. Where an organisation had built an ethos around its corporate values over a considerable period of time, one might expect these to be interpreted more similarly than in organisations where the corporate values had not been specifically promoted, or in organisations which had recently introduced a set of corporate values.

The question of the number of informants required for a case study to be informative is a difficult one to answer. It is clear that the greater the number, the more comparative data are provided. Two or more informants are necessary to provide any comparative data at all, and four or five would seem to be the minimum number large enough to allow for some conclusions to be drawn. Each addition to the sample above this number allows for greater refinement in comparing managers' interpretations, but this needs to be countered with the difficulties in gaining access to high-level managers, and with the limited resources of a single researcher. Perry (1994) suggests that 'as a rule of thumb' qualitative studies should have a minimum of forty-five informants for this level of research, but fails to substantiate this with any argument for the numbers. Others, such as Strauss & Corbin (1990) approach the question by arguing for 'saturation', or the point where further data collection ceases to add any further insight. Some of the more influential studies are based on significantly fewer numbers of informants. For example, Hinkle's (1965) development of the theory of construct implications was based on twenty-eight subjects, and Mintzberg's (1973) study of managerial work was based on the observation of five senior executives, while Mangham's (1986) 'microsituational' study of power and

performance in organisations was based on a single afternoon's meeting involving just nine managers. This suggests the number of informants is but one aspect to the collection of data. The amount of data gathered and their quality for the purpose of the research are also important, as is the depth of the analysis. Thus Mintzberg's five executives were shadowed for some weeks each, and Mangham's afternoon meeting was analysed from a number of perspectives and in great depth. The determining factor in qualitative research is sufficiency for the purpose, and the criteria are the number of informants, the quantity and quality of data gathered and the depth to which the data are analysed.

4.2.1 Summary

The key criteria for this study are that more than one case organisation is investigated for literal or theoretical replication, but within the constraints of a single researcher. This suggests two or three case organisations. The cases do not need to be chosen for any particular characteristics, but require sufficient numbers of informants for comparisons to be made.

4.3 Site and informant selection

Marshall & Rossman (1989) suggest four criteria for selecting suitable sites for qualitative research studies: that entry is possible; that there is a high probability where that which is part of the research study will be present; that the researcher can devise an appropriate role to maintain continuity; and that data quality is reasonably assured. Of these, gaining access is a likely to be a problem regardless of the other criteria.

The research requirement is that managers should be able to offer their interpretation of their organisation's corporate values. This does not necessarily mean that an organisation should have a stated set of corporate values, although a formal document setting out the organisation's corporate values would be useful to provide a framework against which managers' interpretations can be compared, and they themselves can be analysed. Schein (1985) argues that values are

communicated through other artifacts, such as the mission statement, the strategy, the formal and informal reward systems, and through ideas about desirable relations between organisational members and the external environment. The requirement that the phenomena under study – corporate values – is present, therefore, will be the situation in almost any organisation, and particularly commercial organisations where strategies and reward systems are known to the informants.

The requirement that the researcher can devise an appropriate role to maintain continuity is perhaps most pertinent where participant observation is the chosen method, and the researcher might be required to adopt a covert role (Schwartzman, 1993). Where the chosen method is the interview, there are fewer problems associated with the role of the researcher, and I did not anticipate any need to present myself as anything other than an academic researcher. The fourth criterion suggested by Marshall & Rossman (1989), that data quality be reasonably assured, is largely dependent upon manager-informants willingness to talk about themselves and their company's corporate values, and be willing to carry out the laddering exercise. The degree of openness is likely to be influenced by the relationship between the informant and the interviewer (Douglas, 1985), and the perceived sensitivity of the subject area. Fitz & Halpin (1995) found that 'elite' individuals were more open in asserting their own opinions than were more junior staff. Furthermore, elite interviewees, such as senior managers, are more likely to provide quality data in situations where: they understand and appreciate the purpose of the research study; they have confidence in the professionalism of the interviewer; and where the interviewer is experienced (Welch, Marschan-Piekkari, Penttinen, & Tahvanainen, in press). The onus would therefore appear to rest upon my ability to conduct interviews in a professional manner, rather than on any special requirement of the informants themselves, or of the site. It is a reasonable assumption that all managers have personal values that can be elicited, and that they are able to provide their interpretation of their organisation's corporate values.

4.3.1 Gaining access and selecting informants

The first of Marshall & Rossman's criteria – where entry is possible – is a particular concern for this type of research, and gaining access, as Van Maanen & Kolb (1985) point out, “involves some combination of strategic planning, hard work, and dumb luck” (p. 11). In finding the sites for this study, all three of the above combination appeared to play their part. Bryman (1989) suggests that researchers “should not be chary about employing an opportunistic approach” (p. 162), and in searching for sites, I did not pass up any opportunity for approaching colleagues, friends and family in attempting to get an introduction to organisations that might be willing to allow me access to their senior managers. An early success by this route – my supervisor introduced me to the site that became the initial exploratory study – may have led to a false sense of security, for the later opportunistic approaches were mostly unsuccessful. For example, I sought the help of company directors of potential organisations who were known to myself, without any success. I followed up a family contact who was a director of a London based charitable organisation concerned with the promotion of ethical management practice in UK organisations. He was supportive and tried to gain interest from company members, again without success. I followed up leads suggested by fellow PhD students, usually by letter and telephone call, but was in each case politely refused. Another lead provided by my supervisor initially showed interest, but subsequently withdrew from the study.

Further suggestions offered by Bryman (1989) include: seeking access at a high level in the organisation; offering a report on the findings; and providing clear explanations of the intentions of the researcher. I reacted to the distinct lack of success in my early attempts by developing a strategy that included all of these, but which still began with some opportunism. Following a presentation of my work in progress at a seminar within the university, I negotiated a deal with a member of the academic staff, whereby I would get a list of contacts and permission to use the person's name as an introduction, in return for agreeing to present my findings to a research consortium once the study was completed. As a result, I acquired the names of five high level managers in four companies.

In previous attempts to gain access, I had written a proposal in an introductory letter. With these contacts, I adopted a more cautionary approach and initially suggested a meeting in order to discuss my proposal (see Appendix B). This produced three positive responses from the five contact letters sent out and I was able to make appointments to describe the purpose of the research and the requirements I had from those involved. The success provided me with a timely reminder from my past experiences in selling: that each step in the process needed to be sold. The three positive responses came from a director in one organisation and a director and a senior manager at two sites in another, and thus my entry point into the organisations was at a high level. One benefit of this level of entry, according to Bryman (1989) is that that the person concerned is more likely to be able to make a decision on access without the need for approval from others. Furthermore, managers at this level can act as 'gatekeepers' or 'sponsors' within the organisation, and can therefore facilitate the enrolment of informants (Van Maanen & Kolb, 1985).

My objective on meeting these contacts was first to gain their agreement for me to interview managers at their organisation, and secondly, to gain their assistance in finding suitable informants. Bryman (1989) regards it essential that a researcher expresses his or her intentions clearly, and is able to overcome any worries concerning how the information will be used. In discussing my requirements with the contacts within each organisation, I explained the purpose of the study, and that the resulting information would not be used in any way that was detrimental to the organisation. In order to further this point, I made clear that the identities of both the individual informants and the organisations would be disguised. Miles & Huberman (1994) describe Sieber's (1992) distinctions between privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. Privacy is concerned with control over access to information, while confidentiality is concerned with agreements concerning what may and may not be done with data, and this may include legal constraints. Anonymity is concerned with the removal or disguise of information that allows a particular person or organisation to be identified. I was able to promise

reasonable anonymity through the disguise of individuals and organisation, but not necessarily complete anonymity: removing all traces to all potential readers of any resulting report was difficult to ensure. In the event, each of the contacts and all subsequent informants were content with the degree of anonymity offered.

Bryman (1989) also suggests that offering a report could facilitate access, but warns that it carries the risk of placing “the researcher unwittingly in the role of consultant and it may invite restrictions on the dissemination of the researcher’s findings” (p. 163). The research study offered few direct benefits to those organisations willing to participate, but I did suggest two forms of report to the contacts in my bid to gain access. I offered to provide feedback following the interviews on how corporate values were interpreted at that organisation, but without identifying informants. The form of this feedback was to be a brief report intended to summarise the variation in interpretation of corporate values within the organisation. In the event, these reports were given in the form of an oral briefing at the end of the data collection period at each site. In addition, I offered a summary report of the overall findings across all organisations and my conclusions, in effect a summary of the thesis, to be provided following its completion. In this way, I was able to provide benefits to the organisations for allowing me access, which helped gatekeepers justify the time I was asking them to commit (Easterby-Smith, et al., 1991).

The outcome of the meetings with the contacts was that each agreed to their organisation participating in the research. Three case organisations took part in the study. The initial exploratory study was carried out at a hotel and conference centre, here given the name HCC. The main study involved a large multinational consumer product organisation, here given the name FMCG, and two sites at a multinational hi-tech company, here given the name HITECH.

4.3.2 Selection of informants

At the meetings with both the initial exploratory and the main study contacts, each agreed to act as gatekeeper in enrolling volunteer informants. In order to assist

their efforts in this, I provided a proposal document outlining the purpose of the research and the topics to be covered in interview (see Appendix C). My need was for senior managers willing to provide an interpretation of their organisation's corporate values, and to talk about their career history and carry out the laddering exercise. Because of the intrusive nature of this research, it was important that all informants volunteered to become involved. The use of a gatekeeper within the organisation, together with the proposal document allowed me to enrol senior managers in this research. This form of sampling has similarities with Lincoln & Guba's (1985) 'purposive sampling', which they argue to be largely synonymous with Glaser & Strauss' (1967) 'theoretical sampling'. In both, the sample design emerges as the research progresses, with subsequent selections following the analysis of earlier samples. In this case, the main study sample was a refinement of that used in the initial exploratory study, the principal difference being the level of seniority of informants. In the initial exploratory study, two of the five informants were at a level in the organisation that meant their role in the development and implementation of strategies was relatively minor. In the subsequent main studies, I aimed to include informants at director level, or as close to that as was feasible. The sampling in this study, however, falls short of Glaser & Strauss' (1967) theoretical sampling in that it was limited to one cycle of sample-analyse-sample, whereas the grounded theory approach is to sample to the point of redundancy. In this case, the point of redundancy, or when no new information is forthcoming from new samples, was thought reached through the analysis of main study data.

Leaving control of the selection of informants to a sponsor within the organisation has the potential to introduce bias into the findings. In each case organisation, the sponsors were senior managers who had indicated an interest in understanding better the interpretations of corporate values held by managers, and it is not known whether there may have been a motive for wanting to know what these were. It is possible that one or more of the sponsoring managers wished to present evidence that supported a particular agenda, and that they selected informants with that purpose in mind. In terms of the research study, such a bias would mean that

certain interpretations of corporate values might be represented more than others, but it should not necessarily affect the relationship between interpretation of corporate values and managers' personal values, which is the focus of the study. The risk of bias in the sample of managers is, however, countered by the advantage of having an internal sponsor enrol informants and removes the need for the researcher to identify and contact individual managers.

A total of twenty-seven managers across the three organisations were included in the research study. A further manager from a fourth organisation was also interviewed, but the organisation withdrew from the research exercise before any further interviews could be completed, and because there were no managers with whom to compare his interpretation of corporate values, the data are not included in the study. Five managers were interviewed for the initial exploratory study, while eight were interviewed at FMCG, and fourteen across the two sites at HITECH. Apart from two of the managers from the initial exploratory study, HCC, all held senior management positions, and seven held the title 'director'. Further details regarding the profile of managers are reported in the following chapters under the heading of the relevant case.

4.4 The interviews

The interviews for the initial exploratory study were carried out during November 1999, and for the main study between November 2000 and February 2001. At two of the sites, that of the initial exploratory study, HCC, and one of the two HITECH sites, each interview was arranged independently of others, and so the period between them was extended to several weeks. At FMCG, all interviews were carried out on three days spread over three weeks, while the interviews at the second HITECH site were carried out on two consecutive days.

4.4.1 Interview format

The objectives for the interviews were to capture a picture of each manager's personal values and to explore their understanding of their organisations'

corporate values. In the initial exploratory study, the interviews had two phases: in the first part of the interview, I explored managers' career histories, and then turned attention to managers' interpretations of corporate values. In the main study, laddering exercises were carried out as a third stage to the interview. The interviews were loosely structured (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991), in the sense that they were standardised: each followed the same three phases in the same order. In this way, the interview "employs a set of themes and topics to form questions in the course of a conversation" (Burgess, 1984: 102), which allows informants to provide answers without the constraints of a structured format.

At the start of the interview, I explained the overall format, indicating that the interview would be in three parts, and I outlined what each of those parts would be. I let informants know that I would explain the laddering exercise in greater detail when we reached that stage. I also assured informants of the anonymity of the interviews and answered any questions they might have, before asking permission to tape the proceedings. All but one of the managers agreed to the interview being taped from the very beginning. The one manager who had reservations eventually agreed to the tape player being switched on after we had talked for about ten minutes.

In the first phase of the interview I asked informants to "tell me how you got to where you are today" – effectively their career story. The purposes of this part of the interview were to uncover personal values, following Watson's argument that "for any individual to give an account of themselves and their life, they are bound to give some indication of what values they hold" (Watson, 1994: 75), and to provide a means of checking the internal consistency of the personal values uncovered later. Similarities between the personal values elicited later in the interview and those indicated by the life story would reinforce the trustworthiness of the technique, and conversely, contradictions would raise doubts. A secondary function of this part of the interview was to encourage the manager to relax by allowing him or her the freedom to talk to an attentive listener about his or her own life story, and thus creating an atmosphere that allows for introspection

(Douglas, 1985). Apart from the opening question, none of the follow-up questions were scripted, but were put in response to the subject matter that was being raised at the time. My intention was to create a situation where my questions were short and provided the opening for longer descriptions from my informant (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989). Typically, managers would give an outline of their career from which I would pick out episodes that held promise for further exploration, and so he or she would return in greater detail. My question format included many of those types suggested by Spradley (1979) for developing deeper understanding of the critical incidents in the manager's career, and what were the reasons for the courses of action taken, or attitudes held. I also attempted to use and to respond to non-verbal cues (Burley-Allen, 1995) in order to encourage responses.

After exploring the manager's career history, I turned the focus of the interview to his or her interpretation of the company's corporate values. I normally introduced the subject by asking the manager to compare the values of the organisation with other organisations he or she had worked for in the past that had been identified in the first phase. This use of the 'contrast principle' (Spradley, 1979) allowed the manager to identify the differences and provided a basis for exploration of both the values and the meanings that the manager might give them. Once the manager was engaged in talking about the corporate values, I then probed for meaning of these values by, for example, asking, in his or her opinion which values were of greatest importance and what changes of emphasis may have occurred since they joined the company. The format for this stage of the interview was purposely left relatively unstructured, and my questions were based on what the informant was describing, rather than following a prescribed pattern. I asked some managers to recount stories of values being acted out or violated, while I asked others to suggest which additional value they might introduce if they were in a position to do so. The questions varied from manager to manager, depending on their responses, with the objective of encouraging them to reveal their interpretation of their company's corporate values, while at the same time maintaining the relaxed atmosphere created in the first part of the interview.

The interviews in the initial exploratory study ended at this point, but in the main study, the third part of the interview was devoted to carrying out laddering exercises. When this stage was reached, I invited managers to 'do some ladders'. This expression was used to sustain the sense of informality built up over the first two phases. At the start of the interview, I had outlined its purpose and content, but at this stage, I explained the process of the laddering exercises in more detail. To illustrate the process, I described an example ladder that I had drawn up beforehand, so that the informants knew what to expect from the exercise, and understood their role. The format I followed was based on the original version developed by Hinkle (1965) in both the formulation of the questions and in the elicitation of bipolar constructs at every superordinate level. The difference, as explained in the previous chapter, was that I generated the first constructs from a variety of groups of elements, and not from closely related ones. I had intended to leave the choice of subject area from which to select elements with the informant, but found that the exercise flowed better if I chose the first set. This I did by relating back to the informant's account of their career history, and selecting an identifiable triad: some had worked for three or more companies in their career, others had described three different roles they had performed, and others had worked in three or more countries. Any of these provided suitable elements for eliciting a construct.

When the informant had chosen the three elements – three positions held, three companies they had worked for, or three countries they had worked in – I wrote them on a sheet of paper in full view, so he or she could follow the process. I then asked my informant to identify any way in which two of the elements were similar to each other, but different from the third. This produced a bipolar construct: 'x', as opposed to 'y'. In recording their answer, I underlined the two elements chosen as similar, and above this wrote the construct of similarity on the left hand side of the paper, and that of difference on the right. I then asked my informant to consider the elicited bipolar construct, and to indicate which of the two poles he or she preferred. I drew a vertical line on the paper from the preferred pole upwards

to indicate a move to the next level and asked the informant why she or he preferred that pole to the other. I wrote the response above the vertical line, and at the same time asked the manager to describe the opposite of that construct, normally with the question “as opposed to...?”. Thus another construct superordinate to the first was generated, and this pattern was repeated to generate another preference, another superordinate construct, and so on, until the manager was no longer able to say why he or she had a preference except in terms already elicited. This marked the completion of the ladder. For the second ladder, I typically suggested that we draw elements from some area outside the work environment such as places visited on holiday, or from non-work interests or activities, and the exercise was repeated. Elements for the third ladder varied more from manager to manager, depending on their interests, and included films seen, work colleagues, places lived, family members, and world leaders. I prepared a prompt list of elements and gave the manager the freedom to choose ones from which to ladder; this proved useful in cases where elements could not be easily sought.

After three ladders had been completed, I wrote the preferred pole of the most superordinate constructs – values – on a fresh sheet of paper and asked my informant to comment, using a very open question – “what do those look like?” After a short while probing responses to these values elicited, I asked if there was anything obviously missing. The rationale was that, after having seen those values elicited as a result of the laddering exercise, the informant would identify more easily any strongly held personal value not recorded. When such an additional value was suggested, I recorded this while probing for its meaning, if that did not seem clear. At this stage, I brought the interview to a close, often following short discussion about the exercise that we had just undertaken. My experience was that managers generally found the laddering exercise interesting, and wished to discuss the results for a few minutes.

The question of how many ladders should be completed in order that a good enough picture of a manager’s value priorities is one that was answered through a

combination of theory and pragmatism. Researchers of values at the macro level have suggested that there are a finite number of values that we can possibly hold. For example, Schwartz argues that the fifty-four value items he includes in his survey cover the expected range possible across some forty cultures (Schwartz, 1992), while Rokeach (1973) settles on thirty six, divided equally between instrumental and terminal types which, he argued, cover the full range one might expect. In each of these surveys, however, the objective has been to capture respondents' values from a range of possibilities and so the net has to be cast wide, although both agree that only a small number of the total possible will be central to the individual with the remainder being of lesser importance.

Stewart & Stewart (1981) suggest that a person holds just four to six superordinate constructs so personal that they "represent, in a sense, his God" (p. 25). This number is consistent with other studies (e.g. Reynolds & Gutman, 1988), and has logic in that the greater number of superordinate constructs, the more complex an individual's construct system would be and the more difficult he or she would find it to anticipate events. When I was developing the method for use in interviews, I attempted to make some assessment of the number of superordinate constructs, or personal values, by reaching a saturation point. A volunteer student carried out a total of twenty-two ladders over a period of five days from a wide variety of elements, and this elicited just four superordinate constructs. Furthermore, these constructs were elicited out of the first five ladders and thereafter all attempts lead to a superordinate construct already elicited. This indicates some limit in the number of personal values that an individual might hold as priorities.

Initially, my intention was to carry out four ladders with each informant, but this was reduced to three for a number of reasons. First, the time needed to carry out four put pressure on the rest of the interview; although many managers were able to extend the interview time beyond the hour to an hour and a half that was negotiated, others were not. Secondly, on those occasions where four ladders were attempted, there were signs of interviewer fatigue apparent through their inability to think of suitable elements to work with, and through outward displays

of frustration and boredom. Finally, it was found that the fourth ladder, when attempted, often resulted in a superordinate construct already elicited. It appeared that the potential advantages of getting a fourth ladder were outweighed by loss of interview time and interviewee interest. My objective in this part of the interview was to gain insight into my informants' personal value priorities, and not to obtain a full and unequivocal record, if that were possible. The combination of eliciting values with three ladders, plus giving every informant an opportunity to add to those elicited, appears to meet this objective. In Chapter Six, I discuss the findings from the laddering exercise in some detail, and report that few managers in this study were able to add more than one additional value to those revealed by the exercise. Furthermore, in most cases, there were indications of these additional values embedded in one or more of the ladders.

4.5 Data analysis

Wolcott (1995) describes the analysis of qualitative data as an art. While there are clear conventions for analysing quantitative data, there is, as Bryman & Burgess (1994) point out, "no standard approach to the analysis of qualitative data" (p. 12). Data analysis is "a process which entails an effort to formally identify themes and to construct hypotheses (ideas) as they are suggested by data and an attempt to demonstrate support for those themes and hypotheses" (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975: 79). This implies an inductive approach to data analysis whereby ideas are both formed from the data and subsequently supported or otherwise by the data. In grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the process normally involves cycles of data collection and data analysis as the ideas become more refined, although the term is often used to describe any analysis where theory emerges from data (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). I found that the process of analysing the data from this study certainly felt more like an art than a science, and that theory emerged from data through the process of iteration. Apart from one cycle of data collection and analysis, followed by further data collection and analysis, however, the emergence of ideas predominantly came from my immersion in the data, and a continuing attempt to develop ideas and support for ideas through cycles of

generation of concepts, building of typologies, and writing up of analysis reports. During the process, an overall strategy emerged which broadly followed the progression of the 'ladder of analytical abstraction' suggested by Carney (1990) reported in Miles & Huberman (1994: 91-92). Carney identifies three levels: summarising and packaging the data; repackaging and aggregating data; and developing and testing propositions to construct an explanatory framework.

4.5.1 The process of analysis

Each interview was recorded on tape and, for the main study, I had written the outcomes of the laddering exercise on sheets of paper. In addition, I had filled out an interview summary form for each of the informant and I had also made rough notes during interviews, but because of my need to listen intently to informants, I found note taking distracting and the results were of little practical use. I also wrote notes during the periods of interviews, recording my first impressions and developing ideas. These were the data with which I worked. Following the interviews, each tape was transcribed in full. I recorded significant discourse features such as short pauses (...), long pauses (... [long pause] ...), interrupted words (wor-), exclamations (!), laughter ([laughs]), and occasions when the manager refers to documents etc, ([points to photograph]). These transcripts became the primary texts on which I carried out analysis.

As a first attempt to make some sense of the data, I made synopses of a sample of the interview transcripts. I did this by reading through the transcripts while listening to the relevant tape recording, and picking out the key themes in informants' accounts of career history and of corporate value interpretation. Listening to the informant's voice at the same time as following the text in the transcript allowed me to pick out non-verbal language, pauses and the tone and tempo of the voice. This added a richness to the text and enabled a greater depth of understanding of the underlying emotions (Burley- Allen, 1995). I recorded these themes in a matrix under each of the values elicited, which I recorded as the positive end of the most superordinate construct, or the tops of the ladders. It was possible to discern differences in managers' descriptions of their corporate values

using this basic approach, but I found it difficult to see any pattern emerge from the data. Furthermore, the differences in the ladder-tops, while clear, were difficult to categorise. I attempted to arrange these ladder-tops so that differences in emphasis were aligned along a continuum, with the intention of sorting by differences in personal values, but such a reductionist approach was confused by the variation in meaning managers gave to the value words they used.

A breakthrough in the analysis came about because of my need to write up a paper for a conference for which an abstract had earlier been accepted (Bourne & Jenkins, 2001a). The abstract promised a discussion of the findings of the laddering exercises and the deadline for submission of the full text was close. In order to have something I could write up, I selected two of the interview transcripts from one of the companies studied, HITECH, which appeared to represent the extremes of differences in managers' interpretation of corporate values. By picking out the extremes, a pattern was visible, and it was possible to develop ideas concerning the relationship between the two value systems. While this was encouraging as it suggested there were patterns in the relationships, I found it difficult to identify these same patterns where the differences between managers was not so extreme.

In the next stage of analysis, I coded the interview transcripts using the computer software NVIVO (Richards, 1999). The codes were organised by the three parts of each interview, and then by identifiable categories, with all corporate value terms identified in the transcripts being coded separately (see Appendix D for an example coding sheet). The advantage of coding using NVIVO software was in its capability for searching by codes and the development of matrices comparing across the interview transcripts. The NVIVO software, however, is not ideal for analysing within-interview data as it is primarily designed for analysing across documents. I found that the software was useful for exploring categories of codes, and for drawing out those informants who had identified particular value items, but not so useful for comparing these with their own personal values.

By this stage in the analysis, it was apparent that there were patterns in the data, but it was difficult to identify the relationships. Furthermore, I repeatedly discovered that it was very difficult to communicate those patterns I thought I could read into the data to anyone else, a reminder of Wolcott's (1995) assertion that the interpretive insight of the researcher is difficult to commit to paper. The need to reduce the data for writing up purposes seemed to remove all its meaning, with the result that my confidence in the patterns I thought I was seeing began to diminish.

A further, useful, stage in the analysis came about on the day I abandoned the technology of sophisticated software, and instead picked up the scissors and tape. In turn, I displayed each corporate value item identified by informants in each of the organisations on a separate sheet of paper and stuck them on a wall. After some reflection, I organised these value terms according to broad categories of society-centred, self-centred and mode of conduct value types, following Rokeach (1973). I then refined these groupings into smaller groups and arranged them all so that the self and society centred values were separated by the mode of conduct values. I then added the initials of each manager who had cited a particular value to the appropriate piece of paper, and a pattern began to emerge: managers' initials tended to appear in just one or two of the smaller groupings. The key appeared to be the initial sorting by the corporate values cited, rather than by informant, or by their personal values. In a continuation of this wallpaper method of analysis, I tried various ways of sorting each informant by personal value priorities, but continued to encounter problems when reducing the contents of the elicited ladders to simpler forms. It was only when the entire contents of the ladders were displayed, together with any additional values provided, that it was possible to sort by value priorities.

Having developed the patterns, I then entered the third level of Carney's (1990) ladder of analytical abstraction and developed the propositions that formed from these wall displays. In this phase, I wrote up each informant as a separate case study, displaying the results of the laddering exercise in full, and extracting

excerpts from the transcripts in enough detail to retain its meaning and its context. To this I added my own comments and notes (see Appendix F for examples). At the same time, I developed matrices of the patterns of corporate value selection and personal value priorities. By combining both the rich description of the longer case synopses with the development of matrices, I found it possible to retain the patterns and their roots with the displays that communicated them in ways that could be clearly seen.

In the process of analysing the data, I attempted to follow the suggestions of those who have written on the subject (e.g. Miles & Huberman 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Wolcott, 1995). These writers each helped in some ways, but my experience suggests that it is the combination of immersing oneself in the data, trying different methods, and submitting the results to the scrutiny of others that is ultimately successful. Like Hughes (1994), I found that feedback often resulted in insights that I had not previously conceived. In retrospect, I appear to have followed a pathway similar to that suggested by Denzin (1994) in moving from field to text. In his description, the key stages are the creation of a research text, from which the researcher develops a 'working interpretive document', and from that a 'quasi-public text', that is shared with colleagues. From their feedback and further immersion in the data, a public document finally emerges (1994: 501-502). My experience appears similar to that reported by Sims (1981), who also found that the process involves a long period of immersion and considerable iteration in each of the stages along the path.

4.6 Conclusion

In Chapter Three, I developed the case for eliciting personal values by means of the laddering method, supported as a form of method triangulation by the accounts that managers' gave of their career history. I also argued that exploring the content and meaning of managers' articulation of corporate values would reveal their interpretation of these values. This provided the framework for the

operationalising this research study. In this chapter, I have described the criteria for the research design in the field and the processes of finding suitable sites and informants, of the interviews themselves and of the analysis of the resulting data in order to lay an audit trail (Perry, 1994). The results of the field work are presented in the following two chapters: in Chapter Five, I report on the findings from the initial exploratory study, and in Chapter Six I report on the findings from the two cases involved in the main study.

5 Findings from the initial exploratory study

5.1 Introduction

The initial exploratory study was carried out at Hotel and Conference Centre (HCC) at the end of 1999. Its purpose was twofold: to establish the extent to which there were differences in the ways that managers interpreted their corporate values and whether any such differences might be related to personal value differences; and to test the methods for inferring personal values of managers, and for exploring their interpretation of corporate values. At the time of the study, I was uncertain about what form differences in managers' interpretation of corporate values might take. I went into the field expecting to find that the principal differences might be concerned with managers' relative ranking of widely shared corporate values. That is, they may be consciously imposing a structure on the unstructured corporate values. It is the nature of exploratory research that initial expectations are modified after one first enters the field, and this was very much the case here: there was no consistent sense of conscious value prioritising and whenever I probed for one, informants were unable to state what that might be. Instead, there appeared to be differences in those values managers selected as HCC's corporate values, and differences in the meanings given to selected value terms. In spite of reservations about the method used to infer personal values in this initial exploratory study – manager's accounts of their own career history – where personal values were identified, these appeared to relate to the way managers interpreted corporate values.

5.2 Hotel and Conference Centre (HCC)

HCC is a medium-sized hotel and conference centre, attached to a major British university. Its purpose is a service provider, supplying accommodation, conference facilities and full catering services. The university is HCC's principal customer, but it also attracts business from regional and national organisations. It

is located on the university campus, but its buildings are separate from those of the rest of the university, and the standard of accommodation is such that it compares with four star quality hotels and conference centres. The company operates as an autonomous profit centre, with its management team responsible for its financial performance. Because the university is the principal customer as well as HCC's owner, it has priority over other customers in reserving the conference facilities, and this limits the scope for the centre to pursue other business opportunities. HCC has its own Board of Directors, and it shares its chief executive with one of the faculties within the university. The general manager sits on the Board and has overall responsibility for the routine management of HCC. The company has a hierarchical structure with senior managers reporting to the general manager, and below that, middle and first level managers. HCC aims to compete by offering a high quality hotel and conferencing service and its competitors include both academic and hotel based conference centres. Its attendant customers are, typically, executive, senior and middle managers employed by national and international organisations.

HCC uses a mission statement, which includes a statement of the roles and objectives, but does not have a stated set of corporate values. The mission statement is widely distributed and can be seen on the walls of staff areas of the complex, as well as in documents such as the business plan. Its headline statement is that the mission of HCC is "to satisfy our customers through our commitment to service, quality, and business success", which it then expands on. The major roles stated in its mission reinforce the routes to customer satisfaction, emphasising a 'high level of service', 'optimising profitability', 'seeking innovative methods' and 'creating an appropriate environment' compatible with the parent company's position as an educational establishment. The mission statement indicates that service, quality, innovation and financial success are priorities espoused by the top management.

5.2.1 Informants

Five managers agreed to be interviewed in this study. I had first contacted the general manager and in a meeting explained the purpose of the study. The general manager found volunteer interviewees on my behalf, and interviews were carried out over a period of two weeks in November and December 1999. The names of the five managers have been changed in order to protect identity, and in this study are given the alter egos of Roger Barnes, Georgina Wilton, Andrew Mitchell, David Capers and Pauline Richman. Two informants are women, one is a director, two are senior managers and two are middle managers.

5.3 Managers' interpretation of HCC corporate values

In each interview, the part devoted to the manager's interpretation of HCC's corporate values came in the second half, after a period discussing his or her career to date. I introduced the topic by making reference to the mission statement, and by asking about the values associated with it. As the discussion developed, I explored the meaning that each manager gave to the values they talked about by the use of probing questions, and by asking for illustrations of values being upheld or violated. This allowed me to build a picture of the manager's interpretation of HCC's corporate values.

5.3.1 Selection of corporate values

All managers identified 'good service' or 'quality of service' to be a key corporate value at HCC. In each of the interviews, this value was the first to be identified, suggesting it held some prominence in the minds of the informants:

"The values are the customer comes first, good service, and done as profitably as it can be." (Roger Barnes)

"When my husband and I started our business, we were emphatic that it had to be quality of service and quality of product, so it's rather nice to work in an organisation that has the same aim, and to know that we are achieving that here as well." (Georgina Wilton)

“I very much foster the fact that the team are here to ... as I say, provide a service, and the service comes first – we are designed to provide a service.”
(Andrew Mitchell)

“The main focus is on the customer, and what the customer wants, and the service, and the [company] name, basically and everything that is done is tied in with that. The customer gets what they want – obviously within reason.” (David Capers)

“It is good service that everybody gets, it is a good standard, and it's a case of keeping and still trying to improve it, where you can find things to improve.”
(Pauline Richman)

Good service, or quality of service was readily identified by each of the managers, but thereafter there was no such common agreement on any other values. Three talked about the value ‘openness’, three about ‘customer focus’ and a different three about ‘friendliness’. There were several values that were identified by two of the five managers interviewed, including ‘teamwork’ and ‘care of staff’, identified by Roger Barnes and Pauline Richman, and ‘exceeding expectations’ and ‘professionalism’, both identified by Andrew Mitchell and Georgina Wilton. Two of the managers identified corporate values that were not cited by any other. David Capers, for example, included security in his set, and made much of the value which he described as “you are left to build yourself”, indicating personal responsibility: “it can be very good for an individual with discipline who wants to build and move on and progress”. Andrew Mitchell, on the other hand, identified ‘stability’, ‘confidence’ and ‘balance’ as corporate values at HCC. A summary of the headline values identified by each of those interviewed is displayed in Table 5.1, and shows that there appear to be differences in those values selected. Managers identified a total of thirteen corporate values at HCC, with each individual manager identifying between four and eight values. Except for the corporate value of ‘service quality’, none were selected by all five managers, and at the same time, four were selected by only one manager. This suggests that

managers may be selective in the values they identify with, or alternatively, that managers attribute a similar meaning to the corporate values, but use different terms to mean the same thing. As this was an exploratory study, and the number of managers interviewed was relatively small, it is not possible to come to a confident conclusion about which of these alternatives offers the better explanation. The findings do appear, however, to suggest some degree of difference in these managers' interpretation of the corporate values at HCC.

	Pauline	Roger	Andrew	David	Georgina
Teamwork	✖	✖			
Care of staff	✖	✖			
Friendliness	✖		✖		✖
Openness		✖	✖	✖	
Balance			✖		
Security				✖	
Stability			✖		
Customer focus	✖	✖		✖	
Service Quality	✖	✖	✖	✖	✖
Exceeding expectations			✖		✖
Responsibility				✖	
Confidence			✖		
Professionalism			✖		✖

Table 5.1: HCC corporate values coded by informant

5.3.2 Giving meaning to corporate values

There were some examples of managers using similar terms to describe a corporate value, but attributing different meanings to it. Andrew, David and Roger identified the values of 'openness' or 'open culture', but described them in significantly different ways:

“It’s a very open culture as well – you don’t necessarily have somebody jumping down your neck every day, down your throat every day, banging you on the head for a report or something – it tends to be in your court, kind of thing.” (David Capers)

“I’m sort of fairly open, I am a fairly sort of honest, I think, kind of person in terms of what I say to people is normally what I mean and I think in that respect that’s true of this organisation.” (Andrew Marshall)

“I think [the company] has a very, very open style of management and that comes from the [parent], and here’s a very open style of management, and that definitely comes from the [parent], the fact that it is so open, and I think that ... as I said to you, I won’t – I wouldn’t say anything to you that I wouldn’t say to [the GM], and I know that I can go and sit in front of him and say whatever I want to say and we’ll discuss it, and come to some sort of resolution about it. It won’t affect – there aren’t any personality things – it’s about making decisions for the good of the business and the good of the people working in it.” (Roger Barnes)

To David, the concept of an “open culture” is one where the individual manager has a high degree of autonomy and is left to get on with the job as she or he sees fit. Andrew, however, qualifies “fairly open ... fairly honest” by stating that “what I say is normally what I mean”, attributing this value, with this meaning, to both himself and the company. Meanwhile Roger sees openness as a state of affairs where there are no secrets and where decisions are made “for the good of the business” and not for personal gain.

Even the widely shared values of service quality and customer focus appeared to have variation in their meaning, or implications. Roger and Pauline saw these values very much in terms of the customer; Roger described the company’s customer focus as “we hate saying ‘no’”, while Pauline argued that “you want people to happy while they are here”. For Georgina, the concept appeared to have a more personally challenging feel about it: “everybody gets a kick out of feeling that we’ve done something where a delegate has had his expectations exceeded”. This viewpoint was also reflected in David’s description of a new service quality initiative in terms that suggested that the purpose of the value was to give staff something to aim for, rather than simply to please customers:

“But, from our point of view, it wasn’t very satisfying for the customer, because we knew we could produce a better concept or a better meal for them. But for us

to actually get that across, because we'd be offering a better service all round – better food to the delegates – but obviously we'd be taking away the convenience side of it. [...] From the chef's point of view, actually creating this, this work of art that comes out on the plate, it – the morale in there is lot higher now and it's the whole thing has improved 110%. Obviously there's a few teething problems with it, and a few adverse comments about it and some negativity floating around the place. [...] If you're taking away that freedom of dining and you are making it more structured, and effectively you are turning it into a longer service, there's a few people that basically waited for us to slip up, and as soon we did, out comes the beating stick ... [laughs] ... well, it's not that bad, but you know, yeah?”

These differences in meaning shown here are subtle and might not appear to be of great significance: managers may simply express themselves in different ways (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000). When taken with the differences in those value terms selected by each of the managers, however, a pattern begins to emerge that suggests continuity within each manager's selection of corporate values and the particular meaning given to value terms. Both Roger and Pauline selected corporate values that tended to reflect a care for customer and staff, and which conform to what Rokeach (1973) describes as 'society-centred' values, and Schwartz (1992) describes as 'self-transcendent' values. David and Georgina, however, selected corporate values, or interpreted their meaning in a way that emphasises the 'self-centred' or 'self-enhancing' type of values. Andrew Marshall identified the fullest range of corporate values and they seemed to include three groups: friendliness and openness seem to fall into a society-centred type; service quality, exceeding expectations, confidence and professionalism are more self-enhancing type values; and balance and stability fall somewhere in between.

5.4 HCC managers' personal values

In the previous chapter, I explained that the eventual method for eliciting personal values, laddering, was developed following this initial exploratory study. I had originally set out to identify managers' personal values by investigating the

accounts given of each manager's career history, their reasons for making career moves, their ambitions, and their reactions to events that were reported during the interview (Watson, 1994). This study showed that the method of inferring values from such accounts is not reliable enough in an interview situation of limited length to obtain consistently trustworthy results. Nevertheless, it did reveal something about the managers' personal values which, if not as clear as the outcomes of the laddering method, provide enough data to identify the general domains in which each of the managers' values lie. Furthermore, my confidence in the ability of this method to reveal personal values increased after the second and third case interviews had been completed as they indicated that values elicited by the laddering method were often reflected in managers' narratives of their careers.

Table 5.2 sets out excerpts from each interview that are indicative of managers' personal values. It can be seen that Andrew appears to value harmony and balance, while finding public failure "difficult to swallow". These evaluative terms are consistent with Schwartz's (1992) *security* ('safety, harmony and stability of society, of relationships and of self') and *conformity* ('restraint of actions ... likely to upset others and violate social expectations or norms') value types (see Appendix G for descriptions of value types). His claim to like an open type culture is couched in terms that suggest a degree of conflict between the values of openness and honesty and his actual preferences, and his qualification of "what I say ... is normally what I mean" is suggestive of restraint of actions likely to upset others.

David Capers indicates that he likes putting himself into situations where he can succeed, but tempers this with avoiding failure, and his preference for security together suggest that his values lie across the Schwartz domains of *achievement*, *power* and *security*.

Andrew Marshall

“I think that is a problem for me personally as a manager, although everything is in harmony, there's this sort of ... sometimes I think well, just a minute here, what about you – you've forgotten to take time for yourself.”

“I find it very hard, especially if it's a very public failure – you know, that's difficult for me to swallow, as an individual”

“I suppose I'm a bit British in that respect – you think if I'm doing a good job, people will just know it, and they can see it”.

“I want to be proud about it, but also you ... you sort of feel ... well, it's this blowing your own trumpet thing, within the organisation. It's getting the balance right because, of course, there are other issues as well”

David Capers

“I deliberately put myself into the kitchen to see how I would cope [then] ... I moved myself back into the front of house and started a career progression [...]. Then I moved up to [the area], and worked my way up there and ended up as restaurant manager for a year, so ... then transferred over here, wanting to grow further until I had more progressed further.”

“My philosophy is that you just work, and do as best as you can, every day - treat every day as it comes, and yeah, sure, I've got objectives and ideas and thoughts of where I'd like to be, and obviously the quicker I get there the better for me, but I don't want to set myself that target and not get there.”

“I suppose that's been the hardest to learn and to ... and the most exciting one as well, actually - dealing with the political side [...] so, it's more of a challenge.”

“When I say the comfort [it is] just the whole security of knowing that you're in a large organisation, and everybody is focused on the same thing.”

Georgina Wilton

“You can anticipate, and the anticipation is the key in this business – anticipating the problems that aren't going to happen [] you anticipate them so they don't happen because you've anticipated them.”

“There's a lot of satisfaction in working for a company that you know is good – in fact, better than good.”

“I'm actually very lucky working here because [the GM] lets me get on with my own thing most of the time, so I make quite a lot of the decisions, which I like.”

“I think everybody gets a great kick out of feeling that we've done something where a delegate has had his expectations exceeded, and I think that is good because it makes everybody strive to be that much better”

Roger Barnes

You don't get profit at the expense of people”

“I like my team to work as a team, I'm part of the team.”

“If I felt I was doing the same thing all the time and there was no progression, nothing new to get your teeth into, I wouldn't be very happy, I would be looking for new challenges.”

“I'm going to be ... you know, my neighbours and things like that, I try and help them – I've got a ninety year old chap who lives next door to me and I like to say “hello, everything all right?”, and hope that if he had a problem he'd come and knock on the door. Yeah, I hope that that's the case, I like to think that's the way it goes, anyway.”

Pauline Richman

“To me, they are very important. If my staff aren't happy then they aren't going to do a good job. So, you've got to make sure that they are happy, and if you are wandering around with a long face and you're shouting at them to do things, that's not going to work.”

“I think [my staff] are a very important part of my department, very important. So I try and look after them, mother them!”

Table 5.2: Evaluative statements indicative of managers' personal values

Georgina Wilton also appears to be more concerned with those values that are consistent with Schwartz's *achievement* value type ('personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards'). Her pleasure in anticipating problems, her preference for working for a company that is "better than good", her liking for making decisions and her approval for striving all indicate an orientation toward the achieving self, rather than the pleasure seeking self.

Both Roger Barnes and Pauline Richman appeared to have value preferences centred on the welfare of others, which Schwartz terms *benevolence* (preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact). Roger made frequent references to his preference for working as a team, of helping others, while Pauline likes to make sure her staff are happy and admits to "mothering" them. In addition, Roger also talked about his preference for "new challenges", which may conform to Schwartz's *stimulation* domain, or to an *achievement* domain.

Overall, it appears that there are differences in the personal value priorities of the managers interviewed at HCC. It must be remembered that these are the priorities that I have interpreted, and they were not confirmed by repeating them back to the managers involved in the interview, so may need to be treated with some caution. At the same time, however, it would be difficult to conclude that these managers had personal values that matched one another and so, regardless of the extent to which their personal value preferences have been correctly and unequivocally identified, it can be concluded that there are differences.

5.5 Relationship between personal and corporate values

In the preceding sections, I have indicated that there appears to be differences in HCC managers' interpretations of their organisations corporate values, both in terms of those that each manager selects and in terms of the meaning that the

values mean for each manager. I have also indicated that there are differences in the personal values of the managers interviewed, inasmuch as the method used in this initial exploratory study has satisfactorily identified their general value orientation. When put together, it seems that the personal value orientation of individual managers is closely related to the particular way that they interpret HCC's corporate values.

	Personal values	Corporate values selected
Andrew	Harmony, avoidance of public failure, modesty, balance.	Friendly, Open, Balance, Stability, Service quality, Exceeding expectations, Confidence, Professionalism
Georgina	Anticipation, better than good, autonomy, strive.	Friendly, Service quality, Exceeding expectations, professional
David	Progression, challenge, security.	Openness, Security, Customer focus, Service quality, Responsibility
Roger	People, team, challenges, helping others.	Teamwork, Care of staff, Openness, Customer focus, Service quality
Pauline	Make others happy, mother them.	Teamwork, Care of staff, Friendly, Customer focus, Service quality

Table 5.3: Comparison of personal values and selection of corporate values, HCC

The summaries set out in Table 5.3 show that it is particularly those corporate values that few, if any, other managers also identified which appear most indicative of a relationship between personal values and interpretation of corporate values. Thus, for example, Andrew holds the personal values of harmony and balance, and balance appears as a corporate value that he identifies, David holds the value security and identifies it as a corporate value, and Georgina holds the values of anticipation and striving, and identifies the corporate value of exceeding expectations.

In addition to specific values being identified as both personal and in the managers' list of corporate values, the overall orientation also appears to match. Roger and Pauline both have personal values that Rokeach (1973) describes as 'society centred', and the corporate values that they cite can be categorised in the

same way. Meanwhile, the emphasis on Georgina and David's personal values is rather more 'self' centred, and the corporate values they both select are likewise more self-centred. Andrew's values and those he identifies HCC as holding are both oriented to what Schwartz (1992) labels 'security' and 'conformity' types.

Earlier, I illustrated the differences that managers gave to the meaning of corporate value terms (see section 5.3.2 above), and it would appear that there is also a relationship between a manager's meaning given to a value term, and his or her personal values. For example, David Caper's definition of HCC's 'open culture' as one with a high degree of autonomy can be related to his personal values of progression and challenge, although not to security. Meanwhile Roger Barnes' interpretation of 'openness' as a state of affairs where there are no secrets fits well with his personal values of people, the team, and helping others.

5.6 Conclusion

The findings of this initial exploratory study appear to indicate that there are differences in the way managers interpret corporate values; they appear to select different values, and they appear to attribute somewhat different meanings to many of the values they do identify. Furthermore, there are indications that those values they select, and the meanings given to them, are consistent with their own value priorities. This suggests that managers make sense of the corporate values of their organisation through the filter of their own personal values. At this stage, however, these findings are, at best, tentative: the method used to identify personal values is not reliable enough in an interview situation of limited length to obtain consistently trustworthy results. While encouraging, it was clear at the end of this initial exploratory study that I needed to be able to identify personal values more reliably. This requirement resulted in my developing the laddering method, which became an important part of the research design for the two case studies in the main study.

6 Findings from the main study

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I described the findings from the initial exploratory study and indicated that I thought that, as a consequence of the method used to infer managers' personal values, the conclusions are necessarily somewhat tentative. In this chapter, I outline the findings of the main study, the overall objective of which is to explore the relationship between managers' interpretation of their organisation's corporate values, and their own personal value priorities.

The main study involves two cases, companies here named FMCG and HITECH, and twenty-two interviews with senior managers and directors. As explained in chapter four, the cases facilitate (Stake, 1994) the study of a number of senior managers around a single set of corporate values, and the focus of the study is the manager. Each interview was made up of three parts: an account of the manager's career history; an exploration of the manager's interpretation of corporate values; and the laddering exercise, which involved the manager carrying out three 'ladders' and reflecting on the results, adding further values if identified. The outcome of each interview is a rich mixture of 'values-with-interpretations' that I have analysed at both the intra-manager and the inter-manager levels. Furthermore, the analysis involves the establishing of the trustworthiness of the laddering method by comparing its outcomes with each manager's career history, and then comparing these with the each manager's interpretation of corporate values. This results in a complex set of findings to be described in this chapter, and finding a way to present these in a clear and coherent way has been a challenging task.

I have divided the chapter into five sections, each of which builds upon the earlier section. I first give a brief account of the two organisations, together with some details of the manager-informants involved in the study in order to provide background to the findings. The second section is devoted to the results of the

laddering method as a means of eliciting personal values. The method was adapted so that it might be used in a single interview that also covers other topics, and as such, represents a novel approach to management research. It is important, therefore, that findings on both process and outcomes are reported, and here I consider the managers' experiences, their responses to the laddering outcomes, and the resulting 'map' of their personal values. In this section, I also compare the personal values elicited by the laddering method with those inferred in the career histories of managers from both the organisations studied. The findings here are that the values elicited and inferred tend to corroborate each other.

In the next two sections, I take each of the organisations, FMCG and HITECH, and consider managers' interpretations of their corporate values. In each section, I first describe briefly the history of the organisation's corporate values development, and then consider how managers interpret them, and the relationship between these interpretations and managers' personal value priorities. The format is somewhat different for each case, as a result of differences in their nature. For FMCG, which had recently introduced a new corporate values statement based around four 'guiding principles', the attention given to these new values were such that managers readily identified them as a coherent group: differences were more apparent in the meaning given to the value terms, and to their relationship with previous corporate values statements. Conversely, at HITECH, the values statement has a long history, but was known by a collective phrase. Differences between managers were more concerned with their selection of individual value items that they identified as corporate values. In the final section, I consider examples in managers' accounts of their career histories across all the case studies where there was a clear conflict between their personal values and the corporate values of the organisation they worked in, and describe managers reactions to such conflict of values.

Because of my wish to preserve both company and informant anonymity, names have been changed and references to readily identifiable places or people disguised or deleted from transcript excerpts. Removing the obvious signs of

identification allows me to give otherwise verbatim extracts of manager-informant interviews, and to display the results of the laddering exercises.

6.2 Background to organisations and informants

Both the organisations involved in the study are large, multinational commercial companies, here named FMCG and HITECH. While each employs a similar number of staff, the two companies differ in important ways that make them suitable for the purpose of this study. FMCG has a long history as a company, yet has only recently turned its attention to its corporate values, and its current corporate values statement was just two years old at the time of the interviews. HITECH, on the other hand, has had a corporate values statement for some fifty years, one that was introduced by the company's founders and which has formed a central part of the identity of the organisation. All eight informants in FMCG are senior managers working in the company's head office, and across six key departments. Conversely, the informants in HITECH came from two divisions of the company, and while they are all senior managers, they are not based in the head office. Eight of the fourteen senior managers involved in the study came from the research and development division, while the remaining six represent four departments in the commercial division. These contrasts provide the basis for comparing findings against different criteria, including the status of the corporate values, informant diversity and informant similarity.

6.2.1 FMCG informants

FMCG is a multinational company operating across the globe, employing over 50,000 people with a turnover exceeding £20bn. The company was formed shortly after the start of the last century as joint venture between two dominant companies in its industry. Following the break-up of one of the parents, FMCG became a separate listed company some ten years after its formation, and has grown to its present size through both acquisition and organic growth. The company is involved in the processing and marketing of fast moving consumer goods and is a market leader in its field. Although the company operates across

the world, and has an increasingly multinational management, its origins were distinctly British in nature. The corporate headquarters of FMCG is in London. The organisational structure at both headquarters and in the regions is hierarchical, but operational authority is largely delegated to the regions. Staff from headquarter functional divisions, such as marketing and finance, have to negotiate with regional managing directors over strategic initiatives. Over the past two decades, FMCG has worked to shake off its traditional image and now claims a more international, less British-centric culture. There were, at the time of interview, over thirty-five nationalities represented in the corporate headquarters building, and three represented in the sample of informants.

The managers who took part in the study were all based at the corporate headquarters at the time, although most had spent some part of their career at FMCG in divisions around the world. All were senior managers. Two were directors: one sat on the operating board; while the other was a director of a joint venture organisation recently set up in conjunction with a consultancy firm. The remaining six informants were all senior managers, reporting either to members of main board or to the head of their functional area. Six functional areas were represented across the eight manager-informants: finance, marketing, human resource management, operations, information technology and corporate relations. Two of the informants were female, which, on the basis of the opinion of one of the female informants, suggests a disproportionate number of women managers in the sample at this level of seniority. The oldest informant was fifty-seven years old, and the youngest thirty-seven. The average age across all eight informants was a little over forty-five, and the average length of service with FMCG was just under fourteen years, giving an average starting age of thirty-one. Three had worked with the company for more than twenty years, and three had worked there for less than ten.

6.2.2 HITECH informants

HITECH is a large hi-tech company with origins in the USA, but now operating as a global organisation, employing over 50,000 people. It was formed over fifty

years ago in California, where it has its corporate headquarters, and has expanded to becoming a leader in several information technology markets. The company has evolved from its origins as an inventor and manufacturer of technical equipment to its current position as a leading high-tech company, offering hardware, software and integrated business systems. The research-based origins of the company are still apparent today, as the research and development division holds special status within the company, and while efforts have been made to broaden the competency base of HITECH, it remains essentially a new product development organisation. The company's origins on the west coast of America, and the particular style of its founders have left a strong impression on the company culture. There is an evident democratic feel in the physical symbols of the company: offices are open-plan, staff dress casually and communicate informally.

The managers taking part in the study were based at two sites: six managers were based at the company's UK commercial operation; and eight managers were based at the company's research and development division. Both sites are located in the south of England. The commercial operation has parts that are subsidiary to HITECH's European division, and others that are directly responsible to corporate headquarters. The research and development division is directly responsible to corporate headquarters. Of the six managers based at the commercial operation, three were regional operating board directors, and one global board director. The remaining two were senior managers, reporting directly to European regional directors. Four functional areas were represented: finance, human resource management, marketing, and support services. In contrast to this, all eight managers interviewed at the research and development division worked in the same one of two departments. Of the eight, all were senior managers, with two reporting directly to the R&D director and the remaining six reporting to one of two departmental managers. All but two of the informants at HITECH were male, with one female informant coming from each of the sites. The oldest informant, across the two sites was fifty-one years old, and the youngest thirty-one, with an average age of just over forty-one. The average length of service was just over

thirteen years, giving an average starting age of twenty-eight. Two informants had been with HITECH for over twenty years, while three had been there for less than five years.

Across the two companies, there is a spread of senior managers and directors representing a number of functions and a wide range of length of service. The spread of functions represented, together with the group from one department allows for comparison both across functions and within one: subculture effect is a possible explanation of the research findings. The most notable weakness in the overall sample is a lack of female representation, and this appears to be a function of the level of seniority of the sample.

6.3 Laddering to personal values

In chapter three, I outlined the way that I have adapted the laddering method for use in this study. This involved separating the laddering exercises from any repertory or implication grid exercise, and using diverse elements to elicit bipolar constructs. The adaptation allowed me to use the method during the course of a single interview that also covered managers' career histories and their interpretation of corporate values. The use of diverse elements to generate constructs from which to ladder represented a change in normal protocol reported in the management literature (e.g. Eden et al, 1979; Gutman, 1982), although it is not unusual in psychotherapy research (e.g. Wright 1970; Butt, 1995). The process and outcomes of the laddering method as used in this study are therefore of interest in their own right and I devote this section to reporting the findings from managers across both the organisations studied.

I first describe the process and managers' reactions to it, and to seeing their personal values being elicited and exposed in this way. Following this, I explain the resulting ladder 'map' and discuss the extent to which it gives the researcher insight into the value-priorities of informants. I then consider the relationship between the personal value elicited by the laddering method and those that can be

inferred in managers accounts of their own career histories. Finally, I draw the section to a close with a brief discussion of the trustworthiness of the technique in eliciting personal values during the course of a single interview.

6.3.1 The Laddering experience

As I outlined in chapter four, the laddering exercise came at the end of the interviews carried out in the two companies involved in the main study. In the first part of the interview, I asked the managers to give an account of their career to date, to tell me ‘how they got to where they are today’, and after probing this for approximately the first third of the interview, I then explored their interpretations of their company’s corporate values. The laddering exercise followed this phase, by which time I hoped my informants were reasonably relaxed and confident, and not too wary of me. When the time came for the exercise, I introduced it in a way designed to maintain the relaxed atmosphere, by asking, for example: “shall we try some ladders now?” My intention was to carry out three laddering exercises with each informant, and, in spite of many interviews overrunning their allotted time, all twenty-two managers across the two companies were able to complete three ladders successfully.

An example of the process of a laddering exercise is given in Figure 6.1. This was the first of three carried out with Cathy Richards from HITECH, and it shows how quickly it is possible to go from three elements to a personal value. In most cases, my informants were able to follow the path in a similar fashion, and I was able to maintain the conversational style indicated. Some informants were very clear and concise about their preferences, answering with one-word replies and perhaps a sentence or two of clarification. Conversely, a few found it very difficult to isolate the reasons for a preference and tended to ramble and, in such cases, it was necessary to gently prompt the informant to keep focussed. The average number of ‘rungs’ on the ladder – bipolar constructs elicited – was just under four, and all fell into the range of three to five.

[In this ladder, the original elements were three projects the informant had been involved with]

OK, can you tell me in any way which two are similar, and different to the third?

These two are more people oriented – they demand that you take people into account.

So, people oriented, versus – the other one is?

I was going to say ‘abstract’, but that’s not what I mean. It’s ‘impersonal’.

OK, so that generates a construct. So, my next question, then, is do you have a preference for one over the other?

Yes, so that will be people oriented.

Why do you prefer people oriented?

Aah! Oh, gosh, there are so many reasons for that – variety, a sense of wanting things to make a difference, to have an effect in the real world, which is something that – I am not the kind of person who could sit and be a librarian, you know, one of those terribly academic librarians who patiently sort through lots of very abstract – I mean I want to research but that would drive me absolutely nuts, so it has got to have some kind of connection to the real world, grounded.

I think we’ve got lots here! I’d like you to go for one of them that feels right for you, and bear in mind that it’s ‘people oriented’ versus ‘impersonal’ and why you prefer the people oriented ... if in doubt, just go for one.

I can’t think! ... I like the social, and...

Yeah, I mean is it that you prefer working with people? Or is ...

No, it’s more than that, because I worked with people when I was working with [a project]. It’s something about seeing the ideas make a difference...

OK, seeing the ideas make a difference, as opposed to ... ?

I suppose in this context, it would be research for research’s sake.

OK, so can you tell me why you prefer seeing ideas make a difference, over research for research’s sake?

Hmm. That’s quite a deep value thing. That’s about wanting to make the world a better place.

I didn’t say that it would be about shallow values! The idea was to get...

No, I was thinking that was getting very fundamental.

Wanting to make the world a better place?

Of course, this is very interesting because many people who do abstract research do it because they think it is going to improve the world.

Yeah, as opposed to?

Well, the opposite is ... OK, put it as indifference, because that is not as strong as ... well, nobody would...

No, it is the opposite of how you construct it; it doesn’t have to be the antonym, as it were. OK, can you tell me why you want to make the world a better place?

[Laughs] I mean that’s just so ... it’s so deeply ingrained, I can’t imagine not wanting to, so...

That just is ‘because it is’?

Yeah, absolutely.

OK. That’s a very – that’s a ladder done.

Figure 6.1 Transcript of a laddering exercise with Cathy Richards (HITECH)

The number of rungs elicited is consistent with those illustrated in papers by Wright (1970) and Neimeyer (1993) and with those reported by Bannister & Mair (1968). On occasion the ladder got stuck into a circular loop whereby the reason for a preference was answered in terms of the subordinate construct that gave rise to that preference, a phenomenon reported by Butt (1995). I found that this normally meant that the construct elicited first was actually the more superordinate and that by focusing on that, I was able to break out of the loop. On a number of occasions, a manager would offer two different constructs to the same three elements, or two different superordinate constructs to a subordinate one, and if time was pressing and the two constructs seemed sufficiently different, we split the ladders at this level. This meant that the same three elements produced two ladders, each arriving at different superordinate constructs.

After three ladders had been completed, I wrote the positive end of each of the ladder tops – elicited personal values – on a separate sheet of paper and showed them to the manager to obtain his or her immediate response. The reason for doing this was twofold. First, it enabled me to get immediate feedback from the manager concerning the values we had just elicited, providing an opportunity for the manager to agree or disagree with the results of the exercise. Secondly, by highlighting the values elicited, any value the manager considered himself or herself holding with a similar level of importance, but not elicited, might become more apparent. The two questions I asked at this point were: “what do those look like to you?”; and then, “is there any value important to you that is obviously missing?” Many of the managers were able to find one or more values to add to those elicited, although in many cases these extra values had already appeared as a subordinate construct in one of the ladders.

Every manager interviewed recognised at least some of themselves in the ladder tops elicited, as can be seen by their responses listed in Table 6.1. Most thought that the exercise had elicited something about themselves that was close to their very being, including the one who could see that the values were those of somebody “who’s pretty self-obsessed”, although two saw them as being more

aspirational than actual. Two were noticeably cautious about the extent to which the values elicited were more than a narrow picture, but did not deny their existence. One appeared to be rather disappointed, as he thought they identified him as a ‘Driver’, according a type of psychometric test and while he had been identified as such some time ago, he thought he had changed. Even this manager, however, later said he found it a “fascinating” exercise. Overall, the reaction was very positive, and most appeared impressed by the effectiveness of the laddering exercises in accessing deeply held values.

“I’d say that’s pretty fair” (Linda Miller, FMCG)	“That looks like me, yeah – strange, isn’t it?” (Susan Marsh, HITECH)
“If you talked to my peers, I don’t think they’d be surprised at all” (Sarah Kennedy, FMCG)	“Yeah. It is me, definitely, but it is aspirational, unfortunately.” (Ben Harrison, HITECH)
“I would say that describes me... that’s good” (David Verkaik, FMCG)	“They feel pretty good to me, actually” (Graham Peterson, HITECH)
“Yes, I think that’s me” (Richard Cooper, FMCG)	“Yes, I recognise that” (Chris Bickell, HITECH)
“It’s a reflection of some of the things I would find interesting” (Charles Knight, FMCG)	“Yes, that applies to me” (John Roberts, HITECH)
“Somebody who’s really content – yes, that’s me” (Stewart Hinds, FMCG)	“Perhaps its what I aspire to, rather than actually what I am like” (Tim Kelly, HITECH)
“Somebody who’s pretty self-obsessed!” (Andy Britten, FMCG)	“Interesting, yes...” (Brian Connell, HITECH)
“Yes, I think I recognise that” (Colin Cook, FMCG)	“It looks like me” (Chris Maume, HITECH)
“That’s very me! They are very core values” (Cathy Richards, HITECH)	“Well, as a biased a set of views, given that I am telling my own story, I think they are probably reasonable” (Robert Osborne, HITECH)
“Great! I’d say that describes me, describes three really key areas that are important to me; that’s good.” (Peter Hughes, HITECH)	“Yeah, I mean, I am happy to go for that” (Bernard Nixon, HITECH)
“Umm ... it looks like from that as if I am a Driver” (Phil Reeves, HITECH)	“Well, it looks like me. Yeah, I think it does” (Calum Phillips (HITECH)

Table 6.1: Managers' reactions to the outcomes of the laddering exercises

A theme running through many of the managers’ responses to seeing their own value priorities emerge is that of a sense of revelation. Several managers expressed surprise that something as apparently benign as a construct arising out of positions held, or places visited on holiday, could so quickly ladder up to a

personal value. It seemed that the superordinate constructs emerged through the dialogue in a way that was a little disarming and for this reason, the resulting values appear to be a more accurate reflection of that which my informants actually held as important than would have been the case had I simply asked them to tell me their values. A number of informants said they found they had revealed more about themselves than they would normally feel comfortable doing. Although none expressed any particular regret about this, it did highlight the potential that the laddering method has for accessing that part of a person that Hinkle (1965) described as “their most fundamental commitments in their present life” (p. 34).

6.3.2 The ladder ‘map’

The outcome of the laddering exercise is the three ‘ladders’, together with any additional value that the informant thought was obviously missing. In many cases, any additional value had already been revealed in one of the ladders as subordinate to another value. Few managers added more than one additional value, in spite of my probing, and this was the case with the manager who felt the exercise revealed ‘some of the things I would find interesting’; he was only able to offer one more value. This does not necessarily prove the efficacy of the laddering method; he may have found it difficult to respond to the direct question, as Smith (1949) and Scott (1959) describe. On other occasions, there was a suspicion that the additional value might have been suggested in order to present a more acceptable picture of the manager concerned. This might have been the case, for example, with the manager who thought the ladders revealed somebody who was “pretty self-obsessed”, who then added a society-centred value to the self-centred values the exercise had elicited. Overall, however, the responses from the managers themselves, and the consistency in most ladders, together with any additional values, suggest that the method does reveal some part of their personal value system.

An example of a completed laddering exercise, with an additional value, is given in Figure 6.2. I have attempted to represent the ladders in such a way that they

can be followed from element to superordinate construct. This map is of the type described by Huff (1990) as those “that show dimensions of categories and hierarchies among concepts” (p. 21). The diagrams used to display ladders should be read bottom-up, starting at the left-hand column. In each display, the preferred construct is placed on the left, and its opposite on the right. An arrow denotes the move to a superordinate construct and the preferred end from which the next level originated. In the final column, I record any additional values in the response to the question “is anything missing?”, as described above. I did not specifically ask for the opposite to the additional value, so only the preferred pole is recorded here. I have indicated by footnote in the figure those situations where more than one ladder was followed from a single set of elements, or when a ladder ‘split’ at a superordinate level.

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Collective	Individual	Peace	Struggle	Stimulation	Repetition	Honesty	
↑		↑		↑			
Strong family bond	Disintegration	Relaxed	Aggressive	Change	Status quo		
↑		↑		↑			
Less materialistic	More materialistic	Holistic thinking	Impulsive	Ingenious	Conformity		
↑		↑		↑			
Developing	Developed	Reflective	Highly strung	Fantastic visual effects	Poor visual effects		
Constructs elicited from countries worked		Constructs elicited from work colleagues		Constructs elicited from films seen		Additional Values	
1 st Ladder		2 nd Ladder		3 rd Ladder			

Figure 6.2: Completed ladders with additional value for David Verkaik (FMCG)

Three completed ladders and any additional value are not intended to represent the informant’s personal value system in its entirety – if that is possible to do – but it does appear to reveal enough about the value priorities of individuals for some conclusions to be drawn. In the example above, the laddering exercise reveals David to value the ‘collective’ over the ‘individual’, ‘peace’ over ‘struggle’, ‘stimulation’ over ‘repetition’, and ‘honesty’. The subordinate constructs within the display suggest a dislike of conformity, of materialism and of aggression, and

a preference for the family bond, holistic thinking and ingenuity. In the terms Rokeach (1973) uses, David could be described as having society-centred value priorities, and in Schwartz's (1992) descriptions of value types, his values appear to lie across 'self-transcendence' and 'openness to change'. The value of honesty, and the subordinate construct of a strong family bond over disintegration are suggestive of a strong moral sense. The picture is one of a value-system, or a part of a value system, rather than a random array of single values. There is an apparent coherence across the ladders that allows the overall 'map' to be related to theoretical groupings such as that of Rokeach (1973) or Schwartz (1992).

6.3.3 The meaning of value terms

Survey methods assume that personal values terms are both universally recognised and have common meaning. One feature of the laddering method, when followed as Hinkle intended, is that both ends of bipolar constructs at every level of ordination are elicited, so that it reveals both the term the informant uses to describe a personal value, and its opposite. This provides the researcher with a richer picture of the value term than can be obtained by survey methods, or by Gutman's (1982) version of laddering, which only records the preferred pole. It is illuminating to discover what the value is *not*, as well as what it is, as this can convey a greater depth of meaning than is revealed from study of solely the positive end of the construct.

Two of the most frequently elicited values were those that might be categorised as 'achievement', with eight occurrences, and 'stimulation', with fourteen. It is not surprising to find the value achievement, in that most of them had reached director or senior management level at the time of interview, and had a track record of achievement. It also conforms to a number of quantitative studies of the personal values of managers where these types of values were found to be dominant (Oliver, 1999; Posner & Schmidt, 1984; Posner & Schmidt, 1992). 'Achievement' is often associated with the notions of success, triumph or accomplishment and it has, commonly, the antonym 'failure'. Most managers who held achievement-type values in this study did not construe the opposite of

achievement as ‘failure’, but as something rather more concerned with purposelessness:

“Busy, but not achieving” (Susan Marsh, HITECH)

“Not making a difference” (Tim Kelly, HITECH)

“Impotence” (Stewart Hinds, FMCG)

“Fuzzy” (Charles Knight, FMCG)

“Being an administrator” (Richard Cooper, FMCG)

Only two of the eight ladders that elicited ‘achievement’ had the opposite pole of ‘failure’. Almost all of those that elicited ‘stimulation’, on the other hand, together with those that elicited ‘challenge’ had an opposite pole that stated or implied ‘boredom’ (other terms included ‘formulaic’, ‘handle-grinding’, ‘ordinary’ and ‘repetition’). Taken together with those opposite poles to ‘achievement’ listed above, this suggests that a common value amongst the managers interviewed across both companies might be best described as ‘avoidance of boredom’. The similarity of meaning in these three value terms is unlikely to have been identified in any method that did not find out their opposites, as subjectively construed by the informants. In every ladder, the opposite pole of the elicited value preference provides a check on the meaning and helps the researcher interpret the language of the informant.

6.3.4 Personal values and career histories

A key means to establishing trustworthiness of qualitative data is through the technique of triangulation. Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggest four modes of triangulation: the use of different sources, methods, investigators and theories (p. 305). Comparing the personal values elicited by the laddering method with those that can be inferred from managers’ accounts of their career histories represents a form of method triangulation. In discussing career histories, I probed for the reasons that managers changed jobs, why they settled on the career they did, and their reactions to episodes in their working life, following Watson’s (1994) assertion that this would indicate values they held. Managers, generally, were willing and able to provide me with accounts of their careers, and in doing so, revealed much that appeared to be related to their own personal values. The

values inferred in this way were often reflected in the ladders elicited later in the interview, at times very closely, and at other times, in their general direction.

Here, I report on four of the managers interviewed, two from each of the case studies. In three of the examples, there appears to be a clear consistency between the values elicited and those inferred, and these represent a pattern that I found in most of the cases. The fourth example, that of Ben Harrison from HITECH, shows some contradictions between values elicited by the laddering method, and those inferred in his career history. Ben appears to have ‘ideal’ values that he finds himself unable to live up to, largely, it seems, because he also holds other, less idealistic ones, which were apparent in his account of his career history, but not elicited in the laddering exercise, which only revealed the ideal values.

Colin Cook (FMCG)

Colin Cook joined FMCG from another consumer goods company in which he had had several years’ experience. In the early part of his career with FMCG, Colin worked in three different regions of the world before joining the staff at corporate headquarters.

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Success	Failure	Exciting	Worry & stress	Accepting others	Feeling uncomfortable	Recognition	
↑		↑		↑			
Return on effort	No return	Opportunity to challenge myself	Tension	Relaxed	Stressful		
↑		↑		↑			
Recognition	Not recognised	Fit & healthy	Tired & not well	Fit & healthy	Tired & not well		
↑		↑		↑			
Tangible success	Status quo	No pressure	Responsibility	No pressure	Responsibility		
Constructs elicited from positions held 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from places lived ¹ 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from places lived 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	
¹ This ladder split at the third level, and so both parts were followed to a conclusion							

Figure 6.3: Colin Cook’s personal values (FMCG)

Central themes to Colin's account of his own career history are that of making a success out of difficult situations, and of the resulting praise he received as a 'conquering hero'. At the time of the interview, Colin was closely involved with the dissemination of FMCG's corporate values programme, which I shall return to in the next section. The overall picture of Colin's personal values is of a person who places priority on success and being seen to be successful. It is interesting that he construed an 'opportunity to challenge myself' out of the bipolar construct 'fit and healthy' versus 'tired and not well'. To be fit means that Colin feels able to take on another challenge. This construct produced a second bipolar construct, which we also followed to produce the third ladder, and this revealed something of a conflict, where 'relaxed' was contrasted with 'stressful' when in the second ladder, 'excitement' was contrasted with 'worry and stress'. Together with 'success', 'recognition' appears to be an important value to Colin; it was the value he added at the end of the laddering exercise ("I think I am somebody who seeks reward and recognition"), and also turned up as a subordinate construct in his first ladder. He explained the background to this while we were doing a ladder:

"I think ... I mean, I would consider myself quite driven to succeed, and I don't think that's about money or status, because I think lots of people want that. I think there's something a bit deeper ... and ... it goes back to my childhood, I expect, the way I was potty trained, or something! So why personal satisfaction from challenge ... is it something to do with proving yourself ... because every time you are faced with a challenge, it's sort of ... all your self-doubts come to the fore, often reinforced by others, and being able to prove that you've got the courage of your convictions and the ability to manage the people you need to manage, either in the team or the people that are trying to influence you ... doing things to show that you can handle that, and that each time you're successful, you get an opportunity of another challenge, so it's kind of seeing how far you can go. And I always remember one boss saying to me –he was a bit like me in many ways, and I feel the same – 'that you are waiting for the time that you get found out'. Why is that important? Because it means something to myself ... don't ask me why that's important to me."

Following Colin's first overseas assignment, he was appointed marketing manager for a region that had a recent track record of falling market share, and, in his opinion, this represented something of a 'make or break' posting, and that he was on trial. On taking the position as marketing manager, he met up with the operations manager and told me of the story of what happened afterwards:

"As we got to know each other, we got on very well and we realised that actually, here is an opportunity where there are very low expectations of what we can achieve, because the business has been going like this [pointing downwards] for eight years now. A succession of well-known management had been through and had managed to screw it up even further, and had moved on to better things – let's see what we can do, and let's really milk – if we're successful – let's really milk the publicity of what we are doing. So, we did that, and it just so happened that we hit on a formula that turned the business around and about 18 months later, we became the leaders again, and we were letting everybody know what a fantastic job we'd done. And it became a bit of a case study, I took every opportunity to write it up in all of our internal marketing magazines and things. [...] So that was a great success, and great fun with no pressure at all, because nobody had expected anything."

Colin's values of recognition, success and excitement all seem to be represented in his account of that market turnaround. They were also reflected in his account of an episode that occurred soon after starting his next assignment in another region of the world. Shortly after starting in the position, he proposed a new marketing strategy that was supported by his managing director, but at odds with the company's marketing director at the corporate head office.

"[There was a] big debate over whether the marketing strategy was right or not, and I felt under the enormous pressure, and I had my managing director, who had life or death power over me day-to-day, and I had the marketing director, who had longer term life or death power over my career, completely pulling me in different directions and I was getting calls from people who worked with the marketing director telling me in no uncertain terms that I was [ruined] if I persisted with this approach – some pretty obscene things – names hurled in my direction, phones slammed down on me and things like this. And I'd never been

in that situation before but ... I ended up doing what I felt was right, because if I did what I was being told to do and it didn't work, I'd blame myself, and I'd upset somebody. So I'd rather upset somebody and be right, and do what I felt was right, even if it failed, at least I'd done what I believed in, and I would have learned from that, so ... and it was a phenomenal success! It became very quickly apparent that we were onto something magical here, with this brand. [...] It has become the most successful piece of brand marketing in [that country], it has won all sorts awards, turned the fortunes of the company around, it doubled our – the size of our business.”

This story reflects those values of recognition and success, and certainly suggests he had plenty of opportunity to challenge himself, although one can imagine he felt much of that ‘tension, worry and stress’ that he dislikes over the period between the launch of the strategy and its eventual success. While these two excerpts from Colin’s account of his career history appears to infer the values of ‘success’, ‘recognition’ and ‘excitement’ that we later elicited, there is little sign in his account of his career history of his value of ‘accepting others’, itself arising out of a preference for ‘relaxed’ over ‘stressful’. When the value appeared in his third ladder, I put it to him that there appeared to be a contradiction between preferring achievement, success and recognition, and a desire for a more relaxed life:

“It’s the dilemma, isn’t it? My wife and I would love to ... and our little girl, would love to move out to the countryside and – I don’t really want to have to commute into London and continue to – I would be quite happy to retire. I think I would. [...] I’ve got this sort of image of the life style I want, and it’s not working in a busy city in a highly stressful job or corporation, although I enjoy what I’m doing.”

The disjointed nature of this excerpt indicates a lack of conviction in what he is saying, as though the thoughts being expressed have not had much previous exposure. Overall, there is coherence between the values elicited through the laddering exercise and those that can be inferred from the accounts that Colin gives of his career. The exception, perhaps, is the conflict he feels between the driven, success-oriented aspect of his life, and the value of a relaxed life elicited in

one of the ladders. Even here, this can be partially explained by Colin’s comment shortly after his description of the country life style, that this value was “more emerging”.

Andy Britten (FMCG)

When I met Andy, he declared, “I’m an activist!” He had been with the company for four years at the time of the interview, having previously worked for two other companies in a similar function, although not at such a senior level. Andy headed up a key department and was brought in to bring it up, as he put it, from “corporate jockstrap” to “corporate catapult”, with a greater pro-active role in the company’s development.

His personal values elicited by the laddering exercise fell into a fairly narrow range of ‘stimulation’, ‘challenging’ and ‘effective’. These conform closely to Schwartz’s (1992) domains of ‘stimulation’ and ‘achievement’, and to Rokeach’s (1973) category of ‘self-centred’ values. The pattern is consistent all through the levels.

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Stimulation	Dragging weed	Challenging	Boring	Effective	Ineffective	Human contact	
↑		↑		↑			
Working with capable people	Tolerating underperformance	Change	Status quo	Convenience	Inconvenience		
↑		↑		↑			
Invest in people	Weak investors	Forward-looking	Backward-looking	Utility	Character		
Constructs elicited from companies worked for 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from non-work interests 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from places lived in 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

Figure 6.4: Andy Britten's personal values (FMCG)

When he saw the results, he commented that they looked like “someone who is pretty self-obsessed”, and in answer to the question of what might be obviously missing, replied, “probably the words ‘human contact’ – I do enjoy human

contact”. It is not clear what he meant by this, particularly considering his dislike of ‘tolerating underperformers’ that appeared in the first ladder. Early in the interview, Andy summed himself up in a way that seemed to characterise his energy, his being an ‘activist’, and one who is effective:

“OK, Let’s characterise me, what I do, how I got there. Clearly you’ve got the name, aged 40, two children, live [out of London], wide range of interests which includes classic cars, golf, having my own gym, that kind of thing. Job title is currently Head of [a department], so it’s the most senior [] role you get in the corporation before you hit the [] director.”

He described the first years in the company, having been hired to put some energy into the department and change it, and it is apparent in his story that this has been both stimulating and – I use the word again – effective. It is interesting to note the change of personal pronoun in the first sentence from ‘I’ to ‘we’:

“So, I went and hired very good people, and I seconded a heap of people, or we seconded a heap of people, and then in ’99, we figured we had probably got enough of the credits built with the organisation to now start motoring on progressive [function], which is integrating it with the business – seeing it as not a support function, but a drive function in that sense: in marketing it’s a drive function; in operations it’s a drive function – trying to get [the function] seen in the same context. And so we launched something called the competitive [function] agenda which was all about a – what we’ve got is more conventional, traditional and boring – any idiot can do this, and if you want to stay doing this for a life, then you might as well outsource the whole lot. If you do differentiate yourself, you get smarter and faster about where the company is going in terms of its strategic imperatives, and how technology can not only be moved in, in harmony with that, but to a degree to actually be used as a lever for achieving it. So we went through this competitive advantage agenda thing for about a year and a bit, a year and a half and obviously had an impact.”

This description carries many of the values apparent in the three ladders, including: working with capable people, the challenging over the boring, and becoming effective. For most of the interview, Andy talked at the same frenetic

pace – he was not only an activist, he talked actively, sometimes in a language that I found perplexing to interpret, as this following excerpt illustrates:

“I will count myself as one of the original founding three, and latterly it has been in the pursuit of the agenda I want to pursue. You do that through the power of the matrix, you do that through the power of lobby, you do that through the power of influence – you know, the more people you’ve got lined up, the better. And in fact, you could articulate the last four years in a completely different way: the first two years were spent pushing a ball up a hill, the next year was getting it to the brink of the top, and then latterly the last twelve months, increasingly the ball is rolling the other side of the hill with [the department] chasing after the bloody thing, because gravity, in both senses, was the Board.”

Whatever this means seems almost irrelevant, it is the language of action, of stimulation and challenge and of the effective over the ineffective. It would appear that Andy is the embodiment of those values elicited by the laddering method.

Cathy Richards (HITECH)

Cathy is a project manager in HITECH’s research and development division, where she has worked for over twelve years. She joined the company after completing a post-graduate degree, and after a short period in teaching:

“[I] trained as a maths teacher, and got half way through my teacher training and thought ‘no, not for me!’ I didn’t like being a policewoman, didn’t like having to force my will on this crowd of unruly teenagers who didn’t want to be there, and missed the intellectual challenge that more academic stuff gave – not that teaching wasn’t challenging, it was, it was very challenging but in a very different kind of way.”

Cathy’s account of this early experience as a teacher reflects some of the values that were elicited later. She prefers to work collaboratively with others, rather than force her will upon them, and the type of challenge that her third ladder implies is one that is concerned with personal growth, rather than the challenge of ‘being a policewoman’. It would appear that the notion of ‘growth and

development' is important for Cathy, whether this be personal, other people's, or the world in general.

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred
		Fun	Boring	Personal growth & development	Sticking with where I am	Collaborative working, other people's growth & development
		↑		↑		
Make the world a better place	Indifference	Development & growth	Being static	Challenges my world view	Sticking where I am	
↑		↑		↑		
Seeing ideas make a difference	Research for research's sake	Challenging	Straight-forward	Discovery of new places & people	Developing what I already know	
↑		↑		↑		
People oriented	Impersonal	Contemplative	Active	Travel	Activity	
Constructs elicited from projects managed		Constructs elicited from non-work activities		Constructs elicited from places visited on holiday		Additional Values
1 st Ladder		2 nd Ladder		3 rd Ladder		

Figure 6.5: Cathy Richards' personal values (HITECH)

The first ladder quickly elicited the value of wanting to 'make the world a better place', and this, together with Cathy's preferences for challenges that help her personal growth and enjoyment of life are apparent in her account of a project she managed a few years beforehand:

"So, that was great because, again it was a combination of having to get inside the heads of people who suffered from illness, learning about the illness, and talking to professionals who deal with the people, and then designing software interfaces that potentially met needs, and again, what messed that up was the delivery route, because the company wasn't ready, and it was sickening that three years later there were companies coming out with products just like we'd been developing. Which is really irritating, but there you go."

At the end of this account, Cathy reveals some of the frustration she felt when the company did not take full advantage of the development work she was involved in. This frustration came out several times during the course of the interview, and seemed to be related to occasions when the actions of others has somehow

undermined her, or her values. Later, Cathy talked about the way she liked to build a team that worked effectively together, reflecting the value she added at the end of the laddering exercise, of other people’s growth and development, as well, perhaps of ‘making the world a better place’:

“I love the process of building a team, bringing different people together and sussing out their strengths and weaknesses, and getting everyone to pull in the same direction, building a common ethos ... I like the people evaluation side, OK, this person is strong in this area and not so strong in this area, how can I get them to develop in an area so that they are more rounded, can I help them progress in their career?”

Finally, Cathy summed up her feelings about her job, and in doing so, expressed a value that was also apparent in the ladders:

“I am lucky at the moment because I get – I love variety; I get bored if I do the same thing for too long”

Ben Harrison (HITECH)

The values elicited through the laddering method with Ben Harrison do not look like those of a typical senior manager. The overall picture is of one who prefers a simple, traditional life based on honesty over pretence, where Ben can do and live according to his beliefs. It appears somewhat idealistic, particularly for a senior manager, albeit the youngest interviewed in either company, at thirty-two.

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Live according to my beliefs ↑	Live according to norms	Honesty	Pretence	A simple life	Complexity	Tradition	
Money is not the purpose ↑	Profit is the bottom line	Freedom to make one’s own choices ↑	Constraint	Fewer choices	Politics		
Research	Profit-making	Emotive	Technical	Simplicity	Modernism		
Constructs elicited from companies worked for 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from non-work activities 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from places visited on holiday 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

Figure 6.6: Ben Harrison's personal values (HITECH)

Ben left school with “some pretty poor A’levels”, started a law degree, dropped out after a year and went to work in a shop until he was made redundant. This seemed to mark a change in his life, because returned to university to read for a degree in computing which included an industrial placement. He found he had both an aptitude for computing and communicating, which he applied in technical support work. His first job is perhaps the last one would imagine somebody with his values even considering:

“I got a job at a place called [XYZ]. It’s a company whose job basically is to work out where they can dig big enough holes and deep enough holes to chuck nuclear waste down. And they’re based in [the south] and I worked there for about three weeks, eventually there became a bit too much tension between me and what [the company], was trying to do. I’ve never been a particular fan of nuclear anyway, and I’d actually used them as a sort of holding position – it was a job and it was giving me money whilst I found something that I was more comfortable with and actually wanted to do more.”

There is, in this account, a realisation that the values of the company he joined, and his own were not compatible, and in this respect it supports those values elicited in the laddering exercise. It is, perhaps, a little surprising that it took three weeks from Ben to realise the tension might be too much, but I think his reference to the job being a holding position reveals a concern for security that tends to override his values. A little later in the account, Ben explained why he began to look for the job that brought him to HITECH:

Now, I was technically competent but I was being completely undervalued by them as a company, so I walked and I came here.”

Neither the value of ‘security’ or ‘being valued’ is apparent in the ladders, but they both seem to appear in Ben’s account of his first reaction to joining HITECH. He refers to a ‘middle ground’, which seems to imply that it caters for his concern for security and being valued, while allowing him to live closer to his beliefs:

“I found what I thought was the best middle, middle ground which was that I had the protection of the huge company which was [this company], but actually [the research & development division] is a unique island of culture and talent and activity within the whole of [the company] and, you know, there is the whole multinational thing, you have got people here who are the most intelligent people

on the planet as far as, you know, their field is concerned, and it was right, you know, I was dealing with people who I felt I wanted to deal with. [...] I felt, you know, I felt that I could be valued here, they were paying me enough, there was a benefits structure, there was a promotional ladder structure.”

It seems that Ben is very successful in his work. At the age of thirty-two, and after just five years with the company, he heads up a global technical support operation for research and development engineers, a position he puts down to having good interpersonal skills. He surprised me, therefore, when he told me that he didn't like people:

“The fact that I don't like people, because I don't like their time, is one of those interesting contradictions, paradoxes. I can get on with pretty much anybody. I'm one of those able to talk with and able to have a conversation with pretty much anybody except somebody who is pretty outrageous. But I am also a sort of a psychopath in the true sense of the word in that I really don't like people very much. I don't like the ... I don't like the politics of interpersonal relationships and it is extremely difficult to be honest with people and be straight with people – you are always having to compromise a bit and – it's the way the world and I really don't like it, but there you go. It is where I can earn a good enough living and have a house in the country and not have anybody around me so that's what I do, that's my sacrifice.”

His dislike of 'the politics of interpersonal relationships' because it compromises honesty is consistent with the values elicited in the laddering exercise. While he does not like to compromise, he appears ready to do so. Ben talked much about his house which is in a remote country spot, and where there are few others around. He argues that he can compromise the way he would prefer to be in order to get that bit he wants, although the romantic ideal returned when he commented on a job he'd seen advertised:

“You know, one thing that is very bad news as well [laughs] ... fantastic job advertised last week, IT – it wasn't 'manager' – it was 'supervisor' to the British Antarctic Expedition ... apart from the fact that you are locked in boxes for 6 months of the year with people you might not like ... it's being in the Antarctic attracts me to that. You know, I hate cities, I hate towns, I hate – you know, it's

just – I hate getting on my soap box about this, because I just find it so pointless getting on the soapbox about it, but I hate seeing what people are doing to the world and don't know themselves.”

I felt that Ben exists in an uncomfortable zone where on the one hand, he feels deeply about the environment, about nature and about living his life according to his beliefs, as indicated in his own personal values, and, on the other hand, he has a strong need for security and recognition. It was almost as though there were two people with two sets of quite contradictory values. Towards the end of the interview and after we had completed the laddering exercise, Ben raised the issue of this contradiction:

“The biggest conflict for me that comes out of that [the exercise] is that I would love to go and live and learn ... but I can't afford to go and live the simple life. It is crazy! I don't have any skills there that would enable me to earn money in that environment ... it is one of those interesting things that what I want to do is to give everything up and to have a quiet little job, chopping down trees or being a carpenter or being a handyman and I don't have the skills to do that. ... I can't, because my skill set is in customer service and IT, my skill set is not in being a chippie and being a handyman earning just enough money to put food on the table and living in a little bit more comfort. So it is strange. ... I don't like all this new stuff, I don't, it doesn't sit well with me. What am I doing working here? That is the question...”

It was Ben, who on seeing the results of the laddering exercise, looked at those we had elicited and commented: “that's me, definitely, but it is aspirational, unfortunately”. Although the values might be aspirational, Ben did recognise them, they did appear in his account of his career history, and the laddering method did produce a coherent set of personal values. That Ben lives a life with many contradictions to his personal values does not negate them. Rather, it indicates that there can be other aspects of the personality, or other personalities in the person, and is suggestive of Bazerman et al.'s (1998) reference to the 'want' self and the 'ought' self.

6.3.5 Summary

Overall, I found that the values elicited by the laddering method were reflected in the managers' accounts of themselves and their careers. There were cases when a particular value was not explicitly expressed in the manager's career story, and others where values appeared but which were not specifically elicited by the laddering method, but even here, the overall impression was of a correspondence between managers' personal values and the account they gave of their careers. The comparison provides compelling evidence that the laddering exercises do allow researchers to access values that are both fundamental and relevant to the individual manager.

The laddering method as used in this research appears to be effective in revealing part of the informant's personal value system. The exercise itself is one that those senior managers taking part in the study found interesting, and their reactions to its outcomes suggest they thought the values elicited were accurate reflections. The method also exposes the idiosyncratic meaning of value terms by revealing the opposite pole to any value elicited. This is of great help to the researcher in that it helps retain the accuracy of lay accounts in the course of research. Finally, the values elicited by the laddering method are consistent with those inferred from the accounts that managers give of their own career histories. This is a form of method triangulation, and together with the managers' own reactions, helps establish the trustworthiness of the method in eliciting personal values. In the next two sections of this chapter, I shall consider managers interpretations of their organisations' corporate values.

6.4 Personal and Corporate values at FMCG

The situation at FMCG regarding corporate values differs from that at HCC, where no attempt had been made to set down the values, and in HITECH, where the corporate values had remained essentially the same since their inception. Here, the corporate values had been introduced within the two years previous to the time of the interviews. Furthermore, all managers interviewed at FMCG held senior positions at the corporate headquarters, so were well exposed to the new values, while two of those interviewed, Colin Cook and Stewart Hinds, were closely involved in their development and promotion. This close proximity to the development and promotion of these new corporate values, coupled with their recent introduction, suggests a degree of familiarity that might influence managers' interpretations of these values. The findings show that there is a general recognition of the new corporate values, some divergence in opinion concerning the relationship of these to the ones they replaced, and further divergence in managers' interpretation of what the values mean. In addition, some managers identified values that were not in the values statement, and differences were evident in managers' opinions about the extent to which the statement represented what should be the corporate values at FMCG. These differences were reflected in the differences in managers' own personal value priorities. In this section, I first outline the history of corporate values at FMCG, then consider similarities and differences in managers' selection of corporate values, in the meaning attributed to them, before relating these to similarities and differences in managers' personal value priorities.

6.4.1 Background to the present corporate values statement

In the mid-1990s an initiative was introduced to focus FMCG on the attributes associated with 'winning across the world'. This initiative included a statement of nine values that were considered to be desirable to these ends. The 'nine values' were grouped into three subheadings of achievement, commitment and trust – although I found some disagreement about these headlines – and included the values of: customer focus, personal responsibility, planning, confidence,

teamwork, openness, honesty, improvement and self-development. Again, there was some disagreement around the actual terms in these nine values.

Approximately two years before the interviews took place, these nine values were superseded by four guiding principles, which have the headline titles of ‘enterprising spirit’, ‘open minded’, ‘freedom through responsibility’ and ‘strength through diversity’. These principles were developed out of the strategic objective of becoming the global leader in FMCG’s key market. This strategic objective was made feasible following the recent acquisition of a major competitor and the guiding principles were, in part, designed to unite the company. The principles differed from the previous corporate values, both in terms of their emphasis, and in terms of their origins. Whereas the ‘nine values’ were, according to informants, developed by the top management team with little consultation within the organisation, the four principles arose out of internal research and consultation, together with external advice:

“Well, basically what we did was that we went out and first of all we analysed a lot of research that existed in the company about culture – we’d had numerous consultants, management consultants come through, all of them had done their own analysis and had produced interviews with managers and reports. We tried to digest all that, we ran some workshops around the world – a horror to organise – workshops, we did some quantitative surveys. We took the output of that, we recruited an ad agency we’d been working with and we recruited [a consultant] who’s a well-known corporate – he’s actually a marketing guru, but he’s really into the corporate brand and he works with a lot of European CEOs on their values and stuff. We got him over, played around with what we were coming up with, and came up with a model which we then went back and said, ‘right, here are five values, do they resonate?’ and three did. One, two – there was something there, but it wasn’t quite right, and we ended up with four.” (Colin Cook)

Some managers indicated that the original nine values failed to ‘resonate’ both because of the top-down way in which they were introduced, and because of a view reported by three informants that the same top managers who conceived the values were acting in ways that were perceived to be contrary to them. Perhaps in

part as a reaction to that, Stewart Hinds told me that the four principles are being communicated as a low-key exercise, and that communication of the definitions has deliberately been left open.

“Those four, which interestingly, they are very much one-liners. In old [FMCG] we would have written a 47-page manual on what ‘open mindedness’ means. Not any more. We would have written a 2,000-page manual on how to use ‘enterprising spirit’, a 5,000-page tome on what ‘freedom through responsibility’ means. So the good news is we have defined four attributes. The disconnect, though, is that we have actually left them very much to individual discretion.”
(Stewart Hinds)

Sarah Kennedy, meanwhile, was concerned that even ‘high potentials’ away from the corporate headquarters have not yet learned of the four principles.

“The guiding principles were only articulated less than two years ago, and [...] there is no doubt in my mind that probably [95% of employees across the world] wouldn’t even tell you, be able to tell you, what those four guiding principles are. It’s easy sitting here when we are surrounded by it and hear a lot about it, to think that this stuff is – but I know this even from the high potentials that come through the international programmes I’m running. I still to this date say, right ‘how many of you know about the guiding principles?’ and a smattering of hands will go up. Now these are the sort of bright people coming through the organisation at a fast rate, who you would’ve thought made it their business, or their senior guys would have made it their business to ensure these guys understood what it was about. It’s got a hell of a long way to go.” (Sarah Kennedy)

The interviews, therefore, were carried out fairly soon after the introduction of the ‘four principles’, which replaced the ‘nine values’ that had themselves been promoted for only about four or five years beforehand.

6.4.2 Managers’ interpretation of corporate values at FMCG

While the four principles have not been fully communicated to all members of the organisation, and the meaning of each has not been documented in the way that the company may have done in the past, Sarah Kennedy’s statement above

suggests that there has been much discussion of the four principles in the head office. The informants, as senior managers based in the corporate headquarters, were close to the central decision making of the company, and, as a consequence, it is reasonable to assume that they had been exposed to much of the thinking surrounding the introduction and dissemination of these new corporate values. For this reason, one might anticipate a considerable degree of agreement about what the values are, and what the values mean.

Selection of corporate values

All managers I interviewed identified the ‘four principles’ at some stage during our discussion of FMCG’s corporate values. Each manager was able to state what the four principles were, that is ‘enterprising spirit’, ‘strength through diversity’, ‘freedom through responsibility’ and ‘open-mindedness’. Two used the term ‘openness’ instead of ‘open-mindedness’ to describe the fourth. While there was some variation in the order that managers listed the guiding principles, all identified ‘enterprising spirit’ first. This reflects the order in which they are presented in documents, but may also indicate a sense of recognition: all managers agreed that it captured an aspect of the culture at FMCG.

While all managers identified the four principles, not all agreed their status as the key values at FMCG. Two of the managers cited the earlier, ‘nine values’ as those they identified with, and each had different explanations of how the four principles fitted in. Andy Britten, for example, had adopted the nine values in developing his functional department as a ‘corporate catapult’ capable of contributing to the company’s success before the four principles were introduced. He explained the reasons for the need for such values:

“What we have here is a winning environment that we all own – it’s not a virtue of iconic leadership, one guy – the winning environment is something that is not just a clinical transaction, it’s something that develops me, values me, enthuses me, and by right, everybody, if they are all lined up to the same set of principles. [...] To create a winning environment we each of us need to display this: we

need to be balanced, confident, energetic, open, winning in our mentality, supportive, flexible, trusting, observant, decisive and positive.”

In this department, headed by Andy Britten, the values were promoted together with associated desirable behaviours in an internal brochure. In this document, the emphasis is on the earlier set of values, with just a brief reference to the guiding principles. Andy explained this, arguing that the two were related:

“When the guiding principles showed up, we did a quick look back and say, ‘well, yes, everything we’ve just done here is actually in concert with the principles, not in conflict’, because if you talk about ‘open-minded’ then you can see the openness and the observation and the support behaviours that deliver on that. If you look at, you know, ‘enterprising spirit’ you see the energy, the confidence and the winning and the positiveness coming through, and to a degree the decisiveness [...] ‘Freedom through responsibility’ you can again come back on that, so there we are, we are operating with some trust, we are operating in a positive and confident manner, but with balance. So you can, and then the ‘strength from diversity’ comes through another mix of the same things.”

Another manager at FMCG, David Verkaik, also used the nine values in promoting the ‘winning environment’ concept to managers in his functional area around the world. His view was that the two value sets were both relevant, and that the nine values’ role underpinned the four principles:

“Enterprising spirit is underpinned by leadership and achievement; open-minded comes out of honesty and trust which allows for openness and also for freedom through diversity; leadership, discipline and self-development supports the pillar of freedom through responsibility.”

Both managers described the ‘nine values’ and found a way of relating them to the more recent four principles, but the terms they used to describe the nine values were somewhat different. Andy Britten appeared to emphasise active values, such as confidence, winning, decisiveness and positive action, and his personal values, as elicited by the laddering method, came out as: ‘stimulation’ as opposed to ‘dragging weed’; ‘challenging’ as opposed to ‘boring’; ‘effective’ as opposed to ‘ineffective’; and ‘human contact’. Meanwhile, David Verkaik, picked out honesty, trust, and discipline in describing the nine values. His elicited personal

values were: ‘the collective’, as opposed to the ‘individual’; ‘peace’ as opposed to ‘struggle’; ‘stimulation’ as opposed to ‘repetition’; and ‘honesty’.

This difference in the priority of one set of corporate values over the other, and of the relationship between the two is, perhaps, indicative of the relative novelty of the guiding principles. It is interesting to note that it was the four managers interviewed in the human resource and corporate relations departments who regarded the guiding principles as having fully superseded any others, and it is these two departments that have the responsibility for their adoption. Managers from other departments were noticeably less supportive, as the two above indicate. Charles Knight, a senior marketing manager, thought the guiding principles had some way to go before being incorporated into the company’s culture. He initially referred to what he considered to be the values that were established in FMCG’s past, summed up by ‘the white Englishman’, and suggested the company was still in a state of flux concerning its values:

“We have four that we state, but I am not saying that those *are* the values – that is what we are aspiring to. I don’t quite know how to verbalise the values at the moment, um ..., it is definitely no longer the white Englishman all over the place in the sense of the values, it certainly is a multinational, international, organisation – there is no question.”

Here, Charles is clearly differentiating between those values that are currently stated and those that have been the historical values at FMCG, and he is recognising that the company is in transition in this regard. His own personal values were elicited as: ‘achieve things’ as opposed to ‘fuzzy’; ‘recognition’ as opposed to ‘impotency’; and ‘challenge’ as opposed to ‘routine’. Interestingly, when I asked Charles to comment on the results after we had completed the laddering exercise, and before I asked if there were any obviously missing, he said that:

“it is a reflection of some of the things I would find interesting ... and, you know, in terms of this organisation, it is the sort of things that we are trying to encourage here”.

In this, Charles Knight is suggesting that the sort of values they are trying to encourage at FMCG are the values that we elicited as his own personal values in the laddering exercises.

Some managers identified values that were not included in either the guiding principles or the nine values, as those that they thought the company held, or those they would like to see instilled in the company ethos. Linda Miller, who at one time described herself as “an interesting mix of liking high risk and security”, later identified the latter as a value at FMCG:

“I think ‘security’ is another value here, too. It’s a nice, cosy environment [...] I do think somewhere in here, the value of security.”

Andy Britten felt frustrated by the values implicit in some aspects of the culture at FMCG that he thought held the company back:

“I’m going to say [the company] has to break some shackles of the past, you know, we’re pretty much a perspiration, permission based culture. [...] Permission ... there’s a lot of hierarchy, OK, so you find decisions rattling this way; the perspiration is that we do a lot of stuff [...] If you wanted to really be living on the [company] principles side of it, we should be seeing passion come through, you know, the heart and the body in synchronisation to transformational change.”

This is reflected in Stewart Hinds’ comment about a value he felt was missing at FMCG, and one that he would like to introduce. Stewart’s own personal values included: ‘never a dull moment’ as opposed to ‘boredom’; ‘achievement’ as opposed to ‘impotence’ and ‘life balance’ as opposed to ‘single focus’:

“A sense of urgency, I would add. Pace. I’d ... I’d ask for a speedier car. I think that is missing: less introspection, less debate, less bureaucracy but more risk and sense of urgency. Recognising, to become number one, we will deliver, we know we will deliver, but we could be doing it quicker, we should be doing it quicker ... and that mindset should then be, if that was an actual attribute value, whatever we call it, that should permeate everything we do.”

While the differences in selection of corporate values appeared largely to do with extent to which managers favoured the new guiding principles over the old nine values, there also appears to be some differences in the value terms selected. These differences appear to be consistent with differences in the personal value priorities of managers concerned.

Giving meaning to corporate values

The first of the four guiding principles to be identified is that of ‘enterprising spirit’. As Colin Cook indicates in Table 6.2, the origins of the term came from a pioneering spirit, which has long been identified as a corporate value at FMCG. The meaning of enterprising spirit is similar amongst those who defined it, but with small differences.

Linda Miller:	“Sometimes tough decisions take far too long to make, and we’re going to - by calling it ‘enterprising spirit’ - work faster, you know, be more aggressive out there, and you know, sometimes you’ve got to make these decisions quicker, operate...”
Sarah Kennedy:	“The ‘enterprising spirit’, which is very go getting, we can do it, we can work in places where a lot of companies refuse to think about working, and getting business done, so you know, there is a lot of positive sides to it. Go getting, can do attitude, which is very positive about it.”
Colin Cook:	“The first is ‘enterprising spirit’ – we had a version of it which sounded a bit too pith helmets and canoes – ‘pioneering spirit’ – that’s right, that was the original, but they didn’t – that sounded too British and ‘enterprising spirit’, yes, that’s it, that exists in [the company], and people can point to great examples of enterprising spirit.”
Andy Britten:	“If you look at, you know, ‘enterprising spirit’ you see the energy, the confidence and the winning and the positiveness coming through, and to a degree the decisiveness.”

Table 6.2: Managers' interpretations of 'Enterprising spirit'

For Linda Miller, the term carries the notion of being more aggressive, being quicker, especially in making those tough decisions that she feels take too long to make. This is reflected in Andy Britten’s notion of energy, confidence and decisiveness, but differs slightly from Sarah’s view that it is a ‘can do’ attitude, where the implication is closer to the pioneering attitude that Colin refers to.

The principle of 'freedom through responsibility' had a greater range of interpretations, both in terms of what is meant by 'freedom' and what is meant by 'responsibility'. Linda's interpretation of the principle suggests a view that people are not responsible, and that, if only they were, they may have more freedom to operate in their jobs. It implies a need for a controlling management, which is in contrast to Sarah's view that the management is too controlling at present. She emphasises the need to trust staff to take on responsibility and be trusted with it, a view echoed by Colin, with reservations, and Stewart.

Linda Miller:	"'Freedom through responsibility' ... means that individuals within a corporation, in this corporation, if they were to act responsibly, they would have more freedom to operate, than if they act irresponsibly."
Sarah Kennedy:	"Freedom through responsibility - the whole push on that is really to say that we try and get away from the feeling that a lot of people have, that it's very much a permission culture [...] but clearly, it's fine saying that, but then we've got to make damn sure that we then don't jump on people who make mistakes, that we don't jump on people who take a risk and screw it, that, you know, if you're going to say that, you've got to mean it."
Colin Cook:	"And what 'freedom through responsibility' means is, you have the freedom in this company - as I've found in my career - to do what you think is right provided it's done in a responsible way, and by that, you are doing things that are consistent with the aims of the company, the objectives, consistent with policies and prac-, policies, consistent with strategy, broadly speaking. You aren't free to go completely off strategy, so provided you operate within the defining parameters, you have complete freedom within those parameters. We call that 'freedom through responsibility'. Also, take responsibility for delivering success - don't expect to be told what to do, don't pass the buck upwards, wherever you are in the organisation, you have the freedom to make a difference, if you want to."
Stewart Hinds:	"Freedom through responsibility [...] it's cutting the ties, being less prescriptive, it is being less dependent, particularly now the pendulum...[it's] not to throw away their shackles, but to act in a responsible way. [...] So responsibility, again what does that mean? Responsibility has been hugely challenging for us to define."
Andy Britten:	"... 'Freedom through responsibility' you can again come back on that, so there we are, we are operating with some trust, we are operating in a positive and confident manner, but with balance."

Table 6.3: Managers' interpretations of 'Freedom through responsibility'

It is apparent from these comments that the principle is an aspirational one, and not currently embedded in FMCG's culture. Andy, meanwhile, relates the principle – as he does with all guiding principles – to some of those from the nine

values that he prefers. In this case, freedom through responsibility is related by Andy to trust, confidence and balance.

Most managers referred to the multicultural aspect of ‘strength through diversity’, but each manager adopted a slightly different view of this particular principle. For Colin, it included the downside of not being able to build a global brand, and for Sarah, it did not stretch to acceptance of different types of people; she felt that there was some way to go before FMCG could accept less “in your face” extroverts in its senior management levels. Linda appeared a little uncomfortable with the interpretation of “your fellow man type of thing” that she places on the principle.

Linda Miller:	“‘Strength from diversity’ is really ... sort of, partly sort of maybe compassion – your fellow man type of thing, the value, yeah ... to the business side of it, the value would be – excuse me, while I look for inspiration here – I’m trying just not to give you superficial answers...”
Sarah Kennedy:	“The real word there for me is strength. Strength. It is too easy for us to say we have arrived - you know - you will not find another multinational as diverse as [this company] if you at it purely from a nationalities point of view. [...] It’s all very well you’ve got different nationalities, but at the end of the day, they need to be extrovert, fairly sort of in-your-face, fairly well versed in managing upwards, in networking, in finding, in inverted commas, ‘sponsors’ in the organisation who make sure that career is tracking where they want it to track. That’s not diversity [...] I think strength from diversity is a stretch for us. But we recognise that, and that’s important.”
Colin Cook:	“The third principle ... was ‘strength from diversity’, well, the antithesis of a one-size-fits-all company - there’s a negative to that, in that we’ve failed to build a global brand. What we’re very good at, because of our origins as a company, we have tremendous ability in our markets in understanding local consumers – a result of the history of our company – we are so multi-cultural, you know, it is not a British company: my team in [one division] had eleven different nationalities. So, you go anywhere in [the company] and it’s a pretty diverse racial, cultural mix and I think what that gives us is a tremendous ability to take on board often conflicting views of a situation, and that’s OK, it’s OK that we think differently about those.”
Stewart Hinds:	“Strength through diversity - I mean, in this building we have thirty-seven different nationalities; we are instinctively international. It comes from our heritage. [The company] grew up by having one man, a dog and a suitcase in every end-market around the world. Our focus is out, not in. We are instinctively international. [The flipside is] absolute chaos, this side of the pendulum.”

Table 6.4: Managers' interpretations of 'Strength through diversity'

The fourth principle, 'open-minded' was interpreted rather more differently. Of the five managers who gave a meaning, two (Colin and Sarah) referred to the process of listening to everyone else's opinions and ideas before making decisions, and both criticised the tendency for this process to go on too long. Stewart had a slightly different view, that it was not so much about listening to other's ideas, but more that the mindset should be open. Meanwhile, Linda felt that it meant being more straightforward in communication, a criticism of British reticence, as she saw it, and Andy again linked it back to two of the values in his own department.

Linda Miller:	"Be open, tell it as it is, I mean I think that sometimes, because we're predominately a British-based culture, sometimes there's a reticence to say exactly how it is, it's more sublime...[] as [an antipodean] - we're very, much more frank in our feedback to people, on their performance, for example. I don't mean to say that you can't package that nicely, but it just means that it comes out with less ambiguity."
Sarah Kennedy:	"The 'open-mindedness' was seen as a no-brainer, that compared to a lot of more cult-like cultures that you have in the Hewlett-Packards, there is a very broad church, that we are very open-minded to ideas - that has huge plusses, because it means that people can feel they can contribute. It also has huge downsides because it can mean that we go round in circles, far too much because we are so determined to make sure that we've heard everybody's point of view ... and it can mean that, yes, we procrastinate for far too long. Yes, there are sort of downsides to that, but overall I'd have said that compared to companies that I've worked for in the past, we are incredibly open minded."
Colin Cook:	The second one was 'open-mindedness' - what we said - there was ... each of them have a flipside, you know, you can go too far and can become negative ... we said where people have -- [the company] welcomes opinions - sometimes too many opinions, sometimes it doesn't know when to say, 'right, let's make a decision', but it's certainly a culture that puts as much weight on the opinion of a personality as it does on hard evidence. There's a lot of faith in the judgement of people it trusts ... but, you know, where we've had certain successes it's been through real open-mindedness and being prepared to try, to listen to new approaches."
Stewart Hinds:	"Open-minded ... I suppose the minded bit is more about style, perspective, it is much more, yes, you could say the two are very much the same but open-minded was deemed to be the most appropriate. You know open-minded in the way we accept ideas... not being trammelled by 'done it before, just wouldn't work'. It's a mindset."
Andy Britten:	"If you talk about 'open-minded' then you can see the openness and the observation and the support behaviours that deliver on that ... we express ourselves openly"

Table 6.5: Managers' interpretation of 'Open-minded'

Over the four guiding principles, there is some degree of difference in the interpretation of their meanings. These differences are not particularly large, and do not appear to be exceptional, but given that four of the five managers defining the values hold senior positions in the two departments that are most closely associated with the adoption of the guiding principles, then these could be considered significant. The differences in meaning given by the managers who described the four principles in detail have some linkages with differences in their personal values. Linda Miller revealed personal values that included 'honesty' and 'integrity', and her interpretation of 'openness' was expressed in these terms. Stewart Hinds used expressions such as 'balance' and 'the pendulum' in defining the four principles, indicating a dislike of chaos, and his personal values included 'life balance' and at a subordinate level, a preference for control. Meanwhile, Sarah Kennedy emphasised the work that was to be done before FMCG could claim to hold the value of 'diversity', which she expressed terms of cultural and gender mix at all levels in the organisation. For Sarah, the values of 'respecting others' and of appreciating 'differences' were elicited in the laddering exercises.

6.4.3 Summary

The corporate values at FMCG have only recently been introduced, and their introduction follows that of the 'nine values', which were criticised for being hurriedly introduced, and not supported by key senior managers. The guiding principles are phrased in such a way that they are open to interpretation, and furthermore, no attempt has been made to define their meaning. They have been developed as part of the company's strategy to become the market leader, and to bring a sense of identity following the acquisition of a major competitor. In spite of the high profile that the guiding principles appear to have had at the corporate headquarters, three of those interviewed aligned themselves with the previous set of 'nine values'. Against this background, it is difficult to discern relationships between managers' interpretation of corporate values and their own personal value priorities with a great degree of certainty. It is possible, however, to detect some patterns in the statements and descriptions made by a manager that suggest personal values priorities are linked to their interpretations of corporate values.

6.5 Personal and corporate values at HITECH

In contrast to the situation at FMCG, where the corporate values were only recently introduced, HITECH has an established set of corporate values that are very much part of the identity of the company. All managers interviewed at the two sites that took part in this study joined the company a considerable time after the corporate values were first articulated. Their prominence in the company's folklore and history has been well documented, both in internal documents and by external commentators.

6.5.1 Background to the corporate values statement

The corporate values at HITECH have been set down as a written statement for nearly fifty years, and while the wording of the document has been updated over time, the essential elements have remained the same. The corporate values were first articulated by the founders of the company, who adopted what, at the time, was considered a modern approach to managing an organisation. HITECH grew up with a flat structure and a democratic style of management, exemplified by symbols such as the use of first names regardless of seniority, open-plan layout of offices with the best locations devoted to public space such as meeting rooms, and an informal dress code. The corporate values reflect this style, and play down the importance of the management function as a means of control by emphasising the trust placed in individuals to perform to a high standard of excellence. The corporate values document is based on five statements, each of which is then explained in further detail, together with details of the 'strategies and practices' that relate to the values. The five statements are: 'We have trust and respect for individuals'; 'we focus on a high level of achievement and contribution'; 'we conduct our business with uncompromising integrity'; 'we achieve our common objectives through teamwork'; and 'we encourage flexibility and innovation'. The detail that accompanies each of these statements includes further elaboration of the values implied, so, for example, the value of 'uncompromising integrity' includes the values 'open', 'honest', and 'ethical business'.

Approximately one year before the interviews took place, an initiative was launched from corporate headquarters designed to re-invigorate the company by restating some of the practices that were characteristic of its early, entrepreneurial period. This initiative, which I shall term 'back to basics', contained a number of statements that managers interpreted as challenging the corporate values statement. A number of managers criticised the 'back to basics' launch for neglecting some of the key values associated with the company, while others saw it as complementary to the corporate values statement and more concerned with the approved behaviours implicit within them.

6.5.2 Managers' interpretation of the corporate values

The well-established background to the corporate values at HITECH meant that all those interviewed were able to talk about the values in a way that was more consistent than had been the case in the previous case, and in the initial exploratory study. Managers referred to the corporate values by their generic name, which may be described here as the 'HITECH code'. During the interview, I probed for the actual value items that managers' identified as being corporate values. One way of doing this was to ask the manager to compare the values at HITECH with those of other organisations he or she had worked for; the contrast in cultures between HITECH and more traditionally British companies tended to highlight differences. Other techniques included direct questions, questions about how the values might have changed over the period of the manager's career with the company, and questions about values being supported or violated. Managers therefore had the opportunity of identifying what they thought were the values in the corporate values statement, but without my direct prompting. Where the meaning of a value term was not clear, I probed for the managers' own interpretations.

Corporate value selection

One way in which I analysed the interview data was to code the transcripts according to corporate values cited by each of the managers, using NVIVO software. In addition, I coded HITECH's corporate values statement in the same

way. Over the fourteen managers at HITECH and the corporate values statement, I coded a total of twenty-nine value types. Sixteen values were coded from the corporate values statement, two of which were not cited by any of the managers interviewed. A further thirteen value types were cited by managers but did not appear in the corporate values statement.

In order to clarify managers' selection of corporate values, I have organised them into three broad groups, following Rokeach's (1973) classification: society-centred, self-centred, and those that are concerned with mode of conduct. Society-centred values include such value items as community, belonging, teamwork, sharing, cooperation, which are evidently other-oriented. They also include the value items of 'contribution' and 'accountability', which are concerned with individual performance for the benefit of a group, team or society. Self-centred values include those concerned with individual performance, such as making a difference, individual responsibility, and achievement. Mode of conduct values are not clearly centred on society or the self, and are concerned primarily with the way that individuals or the group operates: with integrity, trust, respect for individuals, and in favour of diversity, quality, or ethical business. The outcome of the coding is presented in Table 6.6.

Society-centred values	N° of managers selecting	Mode of conduct values	N° of managers selecting	Self-centred values	N° of managers selecting
<i>Sharing</i>	1	<i>Ethical business</i>	0	Freedom	3
Community	2	<i>Integrity</i>	10	<i>Individual responsibility</i>	4
<i>Belonging</i>	3	<i>Trust</i>	8	Making a difference	3
Employees matter	5	<i>Honesty</i>	0	<i>Innovation</i>	2
Loyalty	1	<i>Openness</i>	6	Intuition	1
Support	1	<i>Quality</i>	3	Commitment	1
Security	3	<i>Respect for individuals</i>	8	<i>Achievement</i>	1
<i>Cooperation</i>	1	<i>Flexibility</i>	3		
Collaboration	1	<i>Diversity</i>	3		
<i>Teamwork</i>	5	Functionality	1		
Contribution	4				
Accountability	3				

Value items in *italics* denote those coded in HITECH's corporate values statement.

Table 6.6: Corporate values at HITECH selected by managers

A total of eighty-eight values were selected by all managers in all categories, giving an average number of values selected by managers at just over six. The actual range was from a maximum of nine values to a minimum of three values. Of the values selected, those that fall into the 'mode of conduct' category represent just under half of all values selected, while society-centred values represent a third, and self-centred values just one in six. All but one of the mode of conduct values appear in the corporate values statement, but two of these – ethical business and honesty – were not selected by any of the managers interviewed. On the other hand, the value 'integrity' was selected by ten of the fourteen managers, while 'trust' and 'respect for individuals' were each selected by eight managers. Several corporate values were selected by only one manager. The most cited value that does not appear in the corporate values statement is 'employees matter', with five mentions, followed by 'security' and 'making a difference', with three each. As well as the limited number of corporate values selected by individual managers, it is clear that the set selected differs from manager to manager. Not one value was selected by all managers interviewed, and no two managers selected exactly the same set of corporate values.

In addition to the limited number of values selected by each manager, there also appears to be a pattern in those selected. All managers selected at least one value from the 'mode of conduct' values, and all but three managers selected only from one of either the society or self-centred groups. This suggests that managers are displaying a preference for one over the other. It is interesting to note that the HITECH code of values includes some that are clearly society-centred, and some that are clearly self-centred, as well as a majority that are mode of conduct centred. Overall, there was a greater tendency amongst the managers at HITECH to select society-centred values over self-centred ones.

Meaning of corporate values

The corporate values statement at HITECH has been part of the identity of the organisation longer than any of those interviewed had been employed. At the same time, there is a relatively high number of values in the values statement, or

perceived to be in the statement by the managers interviewed. Consequently, managers had a greater range for selecting corporate values than was the case with those at FMCG. This reduced the scope for comparing the meaning of value terms when only one or two managers had selected it. There was, however, some differences in the meaning given to those that were selected frequently.

The corporate value 'integrity' was interpreted in a number of different ways. Some managers saw it simply as the code of conduct for doing business, as in Peter Hughes' view that it means "proper behaviour, good business", or John Roberts' comment that "the integrity thing is quite strong" because of a "fairly strong audit function that will pick up any contravention of the standards of business conduct". Chris Maume saw integrity as more than just proper behaviour, but in a similar fashion: "to have integrity requires putting boundary conditions on things, because people with integrity don't do *anything*". Others saw integrity in terms of personal relationships, as did Bernard Nixon, whose view was that "integrity for me is about me and you, me and whoever; that is how I deal with you, within a framework that I might have". Tim Kelly felt it was related to his own independence because "integrity comes back to my own choices, you know", while Chris Bickell gave a similar definition in response to my probing for the meaning of integrity:

"It's giving people space, and expecting them to give me – I expect space, so those other areas where we were saying, you know, I've got the chance to cause things to happen and that means causing things to happen with other people, but it doesn't mean um, telling them what to do. It's explaining to them, and convincing them, and respecting, in the end, their personal decision to take an action or not, but also expecting them to give me the space to present to them the opportunity, and to argue for it, and if someone else argues against it, then they should have total right to do that and then that person makes up their mind."

In a similar fashion, 'openness' was seen as open criticism, or freedom to express opinions, as open information, so there were few company secrets, or as an open door, so one could talk to superiors about problems. While most considered respect for individuals as a belief that everyone will do a good job, and deserves

their voice, Phil Reeves focused on the “respect for the fact that people have very different ways of working”.

6.5.3 Relating corporate values selection with personal value priorities: two examples

In order to explore the relationship between managers’ selection of corporate values and their personal value priorities, I shall first consider two managers, Peter Hughes and Graham Petersen, in some detail as they represent the greatest difference between the interpretations of the corporate values of the managers interviewed. Making a comparison is a “time honoured, classic way to test a conclusion” (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 254), and the two vignettes allow for a description of the relationship between personal values and career history and between personal values and interpretation of corporate values.

Peter Hughes

Peter is a manager at HITECH’s research and development division, where he has worked for fourteen years, originally as a research engineer, although he explained that he was keen on management from the start: “I am more a people’s person which I think is probably going to be relevant, so I enjoyed people type challenges, dealing with people”.

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Belonging ↑	Isolation					Family	
Working with people ↑	Self-motivation	Relationship with God ↑	Take it or leave it	People matter ↑	Messing people around		
Teamwork ↑	Individual work	My faith is integral ↑	Emptiness	Care about people ↑	Task oriented		
Achieve results through others	Real hands on work yourself	Life	Hobby	Good people skills	Poor people skills		
Constructs elicited from positions held 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from non-work activities 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from work colleagues 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

Figure 6.7: Peter Hughes' personal values

Peter's personal values, as elicited by the laddering exercise, revealed a person with a very strong faith, and with a clear preference for 'belonging' and for 'people'. This combination of faith and people was evident in his account of his preference for managerial work:

"I had been a leader in a church for many years, been responsible for youth groups and things like this, so had always been a fairly people orientated person. I enjoyed technology but it doesn't really turn me on in quite the same way as I see it turn other people on. Whereas, you know, dealing with people, you know, I see other people cry away from, but actually I find that very satisfying."

His preference for people is somewhat qualified, and in the following statement, Peter indicates a preference for those he knows over strangers. This suggests that his personal values may centre on Schwartz's 'benevolence' value type, which Schwartz defines as 'preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent contact' (Schwartz, 1992: 9). His recent promotion has meant that Peter has had to move outside the security of the known group:

"I am feeling partly vulnerable, partly you know, OK about it, you know, the job that I am doing. It is a new challenge for me, it does require me to do better networking outside of the building with other parts of the company. You know, it is not necessarily one of my strengths particularly, so when I say I'm a people's person, it's got to be people I know – establishing cold contacts and things like is not so much my forte."

Peter's description of the corporate values started with his impressions when he first arrived in the company, and he selected values that appear to reflect his own, particularly that of 'people matter' and 'belonging'. Peter was one of two managers to identify 'community' as a corporate value:

"I think the kind of things that struck me about corporate values in the [corporate values statement] was, one, the emphasis on the value of the individual. You know, the individual really does matter, and I felt that was really important. [...] It was a company also that seemed to want to be good for the local environment, you know, I think one of [the company's] values is 'doing good for the community' [...]. The sort of core values, the value of the individual, you know, we realised that we supported loads of local charities and things like that here in

[the locality], and the importance of creating the environment that would be good for [the locality], and open door policy and all these kinds of things. Those values became very quickly quite overt, and I felt it was a good, you know, good place to be. I couldn't criticise these, these were the values, I felt yeah, that I exactly share those kinds of things.”

At the end of the statement above, Peter aligns his own values with those that he interprets the company as having. A little later in the interview, Peter returned to the corporate values, this time introducing that of being paid for performance, a value he describes as being ‘tough’ but ‘fair’.

“I think there are two for me that stand out – one is the one I mentioned a lot which is, you know, ‘you matter’. It is probably the shortest way of putting it into words, you know, ‘you matter’, but coupled with that and it is not particularly peculiar to [the company], is that you’re paid for performance. That you know, its we don’t expect, like a civil service just, you know, expect to go on the roll just because of long service history and things like that, you know. It is just simply not the way it works here. If you are good you will do well, if you are not then don’t expect to. Which is tough but at least seems fair.”

This was qualified a few minutes later, when Peter referred to the recent initiatives coming from corporate headquarters, which placed a greater emphasis on contribution. Here, Peter indicates his own reaction to the consequences of this initiative:

“So, [the CEO] really is now calling the company to account to deal with poor performance. [...] Because, you know, it is within the corporate value of you know, ‘we pay for performance, we pay according to your contribution, we value the individual’, but when you do look at what sort of consequences of that are, it feels a little uncomfortable.”

His conflict is apparent here, and while the value ‘contribution’ is consistent with the notion of belonging, Peter finds the effect of failure to contribute ‘uncomfortable’, perhaps because it conflicts with that of ‘people matter’. There appears to be a clear relationship between the corporate values that Peter selects, and which he declares that he shares, and his own personal values. For Peter, whose personal values are ‘belonging’, ‘faith in God’, ‘people matter’ and his ‘family’, the distinctive corporate values at HITECH are ‘people matter’, the

‘community’ and ‘contribution’. In addition, Peter aligned himself with the mode of conduct values of ‘integrity’, ‘trust’, ‘openness’ and ‘quality’. As a final comment, when discussing the difficult trading conditions the company was experiencing, Peter returned to the corporate values:

“The core of the [corporate] values is that ‘you count, you matter’, that, if [the company] is going to change, and it is not going to this now, its going to do that, [the company] will try very hard to relocate you into doing another, do something else, retrain you etc. etc. Clearly, it is not always possible and clearly there are times, quite often, where people do get made redundant, you know. It’s life, because you can't do for everybody, but, you know, they do try hard and there is, I think, there is a corporate policy that [the company] will try its utmost to find you another job within the company. Which – I think that policy clearly comes through as a value.”

Graham Peterson

Graham represents a clear contrast to Peter. Graham is a senior manager, heading up a product group at the commercial division, and has a background in sales and sales management. His personal values, as elicited by the laddering exercise, emphasised his individual nature. He prefers ‘stimulation’ to ‘boredom’, ‘being me’ over ‘trying to work out who I am in the commune’ and ‘free thinking’ over ‘politicking’. The additional value he identified was ‘honesty’.

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Stimulation	Boredom	Being me	Trying to work out who I am	Free thinking	Politicking	Honesty	
↑		↑		↑			
A challenge	Just Implementing	Privacy	Be in the commune	Enable freedom & openness	Political agendas		
↑		↑		↑			
Does not restrict my thinking	Prescriptive work environment	Treating me like I am special	Fitting in	Generates trust	Uncertainty		
↑		↑		↑			
Lot of discretion	Cog in a wheel	Civilised freedom	Treated like cattle	Honest	Deceitful		
Constructs elicited from positions held 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from places visited on holiday 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from work colleagues 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

Figure 6.8: Graham Peterson's personal values

Graham's career history reflected his personal values as elicited by the laddering exercises. At one time during the interview, he told me of an opportunity that he was presented with, and which ultimately led to his present position.

"So I woke up this morning and discovered that, blimmed heck, what is all this about then, you know, I thought this was just the next step in the career and after that I would do this other job. But what I discovered was it had some very, very interesting and what I see as very exciting characteristics. One was it was an organisation that needed to change dramatically to ultimately survive and be successful. [...] Sort of number two about it was, it sort of threw up all of these different personal challenges of communication with a large number of people, and number three, it had – to be successful – it had to be radically repositioned in the mind sets of [the company] as well as the clients. So this is the biggest, roundest challenge you could probably have imagined, and actually I was very ill prepared for it, and so was [the company], as they didn't realise what they were doing either."

Graham was able to admit that he was ill-prepared for the new job, which involved setting up an entirely new product group that changed the shape of the company's offering. In this account, there are indications of Graham's preferences for stimulation and challenge, and for freethinking. A little later, he explained the personal choice that he thought he had to make if the new opportunity was going to be successful, and which involved personal change, reflecting his second value:

"I made a very conscious personal choice to say I am really interested in a really serious change as opposed to what probably I had been driven by in my sales roles which was do a good job and get the next one. It was one of the most serious moments of my life actually, as you can probably tell by the emotion I feel about it all, where I actually sort of said I don't care whether they think this is right or wrong, this is what I am going to do."

Summing up the experience, Graham described the last few years involved in building up this important part of the company in terms of a personal journey:

"So it's been a very enriching journey for me actually. Very enriching journey and if I look back and say what does it mean for me, well it meant quite few

things in – not all positive, a lot of it positive – because I, intellectually, find all of that very exciting and interesting and very motivating thing to have done.”

When describing the corporate values of the organisation, Graham first talked of a recent development in the way the corporate values are being interpreted at a sub-cultural level. He appears to be acknowledging the potential for different department heads to put an interpretation of the values that differs from the corporate level:

“We often talk a lot about silos and people being in silos, and the various business units that exist in that, and [my division] is one of those silos. So, I think the values are being challenged because they are getting a closer interpretation inside of the silos than they are across a broad corporate level, so there is the potential for almost undermining the corporate set of values, because they are being compared with the way that is articulated by someone who is the most important person in the silo, which is, say, someone like me.”

In a short, decisive burst, Graham told me what he considered to be the corporate values at HITECH. The values he selected appear to reflect his own value priorities, and are very different to those selected earlier by Peter Hughes:

“Achievement, commitment, following through on what you say you are going to do, innovation, anything to do with inventing, new ideas – that is absolutely part of the [corporate values]. Doing things that count. Just don’t do things for doing things sake, but do things because it makes a difference. These are absolutely the values.”

Moreover, a little later on, Graham implied that he had internalised the corporate values when he declared:

“You know, the [corporate values] are in here” [pointing to his heart]

The corporate values that Graham can find in his heart appear to be different corporate values to the ones that Peter “exactly shares”. Graham’s version of the corporate values is close to his personal values, and the same is the case for Peter. This suggests that the managers are selecting those corporate values that reflect their own personal value priorities.

6.5.4 Corporate values and personal value priorities: all managers

The above examples represent what might be considered the poles that highlight the relationship between managers' personal value priorities and their interpretation of their organisation's corporate values. The findings from the other managers supports the notion that managers select those values that concur with their own in terms of the general trend in their corporate values selection. Furthermore, there were a number of cases where unusual values selected by managers as corporate values also turned up in their own value systems.

		<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> Predominantly society-centred personal values ← → Predominantly self-centred personal values </div>													
Corporate values selected		HUGHES	MARSH	ROBERTS	NIXON	RICHARDS	PHILLIPS	KELLY	USBORNE	MAUME	CONNELL	HARRISON	REEVES	BICKELL	PETERSON
Society-centred values	Sharing		*					*							
	Community	*						*							
	Belonging		*				*		*						
	Employees matter	*	*	*							*	*			
	Loyalty				*										
	Support				*										
	Security			*							*	*			
	Cooperation			*											
	Collaboration					*									
	Teamwork					*	*			*	*			*	
Contribution	*	*					*		*						
Accountability		*		*		*									
Mode of conduct values	Ethical business														
	Integrity	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*				*
	Trust	*	*		*	*	*		*	*			*		
	Honesty														
	Openness	*		*		*				*		*		*	
	Quality	*							*	*					
	Respect for individuals		*	*	*	*	*	*					*	*	
	Flexibility			*	*										
	Diversity											*	*		*
Functionality												*			
Self-centred values	Freedom			*	*							*			
	Individual responsibility				*							*		*	*
	Making a difference												*	*	*
	Innovation												*		*
	Intuition														*
	Commitment														*
	Achievement														*

Table 6.7: HITECH Corporate values selected by manager

Table 6.7 shows the relationship between managers' personal value priorities and their selection of corporate values. In the table, the managers interviewed have been arranged according to their personal value priorities, with those holding predominantly society-centred personal values on the left, and those with predominantly self-centred personal values to the right. As can be seen, Peter Hughes is situated on the far left, and Graham Peterson on the far right.

The order is based on the number of personal values that can be categorised as society or self-centred out of those elicited in the laddering exercise (see Appendix H). In this way, the most society-centred values were elicited with Hughes, followed by Marsh, Roberts, Nixon and Richards. At the other end, Peterson revealed the most self-centred personal values, followed by Bickell, Reeves and Harrison. The differences amongst those managers placed in the middle of the display are small, and it was necessary to consider subordinate as well as superordinate constructs to make placing decisions. The table shows the values selected by each manager, and the corporate values have been categorised according in the same way as in Table 6.6, with the 'mode of conduct' type values in the middle, society-type values at the top, and self-centred ones at the bottom. The pattern in Table 6.7 shows a general tendency for the corporate values selected to reflect personal value priorities. This is particularly noticeable when the three managers at each end are considered; those with predominantly society-centred personal values selected predominantly society-centred corporate values, while those with predominantly self-centred personal values selected predominantly self-centred corporate values.

In addition to this general pattern that suggests that managers select corporate values that align with their personal value priorities, the selection of unusual values was illuminating. Only one manager, Bernard Nixon, selected the value 'loyalty' as a corporate value, and the same value was elicited as a personal value in the laddering exercise. He also selected 'freedom', and this was elicited as a personal value. Cathy Richards selected 'collaboration', and 'collaborative

working' appeared in her personal values, while Calum Philips selected 'belonging', which also was elicited as a personal value. Brian Connell holds the personal value 'security', and he was one of three to identify that as a corporate value, another being Ben Harrison, who also indicated a preference for security in his account of his career history (see page 157). In a similar fashion, Phil Reeves identified the corporate value of 'functionality', and while this itself did not show up in his personal values, 'order and neatness' did.

Intermediate group

Table 6.8 shows the personal value priorities and the corporate values selected by those managers who neither fall into the predominantly society-centred nor into the self-centred groups.

	Personal values	Coded corporate values	Quotes from the transcript
Tim Kelly	Accomplishment Enjoyment Integrity Respect for other people	Community Contribution Respect for individuals	"I don't have the list of corporate values in my mind. I remember profit and I've nothing against profit, that is the first one on the list, and then there is citizenship and there is one about respect."
Robert Osborne	Generosity Challenging Stimulation Interaction with others	Belonging Contribution Integrity Trust Quality	"I think it is kind of interesting because it does have relatively explicit values, it is a clean company."
Chris Maume	Freedom Living life to the full Truth Proclaiming the truth	Teamwork Integrity Trust Openness Quality	"If I could pick one quality in the [values] I think it would be 'trust' ... trust, I would say, is the single biggest summary word I could use of the [corporate values]."
Brian Connell	Achievement Meeting internal goals Fun Security	Employees matter Security Teamwork Integrity	"I think we are caught between value sets at the moment ... on the one hand we have fairly inclusive value sets ... and now we're moving to the Thatcherite principles which were the brightest and the best survive"
Ben Harrison	Live according to beliefs Honesty A simple life Tradition Recognition Security	Employees matter Security Openness Diversity Freedom Individual responsibility	"On the one hand you get huge amounts of freedom, huge amounts of empowerment, huge amounts of 'I'm responsible' ... but you have to temper that in a certain fashion" "[The company] espoused diversity, it said we will take anybody, it doesn't matter who you are ... and now there is a requisite ... that you have to be of a certain type."

Table 6.8: Personal value priorities and corporate value interpretations of managers in the intermediate group

The match between the values selected and their own personal value priorities is less clear than for those that appear to hold values predominantly in one group or the other, but there are still examples of matching. Tim Kelly, for example, picks out 'respect for individuals' as a corporate value, and cited 'respect for other people' as a personal value. Robert Osborne identified 'belonging' and 'contribution', while his personal values include 'interaction with others' and 'generosity'. Chris Maume identifies 'trust' as the most significant of the corporate values, and this resonates with his personal values of 'truth', and 'proclaiming the truth', while Brian Connell sees 'security' as a corporate value, and it is a personal value as well.

In some cases, there appear to be some anomalies in the values selected and the managers' personal values. For example, with the exception of 'security', Brian Connell's personal values are more self- than society-centred, and yet he selected society-centred corporate values. Ben Harrison revealed some of the conflicts within his own personal values described earlier (see page 157) in selecting corporate values such as 'freedom' and 'diversity', which appear consistent with those values elicited by the laddering exercise, and 'security' and 'employees matter', which appear to reflect the contrasting values of 'security' and 'recognition' that arose from his career history.

Perceptions of shared values

Nine of the fourteen managers interviewed indicated at some stage of the interview that HITECH's corporate values in some way reflected their own, and the summary statements are set out in Table 6.9 below. Some of these managers pick out particular values, which they then emphasise as matching their own, while others, such as Osborne and Peterson generalise to the statement as a whole. Ben Harrison declares that he doesn't value the statement, but does value the contents of the statement, while Brian Connell talks about the 'older set', here contrasting the corporate values statement with those implicit in the 'back to basics' document. Bernard Nixon states that the corporate values generally reflect his own, although, as he says, they could probably be skewed a little here and

there in order to make a better fit, thus indicating some minor differences in priorities. These managers appear to be saying that they share, broadly, the corporate values, that HITECH's values are their values. It would seem that among HITECH managers there is a sense of shared values at the level of the generic 'HITECH code', but when the detail of those corporate values is explored, the differences are significant, and reflect differences in the managers' personal values.

<p>"Those values became very quickly quite overt, and I felt it was a good, you know, good place to be. I couldn't criticise these, these were the values, I felt yeah, that I exactly share those kinds of things." (Hughes)</p>	<p>"I do buy [the corporate values], 'trust and integrity', and 'respect for the individual', 'accountability', 'teamwork' - I guess those are the ones I hold, those are the ones I hold to myself." (Marsh)</p>	<p>"You know all the key stuff like trust, loyalty, resourcefulness are embedded in there in one sense or another, you know, probably you could sit down and say, 'oh well, personally I would like a little bit skewed towards this or a little bit more skewed towards the other'" (Nixon)</p>
<p>"So, certainly in [this division] particularly, it is non confrontational and it is really about how good your ideas are, not how big your job title is. So those values are very important, I think - to me personally - I think it is also caring." (Philips)</p>	<p>"I mean I certainly have my own set of values that go along more or less the same as [the company], so for me that is an attractive part." (Usborne)</p>	<p>[On the 'back to basics' document] "The word 'integrity' does not appear anywhere ... so that is a concern to people like me who have that as a value they resonate with." (Maume)</p>
<p>"I guess my, which are closest to my own, is probably the older set, because I actually think that having uncompromising integrity, I don't think integrity is something - you can't be half-pregnant - it's kind of you either have integrity or you don't..." (Connell)</p>	<p>"I don't value the [corporate values statement], but I value some of the ... some of the contents of it, in that it's sort of how one should live one's life anyway, right? It's like religion, you know, one isn't necessarily a Christian but one can still say 'well actually I believe in everything He said because that's how you kind of should live you life.'" (Harrison)</p>	<p>"You know, the [corporate values] are in here" [pointing to his heart] (Peterson)</p>

Table 6.9: Managers identifying HITECH's corporate values with their own

6.5.5 Length of service and sub-group effects

In the discussion of the possible ways in which value systems may be harmonised set out in chapter two, I considered the argument that individuals' personal values might adapt to those of the organisation over time through the process of socialisation. If this were the case, one might expect a closer match of values

between those who have a long service record, when compared with those relatively new to the organisation. Likewise, in organisations with differentiated cultures (Martin, 1992), one might find greater consistency in personal values, and in interpretation of corporate values within a sub-group, when compared with the group as a whole. These two possible explanations are considered here.

Effect of length of service

Theories of socialisation (e.g. Van Maanen & Schien, 1979) suggest that value priorities converge over a period of time, and as members of an organisation reach positions of influence and seniority. If this were the case, one might expect that both the personal value priorities and managers' interpretations of corporate values would be more similar amongst those who have been with the organisation longer, compared with those with a relatively short service record. The accounts given by managers at HITECH do not support this view as Table 6.10 shows.

		HUGHES	ROBERTS	NIXON	KELLY	MAUME	CONNELL	REEVES	PETERSON
Corporate values selected									
Society-centred values	Community	*			*				
	Employees matter	*	*				*		
	Loyalty			*					
	Support			*					
	Security		*				*		
	Cooperation		*						
	Teamwork					*	*		
	Contribution	*			*				
	Accountability			*					
Mode of conduct values	Integrity	*	*	*		*	*		*
	Trust	*		*		*		*	
	Openness	*	*			*			
	Quality	*				*			
	Respect for individuals		*	*	*			*	
	Flexibility		*	*					
	Diversity							*	*
	Functionality							*	
Self-centred values	Freedom		*	*					
	Individual responsibility			*					*
	Making a difference							*	*
	Innovation							*	*
	Intuition								*
	Commitment								*
	Achievement								*

Table 6.10: HITECH Corporate values selected by managers with over fourteen years service

Eight of the fourteen managers interviewed had worked with HITECH for fourteen or more years, and all those interviewed were in senior management positions. Three of the managers who held the title 'director' had been with the company for eighteen or more years. The range of values selected by those managers with the greater length of service is as varied as for the group as a whole. Indeed the two outliers, Graham Peterson and Peter Hughes have both worked for HITECH for more than fourteen years. The table places the managers in the same order as in Table 6.7 (see page 185), with those holding society-centred personal values to the left, and those holding self-centred personal values to the right. The spread of personal value priorities amongst the managers with more than fourteen years service at HITECH is as great as for the group as a whole. It is not possible to say with complete confidence that there has or has not been some convergence of personal values or corporate value interpretation over the period, as both these may have been even more diverse fourteen or more years ago. The evidence suggests, however, that if convergence does occur, it does so only weakly.

Effect of sub-group

The managers interviewed at HITECH came from two divisions, the commercial and the research & development division. While there was a spread of functional background amongst those managers from the commercial division, all managers from the R&D division worked closely together, and were in the same function. Furthermore, all managers in the R&D division has similar backgrounds, all being scientists and engineers. The research and development division has a special status within HITECH, a consequence of the company's history and the engineering background of its founders. This is symbolised in the separation of the R&D centres from other parts of the company and the more direct reporting relationships; the R&D division in the UK reports directly to corporate headquarters, while commercial functions report through the regional headquarters. This separation of the R&D function, together with its special status and the similar institutional backgrounds of its members might be expected to lead

to a distinct sub-culture within the company. Such a sub-culture might be expected to have a narrower range of values than is apparent in the company as a whole, but Table 6.11 indicates this not to be the case.

		HUGHES	RICHARDS	PHILLIPS	KELLY	USBORNE	CONNELL	HARRISON	REEVES	BICKELL
Corporate values selected										
Society-centred values	Community	*			*					
	Belonging			*		*				
	Employees matter	*					*	*		
	Security						*	*		
	Collaboration		*							
	Teamwork		*	*			*			*
	Contribution	*			*	*				
	Accountability			*						
Mode of conduct values	Integrity	*	*	*		*	*			
	Trust	*	*	*		*			*	
	Openness	*	*					*		*
	Quality	*				*				
	Respect for individuals		*	*	*				*	*
	Diversity							*	*	
	Functionality								*	
Self-centred values	Freedom							*		
	Individual responsibility							*		*
	Making a difference								*	*
	Innovation								*	

Table 6.11: HITECH Corporate values selected by managers from the R&D division

Eight of the fourteen managers interviewed came from the same department, one of two departments in the UK research and development division. The table presents the values selected by these managers from the R&D division, arranged as before in order of their personal value priorities. It shows a similar spread in selection of corporate values to the group as a whole, and includes a similar spread in personal value preferences. This suggests that any subculture effect on interpretation of corporate values or on personal value priorities is, at best, weak.

6.5.6 Summary

Managers at HITECH selected, on average, just over six values when discussing their interpretation of the corporate values statement, with one selecting just three values, and two selecting as many as nine. No two managers selected exactly the same corporate values. Those managers who selected society-centred values tended to select few, if any, self-centred values, and those who selected self-

centred values tended not to select society-centred values. All managers selected at least one 'mode of conduct' value, and these represented the largest group selected across all managers interviewed. Those managers whose personal values elicited in the laddering exercise were predominantly society-centred tended to select society-centred corporate values. Those managers with predominantly self-centred personal values tended to select self-centred corporate values. Managers whose personal values were not clearly centred on society or the self tended to select a mixture of corporate values, but with a skew towards the society-centred. Nine of the fourteen managers interviewed indicated that the corporate values reflected their own personal values. There was no obvious convergence of personal values or of selection of corporate values amongst those managers with a greater length of service. Managers with similar backgrounds working in the same sub-group of the research and development division showed a similar, diverse pattern in corporate value selection and personal value preferences to the larger group.

6.6 Avoidance of conflicting values: findings across all cases

In the previous sections, I have considered the relationship between managers' personal values and their interpretation of their organisation's corporate values. The findings suggest that managers select or adapt the meaning of corporate values so that they more accurately reflect their own personal values. This way of accommodating two value systems is likely to be limited by the extent to which the corporate values can be interpreted in such a way. What happens, therefore, when the corporate values cannot be interpreted to match personal values? In this section, I consider some examples that managers gave me about their relationships with companies they had worked for in the past in order to explore the impact of such mismatches.

Of those interviewed, several managers talked about a clash of values with an organisation they had previously worked for. Most only became aware of the

difference in values some time after taking up their position, but on some occasions the mismatch was clear from the start. One such experience was reported by Bernard Nixon (HITECH) who described his feelings on the first day of joining a company:

“I walked through the door on my first morning and realised I had made a hideous mistake as a young lad of I don't know, early 20s or so, I suppose I would be then, 21 maybe, and just determined probably by lunch time that it wasn't where I wanted to be. [...] The company was sort of Dickensian. There was a definite hierarchy and a lot of, a lot more about position, a lot less about person if you like so there were two staircases. Basically, directors used one staircase, plebs used the other staircase. ... When the bell rang everybody went downstairs for their coffee, when the bell again everybody came upstairs. It was very structured, very organised, very little room for any sort of self expression, you know, just very, very organised and very, very old fashioned, very old fashioned. I mean it really was you know, probably at the time you could see a sort of early 20 year old sobbing, going ‘what on earth am I doing here?’ It was desperate.”

Bernard Nixon's personal values included ‘belonging to a team’ as opposed to ‘being an individual’, ‘freedom to make decisions’ as opposed to ‘being controlled by others’, ‘stimulation’ and ‘loyalty’. It would appear that the structured, rule bound organisation he joined conflicted directly, and strongly, with his value of freedom to make decisions. He described his move to HITECH as being motivated to do anything “that just would get me out of that company”. Stewart Hinds (FMCG) had a similar experience with his first job after leaving university:

“I decided to join [a financial service company] at the time ... totally brand new organisation in the insurance arm, unstructured, and I thought I would get the greater challenge in an entity which is evolving, emerging, rather than an established organisation. I found that challenging professionally but utterly boring from the business point of view, hated, didn't relate to the product, money, pretty boring and insurance so I saw an advert in the IPM magazine for an HR project manager, I was lucky to get the job, fortunate to get the job, that was with FMCG.”

Stewart's values include ‘life balance’ as opposed to ‘single focus’, ‘achievement’ as opposed to ‘impotence, what he describes as ‘never a dull moment’ over ‘boredom’, and ‘family’. In his experience with the bank, it was the ‘utterly

boring' nature of the work that led him to go for a job at FMCG. Both these managers identified the mismatch between their values and those of their organisation fairly quickly, but others took rather longer to take the action that resulted in them moving. Phil Reeves (HITECH), for example, worked in his previous company for several years before realising:

“that [the company’s] values, particularly as they related to staff and people, were quite different from mine and would cause problems further on in my career. [...] Firstly, they always regarded labour completely and utterly as a market. It was a commodity, all labour is a commodity. [...] There were other aspects as well. Again, the sort of memos that would come down from the chief executive or managing directors office that would go out to everybody and ... it was obvious that they hadn't even read them after, after signing or before signing them before they were duplicated. There was appalling grammar in there for example. I know this guy was not a stupid fool, he wasn't uneducated. You could just read the thing, the sentences didn't scan and things like that and you think if that is what he cares about it, fine, that's a broad statement of the value sets. [...] There was complete and utter rigidity on an awful lot of things where you would have thought well hang on, let's be a bit more flexible. So it was those kind of things that you know, I just naah.”

It is interesting that Phil Reeves should identify the 'appalling grammar' of the CEO's memo as an example of the values clash, particularly as his own values include 'order & neatness' over 'chaos', as well as 'in control' over 'absence of control', 'stimulation' over 'stagnation' and 'fairness', 'equality' and 'individuality'. It appears that in this case, these latter three values were also being violated at this company. Another example is Calum Philips (HITECH), whose first ladder elicited the value of 'security', and who told me that “one of the things I found difficult about the academic career was the uncertainty”. One of the values elicited from Robert Osborne (HITECH) was 'interaction with people' as opposed to 'interaction with things'. He left a position in a university because he found it “set up an observation of academic values and academic culture: I was always going to be in the wrong place because I actually network with the real world, and those guys networked with the theoretical”.

One manager from the initial exploratory study, Roger Barnes (HCC), described the change in values that occurred when the hotel he was working in was taken over by a large chain. His own values were inferred, rather than being laddered, but he indicated he held values concerning people, teamwork, challenges, and helping others:

“Then ... the hotel was sold and I couldn't work with [the new owners]. They were a terrible company to work for. They had – they used their people to the point of exploiting them, and I couldn't do that – I'm not that sort of manager, I don't manage in that way, I try and treat my people – it's a hard enough job in this trade as it is without exploiting people, and ... you know ... I just wouldn't do it, I couldn't treat people the way they wanted me to treat them, you know, the sort of profit at the expense of people. [...] So I left there.”

In all the situations where managers found their values clashed strongly with that of the company, they left the organisation to find work elsewhere. This suggests that, while managers may be able to interpret values that are not in direct conflict with their own in such a way that they more closely match their own value priorities, there is a limit to this interpretation. When the limit was reached, the course of action that these managers took was to leave the company. Interestingly, none admitted to including value congruence as a priority in searching for a new position, but Ben Harrison (HITECH), Stewart Hinds (FMCG) and Roger Barnes (HCC) all commented that they became aware of the difference in corporate values soon after joining.

6.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I began by describing briefly the two companies in the main study, and then compared the personal values as elicited by the ladder method with managers' accounts of their career history. This showed a consistency between these indirect methods for understanding informant's value priorities. Following this, I considered each company in turn and reported the interpretations of corporate values made by managers, which I then related to their own value

priorities. The findings from both companies showed that managers do interpret their corporate values in ways that are different from one another, and that these differences are consistent with differences in their own personal value priorities. Sometimes the match between the two value sets is pronounced, and at other times it is only partial, but there appears to be coherence between the ways that managers interpret their organisation's corporate values and their own value priorities. There is no evidence in the findings that managers' personal values, or their interpretation of corporate values, become more closely matched the longer they work for the organisation, nor do those who work in one sub unit of HITECH interpret the corporate values any more similarly than within the company as a whole. Finally, there is evidence that managers in this study resigned from organisations when there was a significant mismatch between their and their organisation's value priorities, suggesting that avoidance of conflict may be a more powerful influence than seeking congruence. In the next chapter, I discuss the implications of these findings.

7 Discussion and conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This study explores the relationship between managers' personal values and their interpretation of their organisation's corporate values. The rationale for this topic as a study for research is that much of the management literature on corporate values explicitly or implicitly assumes that organisational members internalise corporate values into their own personal value system (Nohira & Ghoshal, 1994; Ouchi, 1980; Peters & Waterman, 1982). At the same time, research into personal values indicates that an individual's personal value system is relatively enduring and does not easily change after its initial formation (Feather, 1975; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992; Smith, 1969). Furthermore, corporate values are normally presented as a number of individual value statements that are not ordered in terms of priority, while the hierarchical nature of an individual's value system does imply placing priority on certain values over others (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). In spite of the attention paid to corporate values over the past two decades (Yeung & Yeung, 1995), and the increasing interest in values-based management (Pruzan, 1998), little attention has been paid to how these two value systems interrelate (Hambrick & Brandon, 1988; Roe & Ester, 1999). While the relationship between the personal and corporate values has some impact across all organisational members, it is of particular importance at the senior manager level. Senior managers have responsibility for developing and implementing strategic initiatives (Bowman & Kakabadse, 1997) and for protecting and enhancing the identity of the organisation (Barker, 1998; Selznick, 1957). Advancing our understanding of the relationship between the two sets of values at this level of the organisation is important because of the implications it might have for the roles that corporate values play in organisations. The outcomes may also help further our understanding of the relationship between personal and corporate values, and the process of strategy formation.

The research study is exploratory in nature, and is undertaken from an interpretive paradigm. Three organisations took part in the study, and each showed some differences in the status of their corporate values. The organisation involved in the initial exploratory study, HCC, had no official statement of corporate values. One of the main study organisations, FMCG, had recently introduced a new corporate values statement, while the other, HITECH, had originally set down its corporate values many years earlier, and these were very much part of its corporate identity. The differences in the status of the corporate values statement broadened the scope of the study. The research design was based on interviews, which, in the main study, were combined with the use of the laddering technique (Hinkle, 1965) to elicit personal values. Five managers took part in the initial exploratory study, and twenty-two managers, all holding senior or director status, took part in the main study. The outcomes of the semi-structured interviews and the laddering exercises were rich data sets that combined elicited personal values with managers' interpretations of their corporate values. These 'values-with-interpretations' formed the basis of the analysis, which was carried out at the intra-manager, inter-manager and inter-organisational levels. The findings are described in Chapters Five and Six, and are discussed below.

In this chapter, I first discuss the findings of the research, reported in the previous two chapters in relation to the four types of relationships that might be present between the two value systems. I show that the findings from the fieldwork lead to the conclusion that managers interpret corporate values in such a way that they more closely fit their personal value priorities. Secondly, I consider the implications of these differences in interpretation of corporate values when taken together with the finding that managers felt they share their organisation's corporate values. From this, I propose a model of the relationship between the two value systems, and consider its implications for the role that corporate values might play in organisations. In the next section, I consider the conclusions of the findings from the perspective of the philosophies implicit in deliberate and emergent strategising, and suggest that the interpretation of corporate values by managers represents a means by which the two can be integrated. I then consider

the implications that these findings might have for practice, in terms of the suggested roles for values, and in terms of the saliency of managers' personal values. Finally, I state the contribution that this research makes to theory, method and practice, the limitations of the research study and suggested areas for further research.

7.2 Summary of findings

In Chapter Two, I suggested that the outcome to this study might show managers to have similar or different personal value priorities, and to have similar or different ways of interpreting corporate values. The relationships between managers' personal values and their interpretation of corporate values might therefore manifest itself in one of four ways, as outlined in Figure 2.5 below.

		Managers' interpretation of corporate values	
		Similar	Different
Managers' personal value priorities	Similar	<i>Indicative of selection or socialisation leading to homogeneity</i>	<i>Weak relationship between the values.</i>
	Different	<i>Weak relationship between the values. Indicative of calculated fit?</i>	<i>If correlated, indicative of adaptation of corporate values to suit personal value priorities</i>

Figure 7.1: Relationships between personal and corporate values

Should the outcome of the study show similarities in both managers' personal value priorities and their interpretations of corporate values, this would indicate that selection and socialisation processes have led to value congruence. Such a finding would support Lacey & Schwart's "path of realism" (1996: 327) whereby managers adjust their own personal values to suit those of the organisation, and

would indicate a close relationship between the two value systems. A second possible outcome would be that managers interpret their corporate values in similar ways, but show differences in their personal value priorities. This would indicate a weak relationship between the two value systems, and may indicate that managers 'wear' their organisation's accepted ideology (Abravanel, 1983), and that such a fit can be 'calculated' (Mintzberg 1996). A third possible outcome would be that managers have similar personal value priorities, but interpret their organisation's corporate values differently. Such an outcome would again indicate a weak relationship between the value systems, and would suggest that some factor other than personal values had a greater impact on corporate value interpretation. The fourth possible outcome would be that managers have different personal value priorities, and interpret their organisation's corporate values differently. If the differences in personal value priorities correlate with differences in interpretation of corporate values, then this would indicate a close relationship between the two value systems. It would also suggest that interpretation of corporate values is mediated by personal values, thus challenging the assumption of their assimilation by organisational members.

The findings of this research can be summed up in four statements. First, managers in this study display differences in their personal value priorities. Secondly, the same managers interpret their organisation's corporate values in ways that are different from each other. Thirdly, the differences in the way these managers interpret their organisation's corporate values are broadly consistent with differences in their personal value priorities. Finally, many managers indicated that they shared their organisation's corporate values. In this section, I shall take the first three of these statements in turn to summarise the findings that support them and link them to the theoretical positions taken in the literature. The observation that many managers feel they share their organisation's corporate values is discussed in the following section.

7.2.1 Managers display differences in their personal value priorities

The personal values of managers elicited by the laddering method, and explored through the accounts managers gave of their career history showed two characteristics. First, they formed a broadly coherent set: both the contents of the value ladders, and the expression of those values in managers' accounts of their careers were generally consistent. Contradictions in managers' personal value systems were the exception. Secondly, personal value priorities varied from manager to manager in all three companies.

In the interviews, managers gave accounts of their career history in answer to the question of how they 'got to where they are today'. In answering, they revealed some of their personal values, particularly in describing things that were important to themselves, reasons for job changes, attitudes towards differing experiences in their lives, and periods of enjoyment and frustration. Later in the interviews, managers carried out laddering exercises from constructs drawn from both work and non-work elements, and which elicited personal value priorities. The findings show that personal values elicited by the laddering method were reflected in the stories that managers told about their career history. Thus, for example, Colin Cook, a senior manager at FMCG, revealed personal values that included those of 'success' and 'recognition', and the account of his career history included stories of success and revealed his enjoyment of the resulting recognition he received. Meanwhile, Cathy Richards, at HITECH, told the story of a team effort that successfully found a solution to an important medical problem, and later revealed personal values of 'wanting to make the world a better place' and 'collaborative working'. Examples such as these were common amongst those interviewed, and showed a consistency between managers' description of their own careers and their personal value priorities. There were few exceptions to this pattern. One case reported in Chapter Six is that of Ben Harrison, whose career story revealed a man who appeared to value security and recognition, but whose ladders suggested someone who values the simple, traditional life where he is free to live according to his beliefs. Ben recognised these elicited values, but declared them 'aspirational' and he accepted there was a difference between these two parts of

himself, echoing the difference between the 'want' and 'ought' self described by Bazerman et al. (1998).

Within each of the companies studied, there were widely differing personal value priorities amongst the managers interviewed. The variation in priorities in each company included most of the value types suggested by Schwartz (1992). For example, at FMCG, the value types of security, power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism and benevolence were all represented. At HITECH, all value types with the exception of that of power were represented, and at HCC, there was also a wide variety. This finding is consistent with studies that have investigated the value priorities of organisational members using survey methods (e.g. Adkins, et al., 1996; Buenger et al., 1996; Clare & Sanford, 1979; Meglino et al., 1989; Oliver, 1990), as well as those that have explored personal value priorities from an interpretive perspective (Mangham & Pye, 1991; Watson, 1994). While there were widely differing personal value priorities among the managers, there did appear to be some that were not held by any manager in each of the companies. Thus, values concerning personal power were absent amongst HITECH managers, values concerning conformity and tradition were absent at FMCG and those concerning self-direction and hedonism were absent at HCC. The number of managers interviewed in each organisation is too few for one to conclude that these values are not present amongst organisational members, but the finding raises the question of whether organisations and individuals more actively *select out* those values that conflict, rather than *select in* those whose values are congruent.

7.2.2 Managers interpret their organisation's corporate values differently

In all three cases studied, there were differences in the way that managers interpreted their organisation's corporate values. The differences in interpretation were manifested in both the actual value items selected by managers as representing the corporate values, and the meaning given to particular value terms.

At HCC, five managers identified a total of thirteen values that they collectively selected as representing the corporate values. Of these, one value, 'service quality', was selected by all five managers, but thereafter the selection of other values differed. Each manager selected between four and eight values that they considered being corporate values, and there appeared to be a pattern in their selection. Two managers selected predominantly society-centred values, including 'teamwork' and 'care of staff', while two selected predominantly self-centred values, such as 'exceeding expectations' and 'professionalism', while the fifth manager selected from a wider range. In addition to the range selected, the meaning attributed to the value terms also differed. The value of service quality, identified by all five managers, was interpreted by some in terms of the customers' needs, and by others in terms of the challenge it presented to staff, while the value of 'openness' was given three clearly different meanings.

The form of interpretation of corporate values was somewhat different at FMCG. Here, a new set of corporate values had been introduced some two years before the time of the interviews, replacing an older set. Although all managers interviewed held senior positions in the corporate headquarters, there were differences in their explanations regarding these two value systems. For some, the new set represented an addendum to the older ones, and were closely connected, while for others, the new values had replaced the others, which no longer had any place in the company's values. Furthermore, in spite of the relative proximity to each other and to the initiative that produced the new guiding principles, there were differences in the meaning attributed to these, and some managers added other values they identified the company as holding.

Fourteen managers were interviewed at HITECH. The corporate values here had been established long before any of the interviewees joined the company, but there was a pattern of selection of values similar to that at HCC. Managers here cited a total of twenty-nine different values, and an average of just over six each, as representing the corporate values. The values at HITECH can be grouped into three: those that are predominantly society-oriented; those predominantly self-

centred; and those that might be either, but were more concerned with mode of conduct, rather than end-states of existence. While all managers selected at least one value from this third group, they tended to select either from the first or the second group. One value, that of 'integrity' was identified by ten of the fourteen managers, but the meaning of the term varied; some saw it as conforming to codes of practice, while others interpreted it to mean something more akin to 'do as you would be done by'. The number of managers interviewed at HITECH, together with the fact that eight of them came from a single section of one division, meant that there was scope to compare the findings across different lengths of service, and from one subculture. The findings indicated a similar spread of interpretations of corporate values amongst those with fourteen or more years of service as with those who had served less than fourteen years. There was also a similar spread of interpretations amongst those in from the research and development division – a group of managers with similar backgrounds and who worked closely together – as there was in the commercial division, which included managers from different functional areas.

The finding is that managers interpret corporate values in ways that are different from one another. The notion of difference in corporate values interpretation has not gained much attention in the management literature, but the finding supports Bumpus & Munchus' (1996) study into the meaning of value terms, in which they concluded that "shared values do not necessarily imply shared meanings for those same values" (p. 170). The finding would also find support in the sensemaking literature, where it is acknowledged that individuals interpret and make sense of their world in idiosyncratic ways (Gioia, 1986). In discussing the concept of organisations as interpretation systems, Daft & Weick (1984) assert that while "managers may not fully agree about their perceptions, the thread of coherence among managers is what characterises organisational interpretations" (p. 285). At the extremes of interpretations in the organisations studied, however, the 'thread of coherence' appears at times to be somewhat stretched. The findings are consistent with those who have reported differences in 'shared' frames of

reference amongst members of groups (Boyce, 1995; Donnellon et al., 1986; Langfield-Smith, 1992).

7.2.3 Corporate values interpretation and personal value priorities

The differences in personal values of the managers interviewed across the three organisations, and the interpretations they gave to their corporate values appear to be related. This was most apparent where managers held strong society-centred values or strong self-centred values; the interpretation they gave of their corporate values matched their own value priorities. It was also apparent, however, across the range of personal value types and the conclusion is that managers interpret their organisation's corporate values in ways that more closely match their own.

Watson suggests that the managers in his study were actively engaged in 'searching for themselves' and that "managers' interest in attending to corporate strategic elements ... must be related to their own personal priorities and conception of self" (1994:45). The managers in this study, likewise, can be considered to be making sense of their corporate values – strategic elements – in relation to their personal value priorities. This manifests itself in a number of ways. First, the pattern of value selection and interpretation amongst managers is broadly consistent with the direction of their personal value priorities. Secondly, there were many occasions when the same value term appeared in both a manager's description of corporate values and his or her own personal values. These terms were often quite idiosyncratic themselves, and rarely cited by others, if at all. Thirdly, the accounts that managers gave regarding previous career histories indicate that personal values are triggered more when they are confronted with corporate values that are directly conflicting, rather than mildly different or congruent. That is, managers are more motivated to act in avoiding conflict than in seeking congruence. This finding supports the theory put forward by Schwartz (1996) that values "may play little role in behaviour except when there is value conflict" (p. 1).

These findings indicate that there is a close relationship between managers' personal values and their interpretation of their organisation's corporate values. The findings challenge the view that corporate values remain the fixed point and that personal values adapt to them, implied in socialisation theory (Ouchi, 1980; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) and their use as a management tool (Dobni et al., 2000; Willmott, 1993). Instead, they suggest that corporate values are adapted by individuals to more closely fit personal value priorities. In this way, the findings are consistent with theories of the role of personal values in selecting, filtering and interpreting environmental stimuli (England, 1967; Feather, 1975; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Postman et al., 1948; Starbuck & Milliken, 1988).

7.2.4 Summary

The findings of this study described in this section are that managers hold personal values that are different from one another, and they interpret their organisation's corporate values in different ways. Furthermore, these differences broadly correlate, indicating that interpretations of corporate values are mediated by personal value priorities. These findings challenge the view that corporate values are internalised and assimilated into managers' own personal value systems, and that they provide a frame of reference commonly shared by organisational members.

7.3 Sharing values differently

Although managers in this study interpreted corporate values differently through the value items they selected and the interpretations given to them, there was evidence that they felt they shared their organisation's corporate values. A number of managers, particularly in HCC and HITECH, explicitly stated that they felt their personal values and those of the organisation were largely the same. Even at FMCG, where the corporate values are new, there were indications that managers believed their own values to be reflected in the corporate values. In the case of HITECH, the two managers who represented the opposite poles in their

interpretation of corporate values, and whose personal values were reflected in these differences, both indicated that they felt a strong sense of sharing their corporate values. It is, perhaps, hardly surprising that managers should believe they shared their organisation's corporate values when they have interpreted them to match their own personal values. It is more noteworthy, however, that managers with clearly very different interpretations of the corporate values, and very different personal value priorities, should each believe that they personally share their organisation's corporate values.

The notion that managers, and other organisational members, might share values differently could explain an observation that Posner (1992) noted in his investigation into person-organisation values congruence, where he reported that:

“At the individual level, respondents felt that they both understood and strongly supported the organisation's core values. They were uncertain about the extent to which others in the organisation understood and supported these values” (1992: 359)

Such uncertainty might occur when organisational members feel they share corporate values, but interpret them differently. Individuals feel congruence between these two sets of values because they have interpreted the corporate values to match more closely their own. Those organisational members with different personal values will form a different interpretation of the corporate values. This could lead to the feeling of uncertainty reported by Posner when one organisational member is asked to comment on another's understanding of the corporate values.

Differences in the sharing of corporate values might also explain an observation in Turnbull's (2000) study of the introduction of a 'worldclass' ideology into a large UK engineering company. She noted that managers were both “in favour of a set of common values”, and reluctant “to engage with the values at a deeper level, preferring them to remain at the level of semantics”. She suggested that this reluctance might be because “values are associated by managers along with

emotion as belonging to the ‘private domain’, and thus when asked about their views on the corporate values they were silent on the subject” (p. 277). An alternative explanation might be that managers are able to maintain a sense of shared values provided they are engaged with at the surface level, and that these managers tacitly understood that exploring the deeper level might expose differences that would undermine the sense of holding a set of common values.

The sensemaking literature accepts both the concepts of idiosyncratic and collective interpretation of environments. Gioia (1986), for example, argues that “the reality with which people must deal is of their own making” (p. 51), while Morgan, Frost & Pondy (1983) suggest that symbols, of which corporate values can be considered an example, are “invested with a particular kind of subjective meaning” (p. 5). Conversely, Smircich & Stubbart (1985) define an organisation as “a set of people who share many beliefs, values, and assumptions that encourage them to make mutually-reinforcing interpretations of their own acts and the acts of others” (p. 727). Weick (1995) distinguishes between ‘intrasubjective’ and ‘intersubjective’ meaning, suggesting that the former gets transformed into the latter as the self gets transformed from ‘I’ into ‘we’ (p. 71). It would appear that managers in this study are both interpreting corporate values subjectively and sharing – or, at least, thinking they are sharing – the values collectively.

In discussing the concept of shared values, Weick points out a problem arising out of the word ‘shared’, which “can mean *either* to divide and distribute something *or* to hold something in common” (1995: 180, my emphasis). The suggestion here is that ‘shared’ means *both* to divide and to distribute, *and* to hold in common. In this way, managers in this study are both able to state that they share their organisation’s corporate values, and to define them in idiosyncratic ways that more closely match their personal values. The observation suggests that, at the generic level of ‘Our Corporate Values’, managers believe that their corporate values match their own personal values. This is because each manager interprets ‘Our Values’ in such a way that they become ‘My Personal Values’, and this is, unsurprisingly, what they find they share. Thus, when reference is made to ‘Our

Corporate Values’ (or the appropriate generic term used in the organisation), without further qualification, organisational members are able to think that they share these; they nod their heads in agreement. The actual values that organisational members construe to be the corporate values differ from individual to individual, as they select those that are part of their own value system. By not defining ‘our values’, managers are able to convey a sense of unity, and individuals are able to maintain their sense of identification with their organisation (Pratt, 1998).

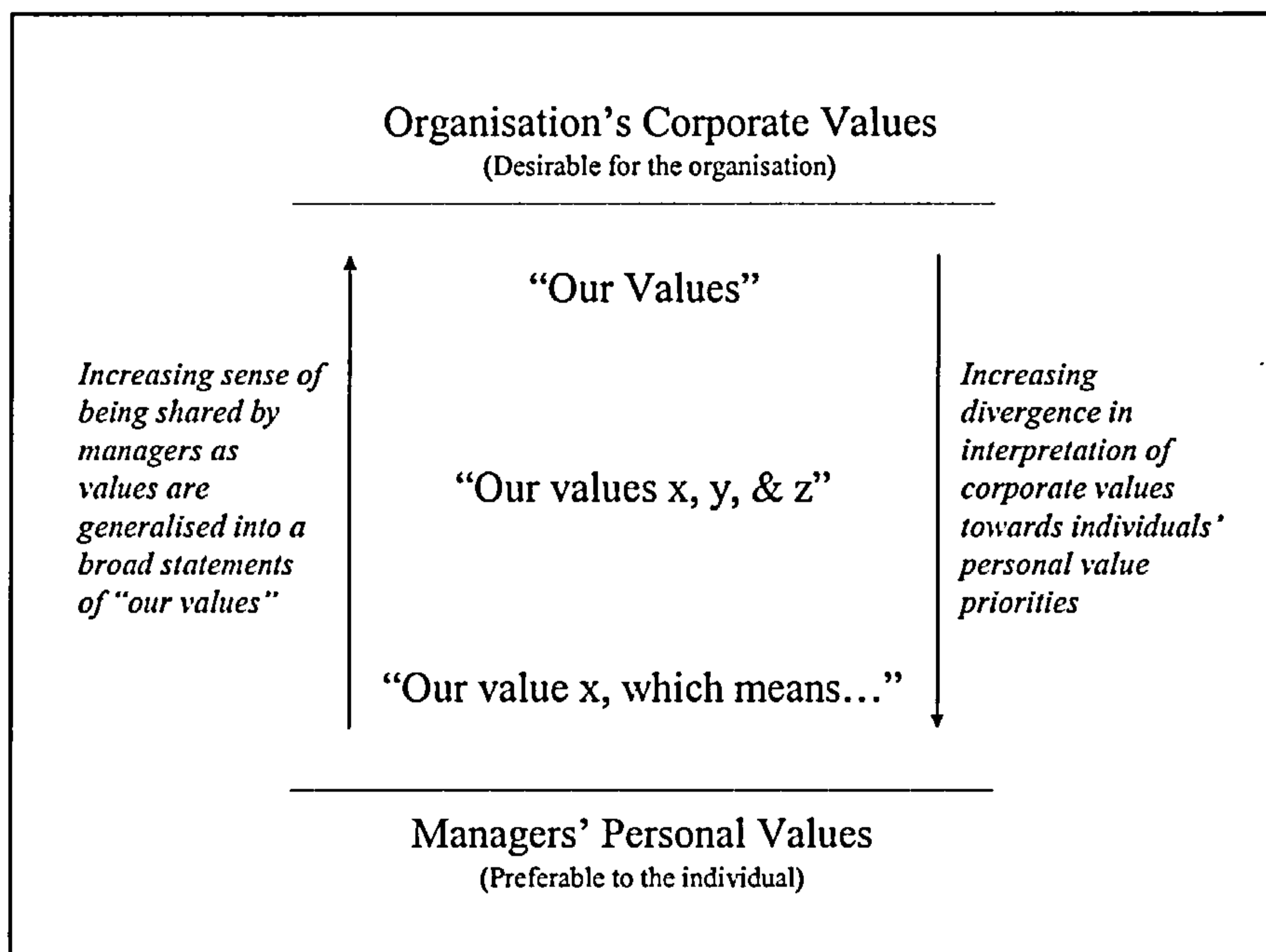


Figure 7.2: Relationship between managers' personal values and their organisation's corporate values

The variation in selection of value items made by managers in this study suggests greater difference in interpretation of ‘Our Values’ when they are called upon to cite the specific components of the corporate values statement. Divergence of interpretation increases further when managers are asked to explain or illustrate the meaning of specific items that they identify within the corporate values. The findings in this study are that the specific values cited and the meaning given to them are such that they reflect the personal value priorities of the interpreter. Thus, corporate values are interpreted to be reflections of personal value priorities.

Corporate values statements presented by organisations in published internal and external documents are typically somewhat superficial. A frequent format is for the values to be summed up in four or five headline statements, which in some cases are then elaborated upon in a paragraph of description. In the case of FMCG, their corporate values were presented in the form of four headline statements ('enterprising spirit', 'freedom through responsibility', 'strength from diversity', and 'openness'), but were defined no further. It appeared that those responsible for the development and communication of the four 'principles' had learned that they are best undefined, and one manager in particular made the point that they were purposely left to individual managers to interpret. In this way, the corporate values statement at FMCG does express what they are, but not what they mean, and the meaning of each statement is open to interpretation. At HITECH, the values are encapsulated in a generic term, the components of which are described in some detail in documentation, although terms are not specifically defined. It is, however, the generic 'HITECH code' that is normally referred to, rather than the contents themselves. In each company, the scope exists for managers to both share their corporate values and to interpret them to match more closely their own personal value priorities.

At the start of Chapter Two, I noted that the term 'values' is widely interpreted to mean different things (Rohan, 2000). Earlier, Kluckhohn (1951) had pointed out that "much of the confusion in discussion about values undoubtedly arises from the fact that one speaker had the general category in mind, another a particular limited type of value, and still another a different specific type" (p. 412). While both Rohan and Kluckhohn were referring to those engaged in research into values, it would appear that the same 'confusion' can be found in the managers working the organisations studied.

7.3.1 Revisiting the role of corporate values

Corporate values can be described as playing one or more of four roles within an organisation. They can form part of the defining characteristics of an

organisation's identity (Gioia, 1998; Selznick, 1957); they can act as ideological control (Dobni et al., 2000); they can liberate and increase fulfilment at work (Dandridge, 1983); and they can act as a form of marketing communication (de Chernatony, 1999). The findings of this study have implications for the first three of these potential roles.

The corporate values of an organisation may be intended to locate an organisation as having a particular identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985). One reason for concern over identity is so that members and other stakeholders themselves might identify with the organisation. Pratt (1998) identifies four reasons why individuals might wish to do this: to satisfy safety, affiliation, self-enhancement needs; and to satisfy a desire to find meaning or a sense of purpose in life. He suggests that identification occurs "when an individual's beliefs about his or her organisation become self-referential or self-defining" (p. 172) and argues that the alternative paths to identification are either affinity or emulation. Affinity occurs when individuals recognise that their organisation's values and beliefs are similar to their own; emulation occurs when an individual changes his or her values and beliefs to match more closely those of the organisation (Pratt, 1998: 179). The findings in this study do not support emulation as a route to identity with organisations, and I am suggesting here that it is an interpreted affinity that conveys this feeling of identification. Pratt appears to accept this latter view when he refers to Weick's (1995) sensemaking perspective in order to conclude that "ascertaining whether or not one is congruent with an organisation is likely to involve retrospective interpretations of one's own values as well as those of the organisation" (Pratt, 1998:180). In the same volume, Barker (1998) expressed his opinion that "no particular and necessary relationship among values exists *a priori* in an organisation. What we do is draw on the organisation's culture as something of a rough draft of values and power relationships to help us construct our own identities in relation to the organisation" (p. 263). The findings of this research provides support to the view that corporate values play a role in an organisation's identity, and that their interpretation allows for a feeling of affinity to be engendered in individual managers whose personal values differ.

A second reported role is for corporate values to act as a means of control (Ouchi, 1980), and as an alternative to formal rules and procedures (Nohira & Ghoshal, 1994). For this role to be effective, it would be necessary for managers to interpret the values in similar ways. It would not be essential that they shared these values with their own, as managers may adopt a position of 'calculated fit' (Mintzberg, 1996), and conform to, or 'wear' the corporate values without necessarily sharing them (Abravanel, 1983). Managers in this study interpreted the corporate values differently, suggesting that they would not act well as a means of control in the organisations investigated. The managers interviewed held senior management positions as local board directors, or reported to such directors. The differences in interpretation at this level of the organisation, where one might expect a high degree of conformity, suggest that the scope for widely differing interpretations at lower levels might be even greater. The weakness of corporate values in their role as control is implicitly recognised by those who emphasise the importance of managing meaning. Gioia (1986), for example, argues that "symbolic management ... is first and foremost the management of the language to describe the organisational values and aspirations" (p. 67), while Dobni et al. (2000) state "because the value system is used as a sensemaking device, managers should be obsessive about ensuring that it is understood and accurately interpreted by employees" (p. 105). There would appear to be little chance of this occurring when the managers themselves interpret 'the value system' differently. Meanwhile, Fiol (1991) discusses the need "to manage the linkages between abstract cultural values and behavioural expressions of those values" (p. 193) and describes this as "the critical meaning-making process" (p. 196).

The extent to which leaders are able to alter the belief systems of organisational members through the management of symbols is questioned by Eoyang (1983), who argues that it is dependent upon assumptions made about the enduring nature of personal value systems. Where personal values are assumed not to be stable, "then there is the possibility for transformational leadership to change the

cognitive structure underlying what and how people believe and understand". Where it is assumed that personal value systems are stable, then "the challenge of transactional leaders is to create and manage symbolic interactions so as to engage the needs and values of high importance of those to be led" (Eoyang, 1983: 117). The major contributors to theories of personal values systems assume that they are relatively stable and enduring (Kluckhohn, 1951; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992; Smith, 1969). Studies, including this one, that find differences in the personal value priorities of managers with long service records (Finegan & Theriault, 1997; Isaac et al., 1992; Watson, 1994), provide support to their relative stability. According to Eoyang, therefore, the challenge is to 'manage symbolic interactions so as to engage the needs and values' of organisational members, and this implies a different role for corporate values than one of control.

Eoyang implies that, rather than "colonising the affective domain" as Willmot (1993: 517) suggests, corporate values can facilitate the engagement of managers' own personal values, and thus provide a sense of fulfilment. In this way, they can 'liberate' managers by providing a means to engage their own values. As a liberating force, corporate values provide the framework for individual motivation, rather than act as a form of 'concertive control' (Barker, 1993). Peters & Waterman (1982) argue that individuals feel motivated to contribute to an organisation whose values they feel match their own, while Dandridge (1983) argues that in work, or in wider social organisations, individuals may find fulfilment through the relationship of their values and the organisation's:

"Individual members of an organisation can use symbols as a valuable means to a greater understanding of the relation of the organisation-sponsored values to their own personal values or goals. The person may find that his or her most important symbols are ones related to the company, to a profession or to the world away from work. In noting this, he or she may become more conscious of individual priorities and values and of means of increasing fulfilment at work" (Dandridge, 1983:77).

In their discussion of organisational identity and strategy and its context for the individual, Ashforth & Mael (1996) argue that both can be viewed as forms of

‘internalised control’. They suggest that “in internalising the who/what/how of the organisation, a member assumes the organisation’s mission, goals beliefs, values, and customary ways of acting as his or her own”. Furthermore, they suggest that:

“[U]nlike these other systems [supervision, regulating technology, rules and procedures], the control inherent in an organisational identity is less likely to be experienced as externally-imposed. The more complete one’s identification, the greater the sense that cooperation is freely chosen. In this sense a strong organisational identity simultaneously empowers and constrains the individual.”
(1996: 49)

While Ashforth & Mael are referring to organisational identity, the sentiment equally applies to corporate values, which are part of an organisation’s identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Later in the same paper, Ashforth & Mael admit that they “have not considered individual differences” (1996: 55). This study focuses on the individual differences and finds that managers do not internalise the ‘who/what/why’ of the organisation as is suggested. Instead, the individual assumes his or her values as the organisations. As a consequence, corporate values appear less of a constraint, and more of a means to empowerment for that individual.

7.3.2 Summary

In the organisations studied, managers interpret the corporate values so that they more closely match their own, and they also feel that they share these corporate values. In this way, corporate values may serve to enhance managers’ feelings of affinity with their organisation. The variation in managers’ interpretation of their corporate values suggests that their role as a form of normative control in the organisations studied is too weak for them to replace effectively other, more formal means. Finally, the findings suggest that interpreting corporate values differently allows managers to feel that these reflect their personal values priorities, and so enhance feelings of fulfilment. Through this sense of sharing,

managers may feel that they are more in control themselves, and less controlled by the organisation.

7.4 Interpretation of corporate values and perspectives of strategy formation

A long-running debate in the field of strategic management is that concerning preferences for deliberate versus emergent strategising (Ansoff, 1991; Mintzberg, 1990). A key characteristic of deliberate strategy formation is that the planning of strategy is separated from its implementation, both in terms of time and of responsibility. Planning is the concern of top managers, or the chief executive (Ansoff, 1965; Steiner, 1969), while the implementation of strategies is the responsibility of managers lower in the organisational structure. Mintzberg (1990) suggests one reason for the poor realisation of deliberate strategies intended by those who formally lead the organisation is that “while the formulators may be few, the implementers are typically many, functioning at different levels and in different units and places, each with their own values and interpretations” (p. 186). Emergent strategising is characterised by experimental trial and error, such that “thinking and acting are intertwined” (Tsoukas, 1994), and, rather than being carried out by a controlling centre, can arise elsewhere and “almost anyone in the organisation can prove to be a strategist” (Mintzberg, 1994: 26).

Tsoukas (1994) considers these two schools of thought about the nature of strategic management to be derived from different worldviews. Ansoff’s (1991) defence of deliberate and planned strategising is based, according to Tsoukas, in a “mechanistic-cum-formistic epistemology for strategic management” (p. 771), while Mintzberg’s (1990) attack reveals an epistemology of ‘contextualism’. In the latter view, strategy becomes “patterns in a stream of decisions that have not been made necessarily at the centre” (Tsoukas, 1994: 773). The two positions have implications for the notion of control in organisations. The mechanistic view

of central strategic planning is more concerned with formal control (Mintzberg, 1994), while emergent strategy formation arising from anywhere in the organisation is associated with freedom from control, and empowerment of the individual.

The personal values of top executives have been linked to the process of strategy formation, reflecting the 'design' school or centrally planned strategising (Connor & Becker, 1975; Guth & Tagiuri, 1965; Pant & Lachman, 1998; Steiner, 1969). In this respect, corporate values are viewed as those of the top management team, and their adoption by other organisational members is intended to ensure that strategic initiatives are implemented as planned. For this to occur, those implementing strategies are expected to internalise, or at least accept, their organisation's corporate values as intended by the top management team. Interpreting corporate values in ways that are different to that intended might likewise lead to managers interpreting centrally planned strategies in similarly different ways. Mintzberg expresses the implications of this in terms of the conflict between top-down and bottom-up flows in the process of strategic planning:

“According to the comprehensive model, organisations begin with objectives that are supposed to emanate from the top (as a reflection of the basic values of the top management) and flow down the hierarchy in that deductive cascade. If, however, they are part of that once-fashionable system called MBO (management by objectives), then they are also supposed to flow up the hierarchy in cumulative fashion, in which case it is unclear where the overall values enter the picture” (Mintzberg, 1994: 68)

Where corporate values are intended to act as forms of control, particularly tight control, then it is certainly unclear where they fit the picture. Variation in their interpretations, apparent at senior levels of management in this study, suggests that normative control through a common acceptance and internalisation of values is unreliable. If, on the other hand, corporate values are intended to be interpreted differently by managers, then some indication of where they may 'enter the picture' begins to emerge.

A consequence of managers interpreting corporate values in ways that more closely fit their personal values is that they legitimise the manager's perspective. He or she may, as a result, feel more inclined and confident to pursue avenues of thought and action that result in new initiatives, and from these, new strategies may be formed. Weick (1979) contends that "most 'objects' in organisations consist of communications, meanings, images, myths and interpretations, all of which offer considerable latitude for definition and self-validation" (p. 157). An outcome of self-validation is an increased sense of worth, and of identity with the organisation (Pratt, 1998), adding to the individual's sense of legitimacy. While legitimacy is typically considered in the context of organisations in relation to larger social systems, Suchman (1995), defines it as "a generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (p. 574). In this respect, an entity can be an individual manager who feels emboldened to be creative in responding to changes to his or her environment when he or she feels that these actions are appropriate within the 'constructed system' of values. Creative thinking throughout an organisation is an important feature if emergent strategising is to be fostered (Mintzberg, 1994). In their roles as characterising organisational identity and as enablers, therefore, corporate values can be seen to play an important part in legitimising emergent strategising.

The role of corporate values in support of top management's deliberate strategising is not entirely rejected, however. While I have argued that the notion of sharing values differently significantly reduces their scope for replacing formal control mechanisms, corporate values may still provide a broad framework within which strategies are conceived. The evidence from the study is that each organisation appears to reject certain values. This, together with the stories that managers told of leaving organisations because of value conflicts indicate that organisations have limits to their tolerance of value incongruence. Values that are repellent to the leadership of an organisation, and those who hold them, are deliberately selected out. At the same time, supported but loosely defined

corporate values may provide for an increase in plurality and variety in thinking, with its attendant reduction in narrow strategic focus and rigid frameworks (Glynn et al., 2000). In this way, they may provide a way forward in accommodating the top-down objectives, which are reflections of the values of the top management, while encouraging initiatives to flow up from below by legitimising the perspective of individual managers.

Spender & Grinyer (1995) support the view that organisations need to be able to accommodate both top-down and bottom-up arguments, but question the ability of shared values to act as the glue that holds such 'loosely coupled' systems together. They argue that "an overarching set of shared values requires these values to be logically prior to the loosely coupled system itself" and they question how the system can ever come into being. Furthermore, they contend that "there can be no continuity through changes in the shared set of values so long as these values are themselves the 'glue' that holds the organisational system together" (1995: 914). In stating this, Spender & Grinyer appear to be assuming that the 'glue' of shared values is itself tightly coupled, but the evidence in this research is that this is not the case. When the corporate values are themselves considered as loose structures, then, while they may cease to act as the 'glue' – or at least any glue that we are familiar with – they may still play a role in holding the system together. Perhaps the glue metaphor should be rejected in favour of the 'rubber band'. Such a revision to the role of corporate values is consistent with Spender & Grinyer's proposal that:

"[M]anagement's role in the development of a loosely coupled system might start by establishing a shared goal. But as the organisation confronts and resolves the uncertainties of activity, it becomes progressively less abstract and cognitive, and less tightly coupled. The informal evolves. It becomes looser as a result of bottom-up and internally developed cognitions and practices which are beyond management's purview" (Spender & Grinyer, 1995: 916)

In this way, the role of corporate values as legitimisers reflect the bottom-up cognitions as well as the top down establishment of a shared goal, or values. The result is values shared differently, able to stretch enough to allow loose coupling

and its attendant “effective, satisfying, adaptive, buffering, and persistent (purposive) action” (Spender & Grinyer, 1995: 917), without either becoming too open, or too closed and detached from its context. Corporate values conceived in this way accommodate elements of both the mechanistic epistemology of deliberate strategising and the contextualism of emergent strategy (Tsoukas, 1994), so offer a way of bringing the worldviews together.

7.4.1 Summary

The tensions between deliberate and emergent strategising are emphasised by differences in worldviews. Combining such different approaches to strategising is important if organisations are to thrive as cohesive systems. The findings in this study indicate that managers interpret values differently, and this presents a way forward in this dilemma. By interpreting corporate values so they more closely fit their own personal value priorities, managers may feel their worldview is legitimised, and are thus emboldened to be creative in finding solutions to situations, and these can emerge as new strategies. At the same time, the corporate values provide a broad framework initiated by top managers, which places some boundaries and constraints on the actions of others in the organisation. In this way, corporate values can be viewed as the elastic that holds loosely coupled systems together, and allows for both top-down and bottom-up worldviews to be accommodated in the one system.

7.5 Implications for practice

The findings from this study are that managers hold different personal value priorities, that these differences are reflected in the ways they interpret their corporate values, and that managers feel they share their organisation’s values. In the previous sections, I have discussed the implications that these findings have for theory. In this section, I consider the implications for practice. My approach is to remain close to the findings themselves, and I shall first consider the implications that arise out of managers’ differing interpretations of their corporate

values. Following this, I shall also consider the implications of the saliency of manager's personal value systems that this research confirms.

7.5.1 Implications of sharing values differently

That literature aimed primarily at a management audience reflects the assumptions found in the more theoretical literature regarding the nature of corporate values. The view is that corporate values are adopted and internalised by organisational members, and that they are "enduring and absolute" (Giblin & Amuso, 1997: 16). Top managers are implored to act out the corporate values (Ciulla, 1999; Howard, 1990), and are told that employee commitment is a result of personal identification with the values (Campbell & Yeung, 1991; Collins & Porras, 1996). A consequence of shared corporate values is a common understanding (Jones & Pollit, 1999) and a common "perspective of the company's global agenda" (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002: 123).

The findings in this study suggest that while corporate values might be 'enduring', they are not 'absolute'. Differences in the selection and interpretation of value terms by managers suggest that corporate values are relative. The study also indicates that personal identification with values comes about through managers interpreting them so that they more closely fit personal value priorities. Commitment, therefore, is to personal value priorities, and not to top management's intended interpretation of the corporate values. Furthermore, differences in interpretation mean that corporate values do not result in a common understanding or perspective. While top managers might act out their interpretation of the corporate values, and perhaps should do so if they wish to maintain their own personal integrity, they need to be aware that others will interpret these actions in their own idiosyncratic ways. They therefore cannot assume that the values they are acting out will be the same values that others interpret in those actions.

As argued in the previous section, the findings in this study do not negate the role of corporate values for the organisation. Instead, they suggest a different role: one

that is less controlling and more enabling. There are a number of specific recommendations that arise from this change in role for corporate values. First, instead of selection and socialisation being viewed as a means to inculcate new organisational members with the corporate values (McDonald & Gandz, 1992b), the processes should be used to select out those whose values are in direct conflict with them. In this way, the corporate values play a role in rejecting unacceptable values, while allowing a diversity of views to exist within the organisation.

Secondly, attempts to define the meaning of corporate value terms should be avoided if the intention is to encourage individual initiative and creativity. The more the meaning of corporate values are defined, the more individuals will find that they are unable to interpret them so that they fit more closely their own personal value priorities. Such individuals will find themselves at odds with the organisation, and may feel they have to leave. Of course, there may be situations where this is exactly the intention of the top management team, in which case, elaboration of the meaning of corporate values will cause individuals to leave the organisation, and will result in a narrow focus amongst the remainder. The evidence in this study is that practitioners may recognise the enabling role of corporate values, which can be enhanced through their ambiguity. Senior managers responsible for the dissemination of the new corporate values at FMCG were clear that they did not wish to define the value statements, as had been their practice in the past, preferring to allow individuals to interpret them as they saw fit. Perhaps they recognised the weakness of corporate values as means of control and instead accepted a consequence of one of their own values: to state that they value 'strength through diversity' implies acceptance of a multiplicity of individuals and their thinking

Finally, top managers should not abandon formal controls in favour of the supposed normative control offered by corporate values. The differences in interpretation suggest that corporate values may not be an effective substitute for the more traditional control mechanisms. In this respect, the research findings support the Peters & Waterman's (1982) loose-tight concept, with corporate

values being loose and liberating, and key financial measures, for example, ensuring a tight control at the same time.

7.5.2 The saliency of personal values

The importance of the personal value priorities of the chief executive and other top managers in the development of strategy has been a continuing theme in the management literature (Barnard, 1938; Guth & Tagiuri, 1965; Hambrick & Brandon, 1988; Kotey & Meredith, 1997; Sikula, 1971). Those of managers less senior in the organisation have also been widely studied, but have not been given the same prominence in the context of strategy formation. This is a reflection of the importance placed on corporate values and the assumption that once these were established, then processes of selection and socialisation would ensure that the lower echelons adopt them as their own. It also reflects the design school of strategic management (Mintzberg, 1990), in which strategies emanate from the top management team and are reflections of their personal value priorities.

The findings in this research suggest that corporate values are not internalised into managers' personal value systems. Instead, the evidence suggests that personal value systems remain largely unchanged by socialisation processes. Top managers cannot assume that those managers implementing centrally devised strategies are doing so from the same values perspective. This may result, as Hambrick & Brandon pointed out (in the context of the executive), in "half-heartedness, or, worse, even the inward hope that the offending initiative will fail" (1988: 25). Alternatively, however, such differences in personal values can be viewed more positively by those top managers who wish to encourage emergent strategising throughout the organisation. Differences in personal value priorities will be reflected in different worldviews amongst managers and other organisational members, and consequently, new solutions to challenges.

The research findings give support to the view taken by Eden & Ackermann (1998a), who argue that the strategy 'journey' should allow for managers to 'surface' deeper beliefs in order to negotiate a shared meaning. Eden &

Ackermann recognise that differences exist amongst managers' value priorities and advocate that these are brought out into the open, rather than being suppressed. In this way, those working together in developing strategies are able to understand better the perspectives of others in the team. This should have the effect of exposing and then exploring differences as a 'creative tension'. The exposure of each other's personal values may result in team members identifying the way forward or the reason for the obstruction:

“The sum of beliefs of each individual manager is rarely deliberately related to the beliefs of others. Each manager has a bounded view of the organisational world, both internal and external. It is only when these views are linked to those of others that it becomes possible to identify how one set of beliefs impact another set which impact yet another and so create a closed loop which may encourage self-sustaining virtuous circles or unhelpful vicious circles of organisational behaviour” (Eden & Ackermann, 1998a: 31).

7.5.3 Summary

The findings suggest that practitioners recognise the limitations of corporate values in their role as a means of control, and instead view them as a means of allowing differences to flourish. This may involve a lowering of expectations from the selection and socialisation processes, and an acceptance of diversity, which may result in more and better emergent strategy initiatives. The findings also suggest practitioners encourage the surfacing of personal values by managers working together in teams throughout the organisation in order to harness the creative tensions that may arise.

7.6 Contribution

This study makes six significant contributions to theory, method and practice. In contributing to theory, this study offers a new proposition concerning the relationship between managers' personal values and their organisation's corporate values. It also adds to those research studies that have noted differences in the interpretation of shared frames of reference by group members, and it confirms the saliency of personal value priorities in managers' interpretation of their environment. The study contributes to method in two ways. It confirms the usefulness of interpretive research in strategic management, which furthers understanding of the thoughts and actions of strategists at the personal level, and adds to this body of research. The study also adds to the repertoire of research methods by offering an adaptation to the laddering method that allows its use in a single interview where other topics are also covered. Finally, this study contributes to practice, by adding to those that question the efficacy of selection and socialisation programmes in ensuring congruency between corporate values and those of managers. The specific location of each contribution is described below.

7.6.1 Theory of the relationship between personal and corporate values

Hambrick & Brandon (1988) commented that they knew of no recent research that investigated the interplay between social and personal values, while Roe & Ester (1999) expressed the opinion that assumptions regarding the two value systems are still a debated issue. Corporate values are social values, being those that are considered desirable for a group by its leadership, and this research contributes by investigating the interplay and offering a viewpoint to the debate.

Previous studies into the relationship between corporate and personal values have relied on survey methods to measure both value types (Liedtka, 1989; Posner & Schmidt, 1993). The method chosen meant that these studies did not explore managers' interpretation of corporate values and so were limited to concluding that there was conflict between the two value systems. This study finds

disagreement between individual managers regarding their interpretation of their organisation's corporate values. It also finds these differences are consistent with differences in their personal value priorities, and that these mediate in managers' interpretation of corporate values. This challenges the view put forward by Willmott (1993) that corporate values extend management control by "colonising the affective domain" (p. 517) of organisational members. Instead, managers in this study appeared to adapt the meaning of the corporate values so that they could be accommodated within their own unchanging personal value system.

A further finding was that managers felt they shared their organisation's corporate values with their own. This finding is not surprising given that managers have interpreted these corporate values to fit more closely their personal value priorities; what they claim to share is already their own. However, the finding that managers with widely differing interpretations of corporate values felt they shared the corporate values led to the conclusion that managers share values differently, and to the proposal of a model of the relationship between the two value systems. This model differs from those theories that assume corporate values are assimilated into managers' own personal value systems (Chatman, 1991; Ouchi, 1980; Willmott, 1993), and from those that assume value conflict (Beyer, 1981; Finegan & Theriault, 1997; Liedtka, 1989). It suggests that values are shared at the generic level, and that divergence only appears when such values are specified and defined, at which point differences between managers become apparent. This model represents a new proposition regarding the relationship between personal and corporate values, suggesting a way that corporate values may assist in uniting deliberate and emergent strategy perspectives.

7.6.2 The interpretation of shared frames of reference

The finding that managers interpret their corporate values differently adds to the growing body of literature that challenges the 'appealing' and 'attractive' assumptions of shared interpretive systems (Huff & Huff, 2000; Spender & Grinyer, 1995). In the specific field of corporate values research, Bumpus & Munchus (1996) investigated the meaning that individuals give to corporate

values and found that the meaning varied between subjects. This study supports their finding that “shared values do not necessarily imply shared meanings” (p. 170), and adds to the limited research in this specific area by offering the explanation that interpretations of shared meanings are mediated by personal value priorities.

Other studies have also found differences between supposedly shared frames of reference. Donnellon, Gray & Bougon (1986), for example, investigated the shared meaning of a communication episode and revealed differences in individuals’ interpretations. Meanwhile Langfield-Smith (1992) investigated group members’ beliefs concerning important aspects of a job and revealed different, but overlapping cognitive maps. Similarly, Daniels, de Chernatony & Johnson (1995) found differences in managers’ mental models of industry competitors. While these studies all revealed differences in managers’ mental models, they found that such differences did not appear to have a negative effect on the ability of the managers involved to operate successfully. The findings in this study also reveals differences in managers’ mental models of their shared corporate values, and while it did not set out to investigate the effect of such differences, the managers involved appeared to be able to function effectively.

7.6.3 The saliency of managers’ personal values

Management researchers have long considered the personal values of those at the highest echelons to be influential in shaping the organisation and its strategies (Barnard, 1938; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Selznick, 1957; Pant & Lachman, 1998). At the same time, however, the assumption in management research is that the personal values of others in the organisation are altered to conform to those of their leaders. This is in spite of the view of social psychologists, who have long considered personal values to be relatively enduring and resistant to change (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992; Smith, 1969).

This research confirms those studies that have found that the personal values of organisational members are not changed significantly in favour of those of their

leaders. Isaac et al. (1992) found that employees' personal values were not affected by those of their supervisors, while Finegan & Theriault (1997) challenged the assumption that personal values became more similar to those of the organisation over length of tenure. It adds to these studies in that the focus of this study was at the level immediately below the highest echelon, and also shows variety in personal values. Furthermore, this research confirms the importance of individual's personal values in influencing their perception (Postman et al., 1948), and their interpretation of their environment (England, 1967).

7.6.4 Interpretive research in strategic management

Following their exploration of the implications of the enacted environment perspective in strategic management, Smircich & Stubbart (1985) called for more research that would further understanding of "strategists thoughts and actions at the personal level" (p. 733). This view was echoed by Stewart (1989) who suggested that one useful, but potentially difficult area of research is the study of how individual managers think about their work and their jobs. More recently, Sutton (1997) called for more qualitative research in organisations as a means of developing theory, and Mir & Watson (2000) called for a greater application of constructivist methodology, because of its potential to inform strategic management research.

This study confirms the potential of interpretive research to inform and develop theory in strategic management. There have been few studies that have considered personal values or corporate values from an interpretive perspective. This brings the two together and investigates their relationship from a strategic management perspective. In this respect, it contributes to the body of interpretive research that furthers understanding of strategists' thoughts.

7.6.5 Adaptation of the laddering method

The laddering method, developed originally by Hinkle (1965), has been shown to be a useful and valid means of eliciting values in individuals by tapping into their personal construct system, and following it up to the most superordinate level

(Adams-Webber, 1979; Armstrong, 1979; Gutman, 1982). The normal practice in management research has been to use the laddering method in conjunction with repertory or implication grids (Eden et al., 1979; Reynolds & Gutman, 1984), and this necessitates the cumbersome exercise of eliciting constructs from a number of closely related elements. In this study, I borrowed from psychotherapy research and developed constructs from a wide range of elements, following Bannister & Fransella's (1986) assertion that, regardless of what elements were used to generate bipolar constructs, they would ladder to personal values.

This adaptation of the laddering method, and its subsequent incorporation into an interview design, is, in itself, a minor change to an established research tool, but it does open up possibilities for future research. The elicitation of personal values can be combined with informants' interpretations of aspects of knowledge and actions to produce alternative 'values-with-interpretations'. Potential applications of the adapted laddering method include studies into the effect that personal values might have, for example, on managers' environmental scanning priorities, strategic choice selection, priorities in implementation of strategies, and assessment of the success of past strategies (Bourne & Jenkins, 2001b). The adaptation of the laddering method contributes by adding to the repertoire of research methods in management research.

7.6.6 Selection and socialisation processes, and values congruency

Theorists working in the area of value congruency have suggested that individuals are screened for such congruence during the selection process (Adkins et al., 1994; Cable & Judge, 1997). Similarly, others have implied or suggested that the value priorities of organisational members are adapted to fit those of the organisation during the period of socialisation (McDonald & Gandz, 1992b; Ouchi, 1980; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979)

The efficacy of selection and socialisation processes in screening or adapting personal values has been questioned (Finegan & Theriault, 1997; Kamoche, 2000; Kraimer, 1997). In this study, there was evidence to suggest that major value

conflict, but not value congruence, plays a part in the selection and subsequent socialisation processes. The study confirms those that find different personal value priorities differ amongst organisational members in spite of length of service and adds to those that have concluded that selection and socialisation processes do not result in homogenisation of members' personal values. Here, the conclusion is that selection and socialisation processes may result in the selecting out of those whose values are in direct conflict with the corporate values, rather than selecting in those whose values are congruent. In this way, the research supports Schwartz's (1996) theory of integrated value systems.

7.6.7 Summary

The study makes significant contributions to both theory and method, and adds a little to practice. It confirms much of what is known, but not much accepted in the management field: the saliency of personal values of senior managers; the value of interpretive research for understanding the thoughts of managers and for developing new theory; and the limitations of selection and socialisation processes in practice for organisations. The research also adds to what is known in the management field: it shows that corporate values are interpreted in sometimes very different ways by senior managers; and it offers a modification to a research tool, which opens up the opportunity for new research avenues in management. Finally, the research proposes a new model of the relationship between the personal values of managers and their interpretation of corporate values.

	Confirmed	Added	New
Theory	o Saliency of personal values	o Interpretation of corporate values	o Relationship between personal and corporate values
Method	o Value of interpretive research in strategic management	o Adaptation of the laddering method for use in interviews	
Practice	o Limitation of selection and socialisation programmes in changing personal values		

Table 7.1: Contributions to theory, method and practice

7.7 Limitations

There are two principal areas which give rise to limitations in this research: those related to the choice of method in undertaking the study; and those related to the decisions made in bounding the research study. These limitations are highlighted below.

7.7.1 Method limitations

To choose to undertake an interpretive research study is to place limitations on the extent to which findings can be generalised. While some, such as Lincoln & Guba (1985) argue forcefully that all research in the social sciences is contextual, this accusation falls most heavily on qualitative research carried out from an interpretive paradigm (Bryman, 1989). For this reason, such research is limited in the extent to which findings can be generalised. Furthermore, while quantitative researchers are able to argue that their methods remove bias, or if not, give it a numerical status, the qualitative researcher is hardly able to claim objectivity because the very nature of the work is subjective.

The research is limited by the size of the study. The fieldwork took place in three commercial organisations, which allowed for comparison between them to be made, and some theoretical replication (Yin, 1994). A greater number of cases, however, may have reinforced the findings apparent in the study, or exposed some alternative explanation that was not revealed. Furthermore, the fieldwork involved a relatively small number of informants, which was partly a result of the nature of the question being researched, and partly one of the levels in the organisations that the research was directed. Senior managers and executives are generally busy individuals with demands on their time that makes interviews with academic researchers a low priority. While the findings showed considerable consistency across all managers interviewed and therefore is suggestive of saturation having been reached (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the sample is still small. Inasmuch as research findings can be generalised out of their context, the

conclusions of this study may have some claim of generalisation to theory. The findings are applicable to the three cases involved in this study. The conclusions involve implications that are propositional and thought to apply beyond the limits of the cases involved.

The interpretive researcher may try to remain wholly objective, and may force him- or herself to consider equally all methods, all data sets and all conclusions. The nature of the researcher's relationship with the topic, with his or her informants, and with the resulting data means, however, that objectivity is compromised. This research is shaped and informed by my own biases, which will have entered at many points in the study. At all stages, from problem definition, through research design, data collection, and analysis, through to the conclusions formed, I have approached the research from my own construction of reality. The research findings themselves show how such constructions can influence resulting interpretations, and I do not pretend that this study (or any other, for that matter) is value-free. It is, however, sincere.

7.7.2 Boundary limitations

The three companies involved in the study were all based in the UK, and most of the informants were British. The findings may be influenced by cultural characteristics that are not found to the same degree elsewhere. Hofstede (1980) categorised the cultural values of the British to be high on 'individualism', and it may be that the idiosyncratic interpretations of corporate values are to some extent a reflection of this emphasis in the cultural character. The interpretation of corporate values in cultures that are more collectivist may differ in both range and intensity to those found here.

The type of organisations involved in this study, while being quite different in their products and modus operandi, were all commercial companies. It may be that the ideology encapsulated in the corporate values is subsumed by other ideologies, such as the profit motive, or shareholder value. This may have a bearing on the outcomes of the research. Organisations that are more clearly

ideologically based, such as religious or political groups may show different relationships between the personal values of their members and their corporate values. The research did not explore this possibility.

The study is also limited in its exploration of value interpretation amongst sub-groups in organisations. The opportunity for comparing groups of managers with more or less service length, and for comparing one group working in one department, was presented and investigated, but there is scope for extending this work. While the study revealed no particular pattern in the one department where several informants worked closely together, there were too few managers in particular functions for theoretical replication at this level of analysis.

7.8 Suggestions for further research

There are a number of ways in which this research can be developed in future studies. Some of the limitations of this research point the way to further study, and others arise out of the tentative conclusions drawn or from other, related studies.

7.8.1 Developing the propositional model

The propositional model of the relationship between corporate and personal values described in section 7.3 of this chapter is based upon the findings in this study, which is limited to three cases. The model is based on the conclusions that managers' interpretations of corporate values vary in accordance with differences in their personal value priorities, and that the same managers feel they share their organisation's corporate values. Further replications of this study would either challenge this propositional model, or alternatively, support and refine it.

7.8.2 Extending context and situation

This research investigated commercial organisations in the UK, and while one organisation has its headquarters in the US, and some informants were of different

nationalities, all resided in the UK at the time of the interviews. It would be interesting to compare the findings of this research with others undertaken in other parts of the world, and in different cultural contexts, in order to investigate the influence of these on the conclusions. The research focussed on the personal values and corporate value interpretation of senior managers in the organisations studied. It would be informative to investigate the relationship at different levels within organisations in order to find out the extent to which it is reflected at such levels.

One area not fully investigated in this research was the extent to which the organisations involved could be described as being in a stable or unstable state. Huff & Huff (2000) point out that “individual inertia arises from the reuse of schema available in the social setting and developed from the individual’s own experience” (p. 59), and that such schema are able to go unchallenged in organisations that are in a stable state. Organisations going through change, particularly second-order change, require individuals and groups to search for ‘new shared understandings’, and this can lead to greater homogenisation of shared schema. An interesting avenue of research would be to compare the interpretation of corporate values in organisations in stable and unstable states.

7.8.3 Exploring the impact of personal values on other interpretations

One of the outcomes of this research study is the development of a research method whose outcome is ‘values-with-interpretations’, arising out of the combined use of the adapted laddering method and interview data. While the interpretation in this study was that of corporate values, the method could be applied to other areas in strategic management. Examples include the relationship between personal value priorities and interpretations of the competitive environment, the selection of strategic options, the prioritising of actions in implementing strategies, and the review of past strategic initiatives. A body of research in these areas would build a fuller picture of the impact of personal values in strategic management.

7.8.4 Effect of sharing values differently on decisions and actions

This study finds that managers interpret corporate values differently and in ways that more closely match their own personal value priorities. This finding appears to be interesting, and to have consequences for the relationship and for the role of corporate values. It does not, however, explore the impact, if any, on managerial action. Donnellon, Gray & Bougon (1986) argue that interpretations can be dissimilar, but still result in similar behavioural implications, in what they describe as situations with 'equifinal' meanings. In a study investigating shared cognitive maps, Langfield-Smith (1992) concluded that "individuals operating as a decision-making group do not necessarily need to share an extensive system of shared beliefs" and that "decisions and actions can be made as a result of the transitory 'collective cognitions' that emerge during the group processes" (p. 365). While their findings relate to groups working closely together, and not to managers spread across large organisations, they do raise the possibility that differences in corporate value interpretations are not manifested in decisions and actions. An important avenue of research would be to study the impact of differences in managers' interpretation of corporate values on such actions and decisions.

7.8.5 Summary

There are a number of avenues for fruitful research that come out of this study, both in terms of the findings themselves, and in terms of the methods devised during the investigation. Which of these are ultimately chosen as topics for research may depend upon a combination of researcher interest, opportunity, and relevance arising out of the studies of others working in similar fields.

7.9 Conclusion

The emphasis that organisations place on their corporate values is evident from the extent to which they are now widely published on the Internet. Not only are commercial organisations declaring their corporate values, but also are non-profit

organisations, local authorities and even government departments. The study challenges the assumption that organisational members adopt such corporate values into their own personal value system. Instead of acting as an alternative means of control to replace the more traditional measures, corporate values can best be viewed as enablers, legitimising the idiosyncratic worldviews of organisational members, and encouraging creativity in their attempts to find solutions to the problems they face. Organisational leaders may not be so keen to invest in the development of corporate values in the light of the findings in this study.

The study also confirms the saliency of personal value priorities amongst senior managers in influencing their interpretations. Perhaps it is time for researchers and practitioners alike to consider again the subject of personal values in strategic management, and to begin building a more comprehensive understanding of their influence at all levels of the organisation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CORPORATE VALUES STATEMENTS

HSBC

INTEL

MICROSOFT

KODAK

WHIRLPOOL

HSBC Group Business Principles and Values

The HSBC Group is committed to five Core Business Principles:

- Outstanding customer service;
- Effective and efficient operations;
- Strong capital and liquidity;
- Conservative lending policy;
- Strict expense discipline;

Through loyal and committed employees who make lasting customer relationships and international teamwork easier to achieve.

HSBC also operates according to Key Business Values:

- The highest personal standards of integrity at all levels;
- Commitment to truth and fair dealing;
- Hands-on management at all levels;
- Openly esteemed commitment to quality and competence;
- A minimum of bureaucracy;
- Fast decisions and implementation;
- Putting Group's interests ahead of the individual's;
- The appropriate delegation of authority and accountability;
- Fair and objective employer;
- A merit approach to recruitment/selection/promotion;
- A commitment to complying with the spirit and letter of all laws and regulations wherever we conduct business;
- The promotion of good environmental practice and sustainable development and commitment to the welfare and development of each local community

HSBC's reputation is founded on adherence to these principles and values. All actions taken by a member of HSBC or staff member on behalf of a Group company should conform with them.

http://www.hsbc.com/code/tools/tcl/Renderer.jhtml?bu=group&toolName=AboutHSBC&navName=Group+Business+Principles+and+Values&contentPath=%2Fpublic%2Fgroup%2Finformation%2Fvalues%2Fen%2Fbus_principles_and_values.html

Intel's Culture and Values

How Intel Became Intel

In a 1983 "Esquire" article, author Tom Wolfe said that Noyce "didn't want any employee to look at the structure of Intel and see a complex set of hurdles. It went without saying that there would be no social hierarchy at Intel, no executive suites, no pinstripe set, no reserved parking spaces or other symbols of the hierarchy."

"When we started Intel, I saw it as a community of common interests," said Noyce in a 1988 interview. "It was much more a cooperative venture than an authoritarian structure — a community rather than an army. People came here because of their abilities, and we knew we would all prosper or fail together."

The very nature of Intel's product line also played a large role in determining the company's culture. Noyce and Moore founded Intel with a plan to exploit then-emerging LSI technology — the placement of thousands of microminiature electronic devices on tiny silicon chips. They hoped to supplant core memory, the dominant computer storage technology at the time, with semiconductor memory, an unproven technology. Developing a whole new product category required a creative, risk-taking work environment. Designing and building chips with extremely precise, submicron detail necessitated a disciplined, attention-to-detail work style. And, staying at the forefront of what would grow to be an extremely competitive, high-technology industry required an aggressive atmosphere.

While Intel culture has changed slightly over time, most of the principles that the founders built into the company from day one are still at the heart of the work environment today. Shared values bring people together and move them toward common goals. Six well-articulated values shared by Intel employees form the backbone of Intel's culture, providing a common roadmap for action:

Customer Orientation: We strive to listen and respond to customer needs and clearly communicate intentions and expectations. We try to make it easy to work with us and to be our customers' vendor of choice.

Discipline: We strive to make and meet commitments, prepare to do things right and pay attention to detail. We conduct business with uncompromising integrity and professionalism and work to ensure that we operate in a safe, clean, injury-free atmosphere.

Quality: We strive to do the right things right. We have a strong commitment to continuous improvement, meaning we constantly analyze, measure and improve our work processes.

Risk-taking: Recognizing that by avoiding risks, we avoid potential rewards, we strive to lay the groundwork and take calculated risks. We try to embrace change, challenge the status quo and foster innovation and creative thinking. We recognize that risk taking requires clear goals, sufficient resources and a supportive environment. We do not punish mistakes, but try to learn from them.

Great Place to Work: We strive to be an asset to the communities in which we operate. We work to provide an open, direct, challenging work environment that fuels job satisfaction. We recognize and reward accomplishments, promote employee diversity and work with respect and trust for each other.

Results Orientation: We set challenging goals, strive to execute flawlessly and focus on output. We assume responsibility for outcomes and constructively confront and solve problems.

<http://www.intel.com/pressroom/archive/backgrnd/cn71898c.html>

Microsoft corporate values

There are two key aspects to Microsoft's past and future success: its vision of technology and the values by which we live, every day, as a company. The values you see below are a set of principles which have evolved since our founding, and which capture the spirit, philosophy and day-to-day business practices of our company. They are not new values, but rather a reinforcement of long-held company principles that underscore our relationships with customers, partners and employees.

Customers: Helping customers achieve their goals is the key to Microsoft's long-term success. We must listen to what they tell us, respond rapidly by delivering new and constantly improving products, and build relationships based on trust, respect and mutual understanding. We will always back up our products with unparalleled service and support.

Innovation: In an industry that moves at lightning speed, innovation is critical to our competitiveness. Microsoft's long-term approach to research & development, combined with our constant efforts to anticipate customer needs, improve quality and reduce costs will enable us to deliver the best products and technologies.

Partners: Helping our partners succeed and grow their businesses with the best platforms, tools and support is central to our mission.

Integrity: Our managers and employees must always act with the utmost integrity, and be guided by what is ethical and right for our customers. We compete vigorously and fairly.

People: Our goal is for everyone at Microsoft to develop a challenging career with opportunities for growth, competitive rewards and a balance between work and home life. In a fast-paced, competitive environment, this is a shared responsibility between Microsoft and its employees.

Entrepreneurial Culture: We want our employees to wake up every day with the passionate belief that their work is contributing to the evolution of technology, and making a real difference to the lives of millions of people. We will always preserve the lean, competitive and entrepreneurial culture that has enabled us to grow. We encourage our people to speak out, take risks and challenge conventional wisdom.

Diversity: We are committed to encouraging diversity in the workplace, not only at Microsoft but within our industry. We will practice equal opportunity in all hiring and promotions, and will help to expand access to technology and employment opportunities throughout our industry.

Community: Microsoft and its employees recognize that we have the responsibility, and opportunity, to contribute to the communities in which we live, in ways that make a meaningful difference to people's lives.

<http://www.microsoft.com/mscorp/values.htm>

Kodak Values

At Kodak, we conduct ourselves according to six corporate values. These values define who we are, and how we act toward each other, our customers, our shareholders, and all of our publics. It is important that everyone understand our values so we can work together as one worldwide company as we navigate today's increasingly tough, competitive marketplace.

Respect for the Dignity of the Individual

We cannot operate effectively unless each of us is able to treat everyone else with appropriate respect. This essential value is at the heart of our culture and will help us focus on many important issues like diversity of our workforce.

Integrity

In today's increasingly complex business and social world, integrity and honesty must be the hallmarks of any organization or person striving to consistently achieve and maintain the respect of our publics.

Trust

We must be able to work in an environment in which we trust each other. We must depend upon and trust our colleagues to do their assigned tasks without the need to check and recheck their work. Likewise, each of us must handle our responsibilities so that our colleagues can trust we are doing our part.

Credibility

Each of us must earn credibility with others inside and outside the company. Certainly, the company as a whole must strive for the highest credibility with all its external publics. We must commit to do what we say we will do, and no later than we commit to do it.

Continuous Improvement and Personal Renewal

Results do count, and continuous improvement toward world-class levels is essential to achieve credibility with our publics. We must each continually improve ourselves and renew our skill sets. Training and education must be accepted as a common responsibility between us as employees and the company as a whole.

Recognition and Celebration

We will search out and welcome opportunities to openly celebrate the achievements of others and congratulate individuals, teams, employees, suppliers and customers for delivering results that contribute to Kodak success. Recognition and celebration will be an integral part of our everyday work activity.

<http://www.kodak.co.uk/UK/en/corp/employment/kodakValues.shtml>

Whirlpool corporate values

OUR VALUES

Respect - We do our best work when we trust one another as individuals, encourage diversity in our workplace, value the capabilities and contributions of each person, and recognize that work is but one part of a full and rewarding life.

Integrity - We conduct all aspects of our business in an honorable way, recognizing there is no right way to do a wrong thing.

Diversity - The broad diversity of our people and their ideas is the fundamental foundation for the future success of our company. Differences create value.

Teamwork - Pride results in our working together to unleash the potential of every person. By working together we will achieve exceptional results

<http://www.whirlpoolcorp.com/whr/corporate/values.html>

APPENDIX B

LETTER PROPOSING MEETING TO DISCUSS RESEARCH PROPOSAL

6th November 2000

Dear

I am writing to you at the suggestion of [a lecturer], who thought you might be interested in some research I am carrying out for my PhD and may be able to help.

The focus of my research is the relationship between managers' personal values and the corporate values of their company. I have carried out some exploratory work that suggests that personal values have an important influence on the meaning that managers give to corporate values, and that this has implications for how corporate values are managed.

I am now at the stage where I need to carry out interviews for the main part of the study. I wonder if I might be able to come down to [the company] and discuss my ideas and requirements with you, to see if there is an opportunity for a mutually beneficial exchange?

Yours sincerely,

Humphrey Bourne

Research student, Strategic Management Group

APPENDIX C

FIELDWORK PROPOSAL FOR COMPANIES

Corporate values research: an outline proposition

The merit of a set of corporate values acting as a 'glue' to hold an organisation together, to attract and retain valued employees, to set the general direction of strategy and business policy and to guide behaviour has been well documented in the academic and management literature. At the same time, questions are still being raised about how best to develop corporate values, and how best to encourage managers to act in accordance with the corporate values. This research is intended to help answer these two questions by focussing on how managers interpret their organisations corporate values, and how their personal values may impact upon this interpretation.

Why is this research important?

This research is important because it will provide insight into how and why managers give meaning to corporate values. From this, we will be able to improve practical programmes for firms wishing to develop a set of corporate values; we will be able to make better judgements about the role that corporate values can play in a particular firm, and what needs to be done to extend their role; and we will be better informed about how best to communicate corporate values so that managers will be encouraged to enact them.

What do I need?

The focus of the field work is on the meaning that managers give to their firm's corporate values. In order to investigate this, I need to carry out semi-structured qualitative interviews with a number of managers, each taking approximately one hour. Interviews will have two objectives: to record the meaning that managers give to the firm's corporate values through the descriptions and stories they tell; and to work with managers in exploring their personal values by tracing constructs of everyday work and non-work events and observations to their roots, a process known as 'laddering'. Feedback from pilot studies suggests that managers taking part will enjoy the experience and will value the opportunity to explore their thought processes. The semi-structured format is intended to provide the freedom for managers to talk about whatever they feel pertinent. They will not, however, be asked to talk about anything that they consider to be confidential or too personal.

A minimum number of five managers would need to be willing to take part in the study to provide meaningful data for the study. I would, however, be able to provide better and more useful feedback if this number were to increase. In addition, I would appreciate access to public or non-confidential documents for background data.

What are the benefits of participating?

Firms participating in this study will receive feedback after the analysis on interviews carried out with their managers has been completed. I am willing to adapt the feedback to the particular needs of the firm, based around the range and scope of meanings that are given to the firm's corporate values by participating

managers (whilst maintaining individual anonymity), an analysis of the bases for these meanings, and the implications they might have. From this and from two years of study of the subject, I will be able to comment upon, or make recommendations about a corporate values strategy. I will also be able to provide an executive summary of my final thesis which will incorporate all the field research – again without identifying sources – and my analysis, conclusions and recommendations.

In addition, managers participating in the research will receive immediate feedback on the ways in which they construct their own world-view trace back to underlying personal values. I anticipate that for many managers this will be an interesting and informative experience which will help in their understanding of themselves.

What are my credentials?

I am currently a bursary PhD student in Cranfield University's School of Management. Since 1990 I have worked as a lecturer, first in marketing at City University, London, then in strategic management and marketing at the University of Exeter. Previously, I was employed by the Harrisons & Crosfield group, eventually as sales and marketing manager. I have extensive interviewing experience, especially in sensitive situations; for seven years I was a volunteer for an organisation that worked with people in crisis. I have an MBA from City University, and am a member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing.

Humphrey Bourne
Cranfield School of Management

APPENDIX D

CODING SHEET

HITECH INFORMANTS

Project: Values one
 NODE LISTING

User: Humphrey Bourne Date: 5/6/02 - 07:25:04

Nodes in Set: All Nodes
 Created: 5/2/01 - 03:06:24
 Modified: 11/12/01 - 03:06:24
 Number of Nodes: 103

- 1 Free Node
- 2 respect for individuals
- 3 (1) /Interview
- 4 (1 1) /Interview/Describing self
- 5 (1 1 1) /Interview/Describing self/Failures
- 6 (1 1 2) /Interview/Describing self/Management style
- 7 (1 1 3) /Interview/Describing self/Preferences
- 8 (1 1 4) /Interview/Describing self/Insecurities
- 9 (1 1 5) /Interview/Describing self/Successes
- 10 (1 1 6) /Interview/Describing self/Dislikes
- 11 (1 1 7) /Interview/Describing self/Strengths
- 12 (1 1 8) /Interview/Describing self/Weaknesses
- 13 (1 1 9) /Interview/Describing self/Aspirations
- 14 (1 1 10) /Interview/Describing self/Fears
- 15 (1 1 11) /Interview/Describing self/Frustrations
- 16 (1 1 12) /Interview/Describing self/Loyalty
- 17 (1 1 13) /Interview/Describing self/Attitude to life
- 18 (1 2) /Interview/1~ Career History
- 19 (1 2 4) /Interview/1~ Career History/Present role
- 20 (1 2 4 1) /Interview/1~ Career History/Present role/Responsibilities
- 21 (1 2 4 2) /Interview/1~ Career History/Present role/Challenges
- 22 (1 2 4 3) /Interview/1~ Career History/Present role/Feelings
- 23 (1 2 4 3 1) /Interview/1~ Career History/Present role/Feelings/Positive
- 24 (1 2 4 3 2) /Interview/1~ Career History/Present role/Feelings/Negative
- 25 (1 2 4 3 3) /Interview/1~ Career History/Present role/Feelings/Neutral
- 26 (1 2 4 4) /Interview/1~ Career History/Present role/Motivation
- 27 (1 2 4 5) /Interview/1~ Career History/Present role/Description
- 28 (1 2 4 6) /Interview/1~ Career History/Present role/Failures
- 29 (1 2 4 7) /Interview/1~ Career History/Present role/Successes
- 30 (1 2 4 8) /Interview/1~ Career History/Present role/Describing others
- 31 (1 2 4 9) /Interview/1~ Career History/Present role/Describing Organisation
- 32 (1 2 6) /Interview/1~ Career History/Early career
- 33 (1 2 6 2) /Interview/1~ Career History/Early career/Career moves
- 34 (1 2 6 2 1) /Interview/1~ Career History/Early career/Career moves/First jobs
- 35 (1 2 6 2 2) /Interview/1~ Career History/Early career/Career moves/Aspirations
- 36 (1 2 6 2 3) /Interview/1~ Career History/Early career/Career moves/Promotion
- 37 (1 2 6 2 4) /Interview/1~ Career History/Early career/Career moves/Training
- 38 (1 2 6 2 5) /Interview/1~ Career History/Early career/Career moves/Old cpy values
- 39 (1 2 6 3) /Interview/1~ Career History/Early career/Failures
- 40 (1 2 6 4) /Interview/1~ Career History/Early career/Successes
- 41 (1 2 6 5) /Interview/1~ Career History/Early career/Describing job
- 42 (1 2 6 6) /Interview/1~ Career History/Early career/Responsibilities
- 43 (1 2 6 7) /Interview/1~ Career History/Early career/Challenges
- 44 (1 2 6 8) /Interview/1~ Career History/Early career/Motivation
- 45 (1 2 6 9) /Interview/1~ Career History/Early career/Feelings
- 46 (1 2 6 9 1) /Interview/1~ Career History/Early career/Feelings/Positive
- 47 (1 2 6 9 2) /Interview/1~ Career History/Early career/Feelings/Negative
- 48 (1 2 6 9 3) /Interview/1~ Career History/Early career/Feelings/Neutral

- 49 (1 2 6 10) /Interview/1~ Career History/Early career/Describing others
50 (1 3) /Interview/2~ Corporate values
51 (1 3 1) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Feelings
52 (1 3 1 1) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Feelings/Positive
53 (1 3 1 2) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Feelings/Neutral
54 (1 3 1 3) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Feelings/Negative
55 (1 3 2) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values
56 (1 3 2 1) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Belonging
57 (1 3 2 2) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Employees matter
58 (1 3 2 3) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Community
59 (1 3 2 4) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Openness
60 (1 3 2 5) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Quality
61 (1 3 2 6) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Trust
62 (1 3 2 7) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Integrity
63 (1 3 2 8) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Intuition
64 (1 3 2 9) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Achievement
65 (1 3 2 10) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Commitment
66 (1 3 2 11) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Innovation
67 (1 3 2 12) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Making a difference
68 (1 3 2 13) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Diversity
69 (1 3 2 14) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Individual responsibility
70 (1 3 2 15) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/respect for individuals
71 (1 3 2 16) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Honest
72 (1 3 2 17) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Teamwork
73 (1 3 2 18) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Cooperation
74 (1 3 2 19) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Sharing
75 (1 3 2 20) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Flexibility
76 (1 3 2 21) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Ethical business
77 (1 3 2 22) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Contribution
78 (1 3 2 23) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Accountability
79 (1 3 2 24) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Security
80 (1 3 2 25) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Collaboration
81 (1 3 2 26) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Freedom
82 (1 3 2 27) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Support
83 (1 3 2 28) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Loyalty
84 (1 3 2 29) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Values/Functionality
85 (1 3 3) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Value wish list
86 (1 3 4) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Change
87 (1 3 4 1) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Change
88 (1 3 5) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Contrast example
89 (1 3 6) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Beliefs about
90 (1 3 7) /Interview/2~ Corporate values/Tree Node
91 (1 4) /Interview/3~ Laddering exercise
92 (1 4 1) /Interview/3~ Laddering exercise/Preferred
93 (1 4 1 1) /Interview/3~ Laddering exercise/Preferred/First level
94 (1 4 1 2) /Interview/3~ Laddering exercise/Preferred/Middle
95 (1 4 1 3) /Interview/3~ Laddering exercise/Preferred/Top
96 (1 4 2) /Interview/3~ Laddering exercise/Opposed to
97 (1 4 2 1) /Interview/3~ Laddering exercise/Opposed to/First level
98 (1 4 2 2) /Interview/3~ Laddering exercise/Opposed to/Middle
99 (1 4 2 3) /Interview/3~ Laddering exercise/Opposed to/Top
100 (1 4 3) /Interview/3~ Laddering exercise/Additional
101 (1 4 4) /Interview/3~ Laddering exercise/Reaction
102 (1 4 5) /Interview/3~ Laddering exercise/Initial constructs
103 (1 4 6) /Interview/3~ Laddering exercise/Inner conflicts

APPENDIX E

SECTION OF AN INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

BEN HARRISON

When you first arrived here what struck you most about the culture and particularly the values at [the company]?

It was a mess – that was what struck me most about it. Very, very quickly I got this impression that within R&D especially, the – I presume that as part of your investigation into this is, they show you books such as the [the corporate values]?

I know the [corporate values], the values it contains...

OK, right. It's worth – find a copy of the book, it might be worthwhile you borrowing that – this book by [one founder], I think it is by [one founder], or rather [the other founder], don't know which – which is espousing the traditional values of [the company]. You see ... the problem with that is that – it's one of those utopian things – is that it works at a micro level, you can do the [the corporate values] when you've ten people in your team, but when you have got 100,000 in your team, you are going to have some people who are going to take advantage of it, and misinterpret it, or interpret it to their own designs, or what have you. So when I came here, I actually felt that one of the biggest problems that [the company] faced was the fact that it espouses people - [the corporate values], that it – I mean it was great, you had freedom, you could approach anybody you wanted with this thing called the open door policy so if I had a problem I could talk about it and they had to keep it confidential, they would have to – the only question they had to ask was “do you want me to do anything with this information?” and that was it, you know. But at the same time, I saw a company that had so much freedom it was wasting so much money, that it was causing difficulties for itself because it was pulling in 1000 different directions, that there was, you know, turf wars, an internecine war, a political war, all different types going on because people weren't ... didn't have a common vision. Because you allowed to be different, because you are allowed to have different visions, because you are allowed to have different goals, it had gone too far and it had got to the point where there was no common vision, no common goal in [the company] R&D. I can't vouch for [the company], but rumour has it that it's the same way, or was the same way all over the company. So, it's one of those things where that's a double edged sword – on the one hand you get huge amounts of freedom, huge amounts of empowerment, huge amounts of “I'm responsible, I have the authority and I have the desire, and whether I'm going to do stuff, on the other hand – that's all good for the individual, but its bad for the company, but you have to temper that in a certain fashion and [the company] wasn't very good at doing that. The R&D division were so relaxed, you know, so many people here and a), you have so much money, b), so clever and c), so relaxed, and coming out of Chevron which was – not Oxford Instruments, which was also a relaxed place – but classed

against Chevron, which was a highly mechanistic, highly top down, authoritarian company, a classic thing of where you never saw the man in charge. You know, the man in charge spent of all of his time at the House of Commons lobbying, and in various committees and doing various things and occasionally sent out a memo saying "oh, you've all done very well chaps!" or more often than that it was "oh, you are not doing very well old chaps!" and it was a very much a suit and tie thing. [Sighs] ... yeah, I can't ... it was good for me but, at the time, you know, when I was learning, but that was a huge contrast. Of course [the company] has now changed hugely. [The company] doesn't have – I don't think, I don't see the [the corporate values] being valued on a macro basis inside [the company] at all. Certainly on a micro basis it is valued, I mean I certainly value – I don't value the [the corporate values] – but I value some of the ... some of the contents of it, in that it's sort of how one should live one's life anyway, right? It's like religion, you know, one isn't necessarily a Christian but one can still say "well actually I believe in everything He said because that's how you kind of should live your life: you shouldn't go round kicking people; you shouldn't throw stones at people; you know, you should do as you would be done by; and all the other clichéd phrases. And the [the corporate values] does the same thing for me, it says, you know: you should be open for people coming talking to you, coming to talk to you; you should give people the freedom to do what they want to do, right? None of this is out of the ordinary as far as I was concerned, although the problem I have with [the company] now is not that its over espoused [the corporate values] and therefore it is pulling in all these different directions, but in the last 18 months, in an effort to try and bring the company back into unity again, the ... a lot of the baby, that was some of the concepts that of [the corporate values], you know, have been thrown out with the bath water that was the mess that [the company] was in. And one comment that I have heard, which I thought about for a while, I thought yeah, OK, that's absolutely right, is that within [the company] it is very, very difficult to find a management position in which you can be a leader, OK? Most of the management jobs within [the company] appear not to be about leadership, they are about process. So, all you are effectively is a robot that adds a bit of intelligent value, but – and I've certainly found this more and more last year – that my freedom to go to my team and say "right team, here's our strategy, this is what we are going to do" - I don't have that freedom any more, really. It is like, everyone else is telling me what my strategy is, and my job is to interpret that infinitely. So, that's been a big change in the last two years.

How do you relate to that - I mean what does that feel like for you?

Well, as a shareholder, [sighs] yeah great, you know, it just says "OK, more efficiency, even greater profit, more return" and things like that, but as somebody who has got to work within it ... [sighs] ... you know. I'm ... I have almost finished my MBA, I've got a degree in

computing, I've got experiences and I think understanding about certain things, but once again am I getting myself into the classic [something] about where I am, you know, and my job being undervalued by the company? And this is not a financial thing, because certainly financially [the company] doesn't undervalue me, but on a day-to-day, making use of me effectively, I think it completely undervalues me. You know, I'm getting paid to sit around on my arse doing very little quite a lot of the time, because other people are saying "no, that is my decision" so I only get to make a lot of decisions now, all very tactical stuff really. So I wonder sometimes if [the company] is going to get me into that position and if it is going to be that position, what I am going to do about it? You know, one thing that is very bad news as well [laughs] ... fantastic job advertised last week, IT – it wasn't manager – it was supervisor to the British Antarctic Expedition ... apart from the fact that you are locked in boxes for 6 months of the year with people you might not like, it sounds-...

Well, for somebody who doesn't like people, I think life would be a bit tricky! What is it that interested you?

Oh, it's being in the Antarctic attracts me to that, you know, I hate cities, I hate towns, I hate – you know, it's just – I hate getting on my soap box about this, because I just find it so pointless getting on the soapbox about it, but I hate seeing what people are doing to the world and don't know themselves. One of the few places, I have been to two places now where I feel people haven't done anything to the world. One is Western Australia and the other one is most of Northern Canada, but I think "the Antarctic, that is another place..."

When you said that there are things changing in [the company] and you have brought out this bit about the managers don't lead, or the leadership aspect of management which seems to have gone...

Don't use the word 'don't' – can't.

Can't.

I think the option of leadership has been withdrawn, in the main, from the management function in [the company]. That's how I see it. That the CEO, with the best will in the world, yeah as a shareholder I think she has probably got the right idea, as somebody who works here it is quite painful.

Yeah, OK. Are there other values that are coming in that are different to [the corporate values] would you say?

Well, there are some. There used to be, for example recently – and that was as recently as last Thursday actually – they issued a new ... corrections, for want of a better word, process. And, um previously

what happened was that you got this annual ranking of 1 to 5 and if you were ranked as a 1 – 1 is quite serious, and it indicated that you weren't doing your job, or you weren't up to doing your job, or there was something else that was related, and it was up to you and your manager and human resources to determine what the problem was, and to resolve the problem in one way or another. You had a year to do it – and you could only be ranked as a 1 twice in a row, effectively. If you got ranked 1 three times in a row then people would question what your manager was doing, let alone what you were doing, because you shouldn't be there. But you could spend two years as a 1. Then in November, they had a new version of the ranking process out, which basically said you can only do 1 for one year, at the end of the year you are either up, or you are out. Then last Thursday, they issued corrections process which basically said they will give up to 3 months – and, OK, so ... um what does this say about the way that [the company] values people who work for them? You know, and what I think it says is that [the company] no longer has any loyalty for the people who work for it: you are in a changing company, and the company is changing drastically, and for some people the work environment, the methods of work, the jobs they've got, are very different than what they were 6 months ago, or a year ago, you know. And for some people, especially those people that have been here 20 years, you know, there aren't many of those in the UK, but there are lot of those in the US, those changes are very, very difficult to understand, very difficult to know how to react to, very difficult to know how to work under, and that isn't just for the employees – some managers, you know, all the way up the line, you know, you are seeing there are a couple of senior people right at the top of the tree who have gone. And everyone thinks they have gone, not because they were due to retire, but because they were told, “put up, or shut up!”, and they shut up. So, what that problem – for my mind, the problem is that if you've got somebody who has been working for ten, fifteen or twenty years here, who doesn't know how to respond to the changes in the organisation – which are less visible within [the company] R&D division than they are outside of [the company] R&D division, I can tell you that – and their manager has worked here for ten or fifteen or twenty years, surely that manager is going to have a similar set of problems? So how can that manager be in a position to support the employee? They can both go and cry over their beers together but this isn't necessarily the thing they want to do, manager and employee relationship – I do it but, you know, that's me. But – so there is very little support going on around them, and it is all very hard, so it really is a case of you know, “if you don't like it or you can't hack then we don't want you, we want the best!” and the problem is, its sort of like the baby and the bath water, is that the best people for [the company] are not always those who live in the [the company] environment that we are going towards. In [the company] R&D division, you absolutely don't want the type of person who is your corporate suit – you really don't want him. You want the people who are slightly off the wall, you want people who are different,

who have a different perspective on the world, people who will come in and challenge the way the world thinks, and find a new way of making the world think and make it a brilliant way to do business, you know. So that is the thing that I see, and another thing I see in [the company] which really concerns me is that before, [the company] was a very diverse company and it espoused diversity, it said we will take anybody, it doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter what you can do, we've probably got a place for you. You know, if we can make you secure we will, and now there is a huge amount of prerequisite here – that you have to effectively work, comfortably work within inside [the company], you need to be of a certain type of individual or you won't get along – as well as having the skill sets, whereas before you could be any type of individual and have the skills set. And that's [growls] ... that's the problem. For new hires it just means the company is going to go more uniform and it just means its probably going to be more easy to blind side this company. For the people who have been working here for ages – OK, some of them are validly living on past experiences, living on past successes and are actually not contributing very much, if anything at all. But a few people have left R&D even, and I'm saying R&D to the effect that it is less harsh than I know its been outside of R&D, and yes, even in R&D that's happening so, it's a problem. It's a big company, it's got nearly 90,000 people and it's not going to destroy the company, it is going to change the company, most probably. Very, very definitely it is going to change the company and again, as a shareholder, in the short term – great. In the long term as a shareholder, all the economics – [the company] has always been fairly, that is another change I think, [the company] has always been fairly long term in its outlook, its had five and ten year plans, and five and ten year plans are not usually worth the paper they are written on, as the internet revolution is demonstrating, IT companies of seven years ago were making a balance that involved centralisation of computing and all that sort of stuff, and when the internet took off, centralisation was out and they had to start again. [The company] was long term and is now – it had good backing to be long term as it was a leader in most of the fields of IT, it is still a leader in many of the fields in IT – but it is much, much more short term in its outlook. This may be a function of business, this may be a function of the market in that the market has ceased to be long term in its outlook, dot com stuff, make a quick twenty million bucks, has been all very short termist.

APPENDIX F

EXAMPLE SYNOPSES OF CASE TRANSCRIPTS

FMCG

LINDA MILLER
ANDY BRITTEN
CHARLES KNIGHT
COLIN COOK

HITECH

SUSAN MARSH
PHIL REEVES
BERNARD NIXON
CALUM PHILIPS

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Recognition	Ambiguity	Achievement	Failure	Excitement	Dull & boring	Fairness & fair play;	Treated unfairly
Sense of reward	Frustration	Making a difference	Stuck in a rut	Pushing boundaries	Going through the motions	Honesty & integrity	
Immediate feedback	Takes time to come out	Immediate feedback	Takes time to come out	Adrenalin push	Inactivity		
Individual role	Team role	Individual role	Team role	High energy	Chilling out		
Constructs elicited from positions held		Constructs elicited from positions held ¹		Constructs elicited from non-work activities		Additional Values	
1 st Ladder		2 nd Ladder		3 rd Ladder			

¹The first ladder split at the third level into two bipolar constructs.

From the manager's account of career history

"I guess my sort of parting achievement in the banking industry was that [...] I took part in a - I am not sure how you apply, you sort of nominate yourself - but into [a national] young banker of the year award, which is ... any banker under the age of thirty-five can apply. It looks for a range of facts from performance on the job, to future potential, to sort of leadership qualities [...] I spent the best part of six months writing, doing this research project and ... won the award, so..."

"And I think that the, the one that stretched me the most, but actually ended up being the most rewarding was I was asked by a competitor bank to the after-dinner speech to the training centre, which was forty people and to make it sort of on ... sort of the future of banking but to make it humorous, so that was a challenge!"

"I started looking around, but I hadn't really got to the point where I was, where I had a coordinated approach, when I got a phone call from a head-hunter saying would I be interested in joining [this company]? So, that sort of, that kicked off and the irony was they'd identified me through all the promotional material that had been in the newspapers about the awards...[,] you see, a lot of newspapers had carried stories about this award because it was quite a prestigious award so ... and my research project - or elements of it had been printed in the newspaper and things like that, so my name was out there and I guess it had been picked up by a head-hunter"

"I got asked one day to consider a role that was high risk, high reward, which was this one. Actually, there was another role in HR that I was offered too, which they - I wasn't meant to in hindsight, because someone else was offered it and accepted it, they made a mistake - but I actually turned that role down, anyway. I wanted this one, because it was more me, just challenging..."

"I'm an interesting mix of liking high risk and security ... I always back myself, I suppose, which is why I like high risk. My personality style is that I'm very good at starting, I'm an ideas

Much of all three ladders seem to be expressed in these three excerpts.

Again, this seems to sum up the ladders.

Self-description

person, I've got to focus on finishing things off that I start, you know what I mean, like making sure that the daily grind is still going too, because I, I um ... and I like people, but I like working on my own. You know, what's that introvert-extrovert thing - is that Myers-Briggs? I'm almost on the middle line between introvert-extrovert, slightly more towards the extrovert, but I like time on my own as well, so when I look at the security versus non-conformity, I - you see, I'm particularly like, really interested in doing entrepreneurial things ... and what these roles have allowed me to do is almost do that within a corporate environment - a clean sheet of paper, write your own ticket, sort of thing, just as long as you deliver what you say you are going to deliver."

Manager's selection & interpretation of the company's corporate values

'Freedom through responsibility' ... means that individuals within a corporation, in this corporation, if they were to act responsibly, they would have more freedom to operate, than if they act irresponsibly."

[Defining the principles 'openness' and 'enterprising spirit'] "Be open, tell it as it is, I mean I think that sometimes, because we're predominately a British-based culture, sometimes there's a reticence to say exactly how it is, it's more sublime...[] as [another national] - we're very, much more frank in our feedback to people, on their performance, for example. I don't mean to say that you can't package that nicely, but it just means that it comes out with less ambiguity. I find the British culture, which forms the underlying culture of [the company] globally is more sublime in the way feedback's given, and I find there's a greater tolerance of - because we're a 'very nice' company to work for - there is a bit of a tolerance of non-performance sometimes. [...] So, that's where the, that very strong family thing comes in, so that's a big plus but the downside of that is that sometimes tough decisions take far too long to make, on people. And we're going to - by calling it enterprising spirit - work faster, you know, be more aggressive out there, and you know, sometimes you've got to make these decisions quicker, operate..."

"Achievement, you know, teamwork - I just can't remember them all off the top of my head, but my view is that they don't particularly inspire, I don't think. They are a little bit, well, they don't really strike me as being something that gets you out of bed in the morning, um, but having said that, often it's the fact that you go through these processes as opposed often to what... The values are there, you know, the [corporate] principles are not meant to be an articulation of values, but it's almost, I don't know, how do you say the difference? But to me, the [corporate] principles are not completely a value because they're not personal enough, they represent like an organisational, behavioural guide and sort of tucked in under those are the values that underpin them..."

"Yeah, well, I'd say like, if you talk about 'openness', I would say that honesty, acting with honesty and integrity would be a key value that underpins that. If you look at 'enterprising spirit', I would say the value, maybe risk-taking, innovation, ... 'strength from diversity' is really ... sort of, partly sort of maybe compassion - your fellow man type of thing, the value, yeah ... to the business side of it, the value would be - excuse me, while I look for inspiration here - I'm trying just not to give you superficial answers. ... What's the other one? 'Freedom through responsibility', well ... um, I'm trying to articulate, maybe I've done too much..."

Definition of the principles of the company. It is interesting, in the context of her personal values, that openness is seen as telling it as it is - the same way she defines 'integrity' (see below), and that it somehow relates to a tolerance of non-performance, which would appear to conflict with her value of achievement. She also understands 'enterprising spirit' to mean 'work faster' - again, a characteristic that is seen throughout the laddering exercise.

Referring to the old values statement, known as the 'nine values'. The two she mentions are interesting in that one appears to match, and one appears in conflict to her own values. She then goes on to state that the principles are not values in themselves.

Here, she is again defining what the corporate principles mean, and this time she is making a more direct link between openness and honesty and integrity. Enterprising spirit now has a more risk-taking, innovation feel, but seems broadly consistent with the 'work faster' sense she used earlier. The diversity principle does not seem to strike a chord with her, as she dismisses it almost with disdain.

[On the values of honesty and integrity]. "I think sometimes people still make soft decisions in, you know, for example, can be convinced to go back on their word because someone else has got a stronger personality. The only other way I'd query how deeply embedded that was in the culture at the moment is that I don't - it's one of the classically - you talk about honesty and integrity, but it's an industry that's been in denial for years, so when you talk about honesty and integrity, I mean... I think that people are honest and have integrity and I think the way we do business is that as well, but there's just, there's underlying threads there - maybe it's fear and lack of - no, and not enough courage to talk about the company and the product."

"As an organisation we've never had a big clean out, in terms of saying 'look, in terms of the way forward, who embodies the [company] principles?' - they'll be the people who manage, and if we have doubters as to whether... You know, a classic example is, a friend of mine, who's an expat in a non-English speaking market was told by his general manager - his senior guy on management team - after twelve months, was that if his command of this foreign language didn't improve, he was going to be fired, and motivation, that's fear, that's fear - completely trying to drive behaviour through fear: that's not what I'd call effective leadership."

"I think 'security' is another value here, too. It's a nice, cosy environment [...] I do think somewhere in here, the value of security"

Additional excerpts from the laddering exercise

"I am high on the achievement scale, I mean my drivers are internal, to compete against myself, so as a result, I value the feedback and recognition of having achieved that I get from other people, but in order to do that, when you talk about making a difference, for me to attain the level of recognition that makes me feel satisfied whether it's ego driven or what, I don't know but I need to push the barrow really hard."

[On reflecting on the laddering outcomes] "The only thing that I would say that I believe in strongly is that they all look sort of pretty action-orientated, but, I mean, I've got a very strong sense of fairness and fair play. That's one thing that upsets me very much, if I feel that I've been treated unfairly and I've made decisions like leave jobs because of that ... [gives a recent example] I had, I felt quite a sense of injustice over that, and so I think that if people say they are going to do something - if they don't know they can do it, they shouldn't say that they are going to do it, and that's sort of honesty and integrity. And I do think that's really a fundamental underlying principle in an organisation, because if you don't trust or respect people based on honesty, integrity and fairness, then you have no relationship to build on and what do you do, because it's obviously going to fall down because you've got no foundation to the house, so that's really, really important."

Exploring the extent to which she sees the values embodied in the organisation. Honesty and integrity are, in her view, compromised both by weak management and by the controversial nature of the industry. She also considers that those who do not embody the values should be removed.

Earlier she had described herself and 'an interesting mix of liking high risk and security'

It is interesting to note that this manager described fairness and fair play in terms of herself being treated unfairly.

Andy Britten

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Stimulation	Dragging weed	Challenging	Boring	Effective	Ineffective	Human contact	
Working with capable people	Tolerating underperformance	Change	Status quo	Convenience	Inconvenience		
Invest in people	Weak investors	Forward-looking	Backward-looking	Utility	Character		
Constructs elicited from companies worked for 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from non-wok interests 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from places lived in 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

From the manager's account of career history

"I'm an activist - I tend to make stuff happen, through whatever means. So, I wanted a vocation career, so I liked everything from nuclear physics to building bridges to electronics, but I found electronics particularly baffling, thought that was a good idea, so instead of doing ... if you like a generalist end of year, I did a specialist electronics end of year for my third year dissertation, went into electronics for about five years, initially design, latterly almost corporate trouble-shooter, so if something was wrong I'd be put on the case to sort it out, you know, big vendor contractual issues."

"When I joined [this company], [the department] was just short of a shambles, very regressive in the sense that it was totally positioned as service-centric, the corporate jockstrap as I would call it, and so the first two years was sorting out hygiene factors on a spectacular scale, getting the technology to be reliable, consistent, secure, integrated, getting the people asset changed in terms of where they are pointed at, what they see as core role, what is not core role, outsourcing everything that is not a core role."

"I guess the label that got put on me for the first two years was 'chief hatchet man' and then there was some evidence that that was how I was seen, but you know ... I take the view in life that you've either got to deal with pain now and quick or you've got to deal with pain long and I describe one as torture, and so I decided the pain quick equals the mercy, and not torture."

"I will count myself as one of the original founding three, and latterly it has been in the pursuit of the agenda I want to pursue. You do that through the power of the matrix, you do that through the power of lobby, you do that through the power of influence - you know, the more people you've got lined up, the better. And in fact, you could articulate the last four years in a completely different way: the first two years were spent pushing a ball up a hill, the next year was getting it to the brink of the top, and then latterly the last twelve months, increasingly the ball is rolling the other side of the hill with [the department] chasing after the bloody thing, because gravity, in both senses, was the Board."

"So, we knew what each of us look like, so, you know, I'm a 'Driver-Driver', as was perceived, but I have become an 'Expressive-Driver' which is more home territory. Driver-Driver for the first two years made sense, that's how I was seen. Expressive-Driver is how I like to be, OK?"

His self-description of an 'activist' seems to be reflected in his value priorities as elicited by the ladders.

Action seems to be the theme here.

The language is of action and force and again, appears consistent with the values elicited in the laddering exercise.

Manager's selection & interpretation of the company's corporate values

"So we had to start building some sort of team building exercise - you understand the values each individual person carries, you try to then distil your collective set of values. On that journey, you learn about you, you learn about we. We started that in '97, and now it's actually pretty powerful because by the time we got to '98, it had recognised that [the department] only needed to get six things right, so our own strategic imperatives - you know, for example delivery fit for purpose. Another example: deliver on stakeholder needs or wants; engage with leading partners - not suppliers. These kinds of mentalities had to get gotten sorted out. It also had a crack at the vision and mission statement - it had a crack at re-vitalising the strategy as inherited, by skinning it down to the digestible subset, as opposed to the book it used to represent."

"What we have here is a winning environment that we all own - it's not a virtue of iconic leadership, one guy - that the winning environment is something that is not just a clinical transaction, it's something that develops me, values me, enthuses me, and by right, everybody, if they are all lined up to the same set of principles. And so, the team - [the department] here - defined that strap line; I mean I knocked into a little bit of shape. What we then also said was 'well, we have the nine values of the company', which are in green, and you can measure those things, that's what [the nine values] does. Then we added a tenth, because we thought there was this little transaction called 'feelings and emotions', the little heart shape there [pointing], and you can measure..."

"To create a winning environment we each of us need to display this: we need to be balanced, confident, energetic, open, winning in our mentality, supportive, flexible, trusting, observant, decisive and positive"

"We went down and said 'our interpretation of the values is this: we know where we are going - vision; we believe in our plans - map; we live for our consumers - consumer focus. So we actually put, you know, a series of short sentences behind each value, to say that's what we meant by it. And as we were concluding this piece of work, the [company] principles turned up, and so we said 'ah! OK, well, funnily enough, 'enterprising spirit', 'open-mindedness', 'freedom through responsibility', and 'strength and diversity' actually naturally flows from everything we've just described, so we'll leave it up there, but we won't enact it... It's a level of complexity we don't need'."

"The values had rolled in certain places round the world, and hadn't in others. And we figured that, as a good starting point for ourselves, that there seemed to be some freedom to express it in your own way, so I figured that if people were given the freedom to express it in their own way, they would probably sign up better, so that's why we did some of this stuff. At the same time, it was also clear that the values were not pervasive across the organisation, and that something else was going to slide in, so we had a lot of confusion about whether those were going to disappear or stay, or what else was going to happen. So, we said 'we don't care, because we've pretty much expressed this our own way now - we don't care whether they go or not' and when the [company] principles showed up, we did a quick look back and say, 'well, yes, everything we've just done here is actually in concert with the [company] principles, not in conflict', because if you talk about 'open-minded' then you can see the openness and the observation and the support behaviours that deliver on that. If you look at, you know,

This manager set out to instil a set of values in the department, based on the older set of nine corporate values. They do appear somewhat personalised ("it's something that develops me ... and by right everybody").

His interpretation of the nine values, which he then compares with the [company] principles, and concludes that they add a complexity which is not necessary to adopt.

Again, this excerpt indicates that this manager has determined his own version of the values. His interpretation of the [company] principles appears to carry the essence of action.

enterprising spirit you see the energy, the confidence and the winning and the positiveness coming through, and to a degree the decisiveness [...]. 'Freedom through responsibility' you can again come back on that, so there we are, we are operating with some trust, we are operating in a positive and confident manner, but with balance. So you can, and then the 'strength from diversity' comes through another mix of the same things."

"I'm going to say [the company] has to break some shackles of the past, you know, we're pretty much a perspiration, permission based culture. [...] Permission ... there's a lot of hierarchy, OK, so you find decisions rattling this way; the perspiration is that we do a lot of stuff [...] If you wanted to really be living on the [company] principles side of it, we should be seeing passion come through, you know, the heart and the body in synchronisation to transformational change. We would want to see, you know, the promotion of those ideas, and the expressiveness that goes with, so that when you look back on a year, you say, I did four things, five things really well, and they made a spectacular difference, and I'm proud of that, as opposed to, you get to the end of the year and you think "God, I'm knackered! Shit, that was hard work! I did a million and one things right!" That sounds good, but they are all incremental."

"I have status reports on all of them, which we go through at my top team meeting, and those four status reports with a very modest amount of laundering - because there has to be a bit of laundering - get published to the entire community, so they know what we've achieved, and the plans we now intend to pursue, or issues that we're grappling with. So, again, there is a - what's the word - there is an openness in the organisation, there is a trust that they will do intelligent things with what they have had communicated to them, there is also an inclusiveness here, which is taking support."

"So, if I've created a pocket of dissonance in the organisation by doing things like this, which is counter culture, because I am not aware of any other function that does this stuff, so be it. I've got a hamlet, and that's OK, what we need to also work through is how to integrate it, the hamlet, with the rest, so picking up the corporate values is OK. It gives us some articulation of what this is about to the others."

Additional excerpts from the laddering exercise

"Somebody who is pretty self obsessed! In short ...[and in response to the question, what's missing?] Probably the word, 'human contact'. I do enjoy human contact. That's probably the fourth, missing thing."

Openness and trust appear to be consistent with 'laundering' in this manager's opinion.

Again, this manager appears to relish the idea of running something that is 'a counter-culture' within the organisation.

This was the manager's reaction to seeing the results of the laddering exercise. It is not clear what he means by human contact.

Charles Knight

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Achieve things	Fuzzy	Recognition	Impotency			Being with other people	
Rewarding	Frustrating	Expressing myself	Just living	Challenge	Routine		
In control	Need consensus	Creating	Taking it as it comes	Avoiding boredom	Routines		
Operating	Staff	Activities	Pastime	Different	The same		
Constructs elicited from positions held		Constructs elicited from non-work activities		Constructs elicited from countries lived in		Additional Values	
1 st Ladder		2 nd Ladder		3 rd Ladder			

From the manager's account of career history

"I was on the board of our companies - we have two associate companies in India, and ... then said to [the company], 'I've now spent some time in seven countries around the globe and I am now married with three kids and I am fed up of living out of suitcases' and I suppose that what it was - for fifteen years living abroad or whatever that adds up to - and I no longer actually want to keep travelling. I don't necessarily want to live in England but given this it is an English company, that is the logical place to say I will spend the next twenty to thirty years so I am no longer willing to travel - which caused them all sorts of problems because my next role would have been either another area director or general management role and as we don't have any or those here. So they offered me this role here in global marketing, so I am in the central marketing group and I am head of marketing development so I look after the people side, so that's the people in terms of career planning and development and we have quite comprehensive stuff on that with 3,500 people. I look after the advertising agencies - global agency contracts that we deliver upon and we do a few other things in global marketing."

"I think the most interesting job in the world is running the company so I was President and General Manager of [a subsidiary], which is a good sized company, I think was about the 2nd biggest company in the entire country. So - and because of the nature of it, it was, well, exposure to government and other things. [...] I found the shift fairly straightforward and I loved it, I mean I loved the 3 GM roles that I have done."

Manager's selection & interpretation of the company's corporate values

[Describing the company as it was] "It was a very sort of maybe colonial, um, pleasant, easy going, not easy the wrong word, um, nice place with decent people around and all that sort of thing - those were the sort of values. Then during the nineties we started to become maybe a little harder and sharper and recognising that the world out there was a bit tougher and we started, you know, managing brands globally, being a bit more rigorous in what we did, I think we probably went through a period of not quite knowing what we were from a values point of view."

This manager joined the company at the start of this period of change, and it appears that he is distancing himself from the old, colonial values. The reference to 'nasty American companies' is a reference to himself.

“We went through this phase when we brought in lots of people who worked for nasty American companies and we went through this probably cultural void for a bit, or mixture or whatever you want to call it. In the mid-nineties created this vision that everyone bought into but at the time the vision was very much a quantitative vision, we will become number one again. [...] We have now spent some time thinking about the softer side, and I think that the vision hasn't changed fundamentally but has been re-expressed, as one of leadership both quantitatively which is the same stuff, but maybe different words, but the same stuff - we would expect to change that, and qualitatively in terms of acting like the leaders.”

“And so some of the values that we are now talking about in terms of making people, empowering them to do things and pushing things further down to the line, is partly a reflection of where we came, but is partly a reflection of what we did, because when you suddenly start going a bit global like we did in the nineties - and I went through this with [a previous company] too, this is quite interesting, but it is that - one of the things that you do to begin with is that you pull everything in, and you start getting even more control in the centre, so that people start changing the way they operate, but you don't want to keep on like that, for Christ's sake, and then you let go, and when you let go what you hope to happen is that you don't do that, you actually do this. I think to an extent that happens but then you need values that support that because, I think that people here get a bit frustrated - well hang on we've given you the responsibility, you are not doing it, why aren't you doing it? That's partly because we went through a period of taking control and then you let go and people go oops, you know, I can do that, yeah.”

“We have four that we state, but I am not saying that those are the values - that is what we are aspiring to. I don't quite know how to verbalise the values at the moment, um, um, it is definitely no longer the white Englishman all over the place in the sense of the values, it certainly is a multinational, international, organisation - there is no question. [...] So there genuinely is a male, international - I say male there so - I don't think we are global if that is a value, I think we are intrinsically local in our thinking which is a problem for us, and we need to embrace better the balance of both, and we are really grappling with that at the moment, it is a real, real, problem. I am not sure whether that is a value but I think it might be. I mean, if you leave a bunch of [company] people together for too long they will create their own solutions rather than look to the organisation to see who else has the same problem and fix it, and say 'well, can I steal that?'.”

“We probably have a bit too much respect for authority, so in terms of taking decisions people are sometimes cautious, it is not a risk taking - it's not a highly risk taking organisation. [...] We are not very innovative.”

“We have created these values - openness and diversity and all those sort of things - going through and through the process trying to understand some of the things I was just talking about. I am trying to say 'well, if these are what we are, you know, how can we convert what we are into not only what we want to be, but make sure what we want to be has some relevance to what we are, otherwise - there is no point in saying we want to be an American company when we are an English company - so how do we do, so we have done this?' We have been a head office driven exercise, and the issue is how do you, now ... and depending on who you talk to - I mean, when you talk to people in head offices you tend to be close to head office initiatives and they will talk to you about it as if it was a fact. The reality is that there may be a fact here but when you get out there you won't find enough of it hanging around so how you convert that, and like most companies, we are good at the

Here, the manager sees the attempts to introduce new values as being aspirational. He then discusses what the company is not, or at least not yet and this expands on the aspirational theme: too local, too cautious, not innovative.

A note of caution – at the head office, it is likely that the concept of the corporate values will be much more commonly understood than in the divisions.

hard stuff, we can show you [targets] and objectives, and I don't know what until you are bored, but when you start to run the softer things, and you want to make these objectives, etc. we haven't delivered on these things yet."

"My perception definitely is that we have not reached the end point, that we are certainly in transition, and that we came from very clearly held values and we're in that period - and we went through a whole period of fluffiness, and a lot of people were really thinking 'what's happening to this company?' and I think we are on the way out of that. Whether we are ending up where people would like us to end up I don't know, although I suspect we are not a million miles away from that. Whether we are acting that way is different..."

Additional excerpts from the laddering exercise

[On reflecting on the results of the laddering] "Well, obviously it is a reflection of some of the things that I would find interesting ... and, you know, in terms of this organisation, it's the sort of things that we are trying to encourage here."

"The only thing is that all of those are very selfish and single individual things, they are about me and I could never imagine a working environment without people, without other people so you could - one could do all this by yourself but that would drive me nuts."

Here, he links his own values as elicited by the exercise to those that he perceives the organisation is trying to encourage.

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Success	Failure	Exciting	Worry	Accepting others	Feeling uncomfortable	Recognition	
Return on effort	No return	Opportunity to challenge myself	Tension	Relaxed	Stressful		
Recognition	Not recognised	Fit & healthy	Tired & not well	Fit & healthy	Tired & not well		
Tangible success	Status quo	No pressure	Responsibility	No pressure	Responsibility		
Constructs elicited from positions held		Constructs elicited from places lived ¹		Constructs elicited from places lived		Additional Values	
1 st Ladder		2 nd Ladder		3 rd Ladder			

¹This ladder split at the third level, and so both parts were followed to a conclusion.

From the manager's account of career history

"By complete chance I was on holiday with my girlfriend, now my wife, and coming back on a chartered flight and I found myself sitting next to [the marketing director] for the group. At the time, he was [a subsidiary], and I'd met him once or twice, although he didn't remember me, and we got talking - I introduced myself, I had a whisky, because he's quite a character, quite a forceful character and I had a whisky, I could see he was having a drink, so I had a drink, and introduced myself as 'you don't remember me, but I know who you are'."

"As we got to know each other, we got on very well and we realised that actually, here is an opportunity where there are very low expectations of what we can achieve, because the business has been going like this [pointing downwards] for eight years now. A succession of well-known management had been through and had managed to screw it up even further, and had moved on to better things - let's see what we can do, and let's really milk - if we're successful - let's really milk the publicity of what we are doing. So, we did that, and it just so happened that we hit on a formula that turned the business around and about 18 months later, we became the leaders again, and we were letting everybody know what a fantastic job we'd done. And it became a bit of a case study, I took every opportunity to write it up in all of our internal marketing magazines and things. [...] So that was a great success, and great fun with no pressure at all, because nobody had expected anything."

"So, I then went to see [the marketing director] and he completely sold me on the opportunity, he flattered me and he said that, you know, [they are] an experienced team, but they are too experienced, what we need is somebody who is younger, who doesn't - who's naïve, and who likes to cause a bit of friction, and change things, and who's going to have the energy to do it, and not worry about their pension. That is what he said to me. He explained the new structure, how it would work, and it was potentially a massive job."

This passage suggests that 'accepting others' may also have a sense of being accepted by others. The value of recognition also supports this.

Much of his value priorities as revealed in the laddering exercise is represented here: the success, the challenge, the recognition, and the freedom from pressure.

Here, the manager is indicating that the flattery – a form of recognition – was a powerful motivator.

“I thought, well, here is an opportunity to say what I really think, so I presented a different presentation to the one that I had kind of talked through previously, and I made a very clear recommendation which was: forget the approach, forget the business plan we’ve agreed, this is the right strategy for our brands. And I could remember looking round the room - they were kind of ... ‘what the fuck are you doing?’, and I sensed as I was going through the presentation that I had a real good rapport with the regional director. It lasted well into the evening, and we came back the following morning and carried on until lunchtime, and he completely bought it, lock, stock and barrel. So, after that, of course, everyone was, ‘well done, really good!’, so it was ‘phew!’.”

“[There was a] big debate over whether the marketing strategy was right or not, and I felt under the enormous pressure, and I had my managing director, who had life or death power over me day-to-day, and I had the marketing director, who had longer term life or death power over my career, completely pulling me in different directions and I was getting calls from people who worked with the marketing director telling me in no uncertain terms that I was fucked if I persisted with this approach - some pretty obscene - ... names hurled in my direction, phones slammed down on me and things like this. And I’d never been in that situation before but ... I ended up doing what I felt was right, because if I did what I was being told to do and it didn’t work, I’d blame myself, and I’d upset somebody. So I’d rather upset somebody and be right, and do what I felt was right, even if it failed, at least I’d done what I believed in, and I would have learned from that, so ... and it was a phenomenal success! It became very quickly apparent that we’re onto something magical here, with this brand. [...] It has become the most successful piece of brand marketing in [that country], it has won all sorts awards, turned the fortunes of the company around, it doubled our - the size of our business.”

Manager’s selection & interpretation of the company’s corporate values

[On the new values statement] “It’s the replacement, I think what has happened is ... before now, I think the focus in Human Resources was on, if you like, building the Human Resources infrastructure, and what we did, what happened was that we developed some core values for the business at a time when I think the management wanted them, but we didn’t have the focus on driving them through and embedding them in business practices, through reinforcing mechanisms, that perhaps will have with the new focus. So, that’s why I think some people still think of the nine values that we had before, and perhaps aren’t so clear on the four [company] principles - because the intention is that the four principles become the only core values of the business.”

“The [company] principles were - did resonate, and we basically had defined four principles to replace the nine values, because the nine values meant nothing, it seemed. We did our research: ‘we will trust each other’, ‘we believe in our plans’ and now we’ve got this thing called the Andersen Principle, sort of somebody knows, but if the opposite is plainly nonsense, then it’s probably a bit of a motherhood statement. So to say we believe in our plans - well, which company would say ‘we don’t believe in our plans’? Nonsense, and nobody - they weren’t being reinforced, they weren’t being lived.”

These excerpts reveal something of the manager’s willingness to take risks in order to get the success and recognition that he values, and the tension that arose in the period between taking the risk and reaping the reward. His second and third ladders indicate that he prefers not to experience this tension, but it appears that his drive for success and recognition is the greater force. Again, the success and recognition seems to be the point of telling the story.

These three excerpts all relate to the background to the adoption of the new values statement, and the rejection of the ‘nine values’.

[On the CEO] “He talked about the values, and he said that anybody who doesn’t live the values will not have a place in this company, and people said, ‘fantastic, about time that we got tough on some of these people that are obstructive and are political, you know, destructive’. But there were then a number of high profile situations where people were clearly not living what people thought the values stood for, or their interpretation of the values, and they got away with it. When we started playing around with the corporate brand, I told [the CEO] this, and I told him that there were a number of senior managers that I’d spoken to who had expressed real disappointment at that, and they had dismissed the values, they think that they are - it was a superficial window dressing exercise, and it was actually, because they were dreamt up on the eve of [a] conference.”

[On the four principles:] “The first is ‘enterprising spirit’ - I think the original one was ... they all changed slightly on the basis of the research - the idea was ‘enterprising spirit’, but we had a version of it which sounded a bit too pith helmets and canoes - ‘pioneering spirit’ - that’s right, that was the original, but they didn’t - that sounded too British and ‘enterprising spirit’, yes, that’s it, that exists in [the company], and people can point to great examples of enterprising spirit. The second one was ‘open-mindedness’ - what we said - there was ... each of them have a flipside, you know, you can go too far and can become negative ... we said where people have – [the company] welcomes opinions sometimes too many opinions, sometimes it doesn’t know when to say, ‘right, let’s make a decision’, but it’s certainly a culture that puts as much weight on the opinion of a personality as it does on hard evidence. There’s a lot of faith in the judgement of people it trusts ... but, you know, where we’ve had certain successes it’s been through real open-mindedness and being prepared to try, to listen to new approaches, and not going in with a fixed view of a solution for a particular part of the world. Which kind of links, or kind of supports the third principle which was ‘strength from diversity’, well, the antithesis of a one-size-fits-all company - there’s a negative to that, in that we’ve failed to build a global brand. What we’re very good at, because of our origins as a company, we have tremendous ability in our markets in understanding local consumers - a result of the history of our company we are so multi-cultural, you know, it is not a British company: my team in [one division] had eleven different nationalities. So, you go anywhere in [the company] and it’s a pretty diverse racial, cultural mix and I think what that gives us is a tremendous ability to take on board often conflicting views of a situation, and that’s OK, it’s OK that we think differently about those. [...] And the last one was ‘freedom through responsibility’ and there are two meanings to that: there’s the organisational meaning which is ... our chairman, our former chairman once said, ‘we give our operating companies the freedom they deserve’, what our current managing director said was ‘they have complete freedom and autonomy’ and they do, far more than many multinationals; we’re quite a federal structure.”

“And what ‘freedom through responsibility’ means is, you have the freedom in this company - as I’ve found in my career - to do what you think is right provided it’s done in a responsible way, and by that, you are doing things that are consistent with the aims of the company, the objectives, consistent with policies and prac-, policies, consistent with strategy, broadly speaking. You aren’t free to go completely off strategy, so provided you operate within the defining parameters, you have complete freedom within those parameters. We call that ‘freedom through responsibility’. Also, take responsibility for delivering success - don’t expect to be told what to do, don’t pass the buck upwards, wherever you are in the organisation, you have the freedom to make a difference, if you want to. You know, if you look at the most successful people in

Great examples of enterprising spirit seem to include his own. His interpretation of ‘open-mindedness’ is one of listening to opinions, although he appears to be cautious about the extent to which this should be done. The idea that ‘there is a lot of faith on the judgement of people it trusts’ seems a qualified statement.

[the company], that's what they've done; they've taken the opportunity to act in what they believe is the right way to achieve success."

[On the assimilation of the corporate values] "It's not just going to happen on its own, you've got to ... in a very measured way, build these desired outcomes into these mechanisms, and we are: we're changing the way we appraise people, so our appraisal process - you can't be open-minded and not have a 360 degrees feedback system, you can't promote enterprising spirit if there's no freedom of the consequences of failure - you've got to allow people to go for it and fail. So, again, freedom through responsibility - you can't promote that if actually you are promoting managers whose leadership style is one of command and control - you've got to be more enabling."

[On the reactions to the corporate values] "The one I hear most people talk about is 'freedom through responsibility', because ... it's empowered people to be able to say, 'hang on a minute, I understand what you are saying, but let me do my job', or when people take an opportunity and just go ahead and do something and their boss says 'you didn't tell me about that', they say, 'well, you weren't here, you were on holiday, or whatever, I didn't want to wait - freedom through responsibility'. You hear it a lot, actually, this kind of "ooh, yes, OK, nothing I can say about that!" [...] I think it's quite a personal - that one has really empowered people. Open-mindedness, I'd say is probably the next one in that again, it's kind of, 'hang on, you're not really listening to what I'm saying - open-mindedness - I may have a different way of doing things'."

Additional excerpts from the laddering exercise

"I think ... I mean, I would consider myself quite driven to succeed, and I don't think that's about money or status, because I think lots of people want that. I think there's something a bit deeper ... and ... it goes back to my childhood, I expect, the way I was potty trained, or something! So why personal satisfaction from challenge ... is it something to do with proving yourself ... because every time you are faced with a challenge, it's sort of ... all your self-doubts come to the fore, often reinforced by others, and being able to prove that you've got the courage of your convictions and the ability to manage the people you need to manage, either in the team or the people that are trying to influence you ... doing things to show that you can handle that, and that each time you're successful, you get an opportunity of another challenge, so it's kind of seeing how far you can go. And I always remember one boss saying to me - he was a bit like me in many ways, and I feel the same - 'that you are waiting for the time that you get found out'. Why is that important? Because it means something to myself ... don't ask me why that's important to me."

"I think your personal values, at different times in different roles, different values become more used, leveraged, and right now, in the role I am in today, I am managing a team of experts, so I've got people with doctorates, and that sort of thing, in areas that I know nothing about, and therefore I've had to become far more open-minded, and accepting of - or trusting - of other people's ability than I had to be when I was in [] as a marketing director, where I was the guru, and I sat at the top of the triangle in my department, and ultimately made any judgement calls - and yes, there's always certain responsibilities further down, but, you know, the big strategic things, it was my call. Here, in many cases, I am a recipient of strategic thinking, not the driver of it, so that's completely different. Perhaps the reason it doesn't come out in the ladder is that it's not something I'm yet entirely comfortable with,

A passage that seems to reveal much about the basis for this manager's personal values.

Here the manager is suggesting that the values at the fore in his current role do not come out in the ladder, but there seems to be a consistency with the third ladder - "I've had to become far more accepting..." - and conflict with the other ladders, which could explain why he is not "entirely comfortable" with this role. In the last statement, the manager is suggesting that the corporate values have themselves been at the fore of his behaviour.

actually. I prefer to know everything, and to have, to be able to provide I mean I do provide strategic leadership, but in some areas, I don't. I mean I would say, if you take the four [company] principles at [the company], at different times, different ones of those have been to the fore in terms of my personal, um ... behaviour.

It is – it's the dilemma, isn't it. My wife and I would love to ... and our little girl, would love to move out to the countryside and – I don't really want to have to commute into London and continue to – I would be quite happy to retire. I think I would. [...] It's the kind of signing up plans of that life – I've got this sort of image of the life style I want, and it's not working in a busy city in a highly stressful job or corporation, although I enjoy what I'm doing.

When I commented on the third ladder.

“Recognition ... I think, yeah, I think I am somebody who seeks reward and recognition”.

On being asked what was missing from those elicited by the laddering exercise

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Achieve more	Busy, but not achieving	Who I am with	Where I am	Accepting differences	Cliques	None given	
Operating with clear directions	Incremental change	People and ambiances	Activities	Non-judgemental	Quick to judge		
Conceptual thinking	Detailed tactics	Absorbing atmospheres	Manufactured fun	Appreciating complexity	Ignorance is bliss		
People management	Individual contributor	Historical	Modern	Operating at deep level	Bowl along in life		
Constructs elicited from positions held 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from places visited on holiday 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from members of family 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

From the manager's account of career history

"Yes, just the volume of it - phenomenal, but you shouldn't tune in, that's not really - the point is to be clear about what your contribution is and your focus and the rest of it. Let it flow past you in some sense."

"I am a great believer in 'be happy'. Be happy, number one, and then sort out the rest. I do make some decisions - I'll make decisions based on happiness. Half the reason I juggle three jobs is because I don't want to do a European role, because I know it would make me miserable travelling around Europe [...] it's a funny job, it is a bit of a hotch-potch, in a way it's a compromise, and it is, but, you know, I am quite comfortable with it."

"I really pushed them because I thought it was [the company] and I really liked the sound of the job, and it was a generalist HR job, but kind of one level up from where I - it was an HR manager versus a personnel officer, I mean it turns out to be titles in the end, but ... yeah, there you go, it's worked out, to a degree..."

"Then went into training and development, and we used to run that like a P&L so it was great, it was great fun. We could basically set up our own curriculum and all we had to do was recover our costs so we were like a non-profit making organisation, but it was like running your own business. So we would sell training courses to the business at a small mark up to recover our costs, and as long as we would break even we could carry on and grow and develop, we could reinvest money - that was a great, that was a great time."

"I got that job, and then [the previous HR director] wanted to relinquish [his job], so I took on that as well and, er, it is quite good because there is lots of stretch - well, loads of stretch in it for me. [...] Yeah, love it, yeah, very much so. Yeah. But I come back to - I made choices on the basis that I

In describing the amount of information she has to deal with, the manager eludes to the importance of clear direction, as in her first ladder.

This manager's job is, as she describes, a bit of a hotch-potch, which she appears comfortable with, and appears to conform to her third ladder sense of appreciating complexity. She also states her preference for being happy, which could be associated with fun, or at least it's opposite.

In describing how she got to work for the company, this manager reveals a preference for a generalist position

In an earlier phase with this company, this manager was involved with training and development. This excerpt reveals her preference for fun, but also indicates that her value of achieving more was being realised.

Again, the manager is showing her preference for achieving more and enjoyment.

kind of will enjoy it. I think in HR, as well, who you have got to partner within the business does make a big difference in terms of how much enjoyment, freedom you can have. Certainly our MD is very good for that and that makes a difference. But no, I thoroughly enjoy it, and if I didn't, again I would probably make a choice to do something else, so that is kind of what drives me."

Manager's selection & interpretation of the company's corporate values

I do buy [the corporate values], 'trust and integrity', and 'respect for the individual', 'accountability', 'teamwork' - I guess those are the ones I hold, those are the ones I hold to myself. [...] The two that stand out for me are the 'trust' and 'respect for the individual', believing someone will do a good job, you know, if you give them all the right tools you believe they will do a good job almost until they prove you otherwise, and their 'uncompromising integrity'. I guess those are the ones that really, they mean [the company] to me.

"...our mentality was that for the ninety-nine people who don't have to fill in absence forms, who feel very freed up by that process, we will live with the one that we can't catch out as quickly or manage as quickly as we want to."

"It is quite, a great deal of freedom. I mean the thing is that I can never quite pinpoint about [the company] is that there is actually massive accountability combined with this sense of trust and respect and in a way - most companies the two, I think, conflict because one erodes the other and somehow [...] one doesn't erode the other here. So you can be very accountable and actually quite well treated and that is a kind of funny. Yeah, you know they are sort of at odds with themselves and yet somehow they blend together."

"Well that stands out the minute you walk in the door because we have these standards of business conduct which I think most people could say, you know, if you said to anyone in this building find a document that articulates [the company's] position on integrity, they would go and find the standards of business conduct from somewhere. So [the company has] got a very clear document that everyone is trained in and everyone has updates on and you can't avoid it, it is kind of in your face the minute you walk in the door. And then I guess the rest of it you just get by osmosis. Why is it so strong for me? Well, I think those two things, the first thing I mentioned and that combined together, they are the reason why our attrition is running lower than most people in our industry, because, actually, people like working in a fair environment. [...] We will pay what we owe and if somebody has got an issue we will talk it through with them, you know, and we'll find a resolution. For me that is one level of integrity. Another one is being very, very firm on people if they break the standards of business conduct".

As HR director, one might expect this manager to be as familiar with the corporate values as anybody. Here she picks out four key values, and then suggests that three stand out.

This is an HR version of an oft-repeated story in the company, with different examples but always the ninety-nine benefiting from being trusted, in contrast to other organisations operating vice-versa.

Describing Integrity: she interprets this value as standards and rules first, and as doing what you said you'd do as second.

“I mean, if you said to us what is the biggest difference between [this company] and any other company that I have seen through different research we have done with [a business school], is - and this is all up for debate at the moment where we are as a company - but people live the values here. That is the biggest, biggest difference. It is because they were here when the company was born and they have grown up with the company and because we have got a lot of people with long service, they tend to be passed on, in a father to child type relationship, which is actually quite true here. People do try and live their values.”

“The values are still valid, but the way they have been applied is wrong so, operating as team does not mean consensus decision-making [...] So what people have done with them is they have almost said, “you can't do that to me, or this can't happen, because of the [corporate values]”, which is wrong - it's kind of mixed, so we have ended up with the situation where there is a misuse of the values. There's a very - somebody once commented - there is a very sophisticated way you know, of avoiding any conflict or to get what I want, so the minute you go back to the values, people are um., ‘better tread carefully!’ - right at the heart of this person. So I think people have got a little bit, have got a little bit sophisticated about how they - so we might be in a dispute with someone about their commission payment and they will say ‘you are not operating in [accordance with the corporate values]’.”

“I don't know whether it is a value but, you know, there needs to be some foot in the company's success versus my own position, so I feel that would be a change for now for me. So I see a lot of people defending, you know, old practice, which in the long term is not going to help, or spending - at the moment we are under severe cost pressure and I see people finding ways round the cost target and I think, ‘who are you kidding?’ I mean, we are all kidding ourselves so it really concerns me when I see people - a great example at the moment is that we have got really tight cost restrictions, and I see people bucking the system and I sort of think ‘why, what is the point if you really take a look at it because if we don't turn this company round, none of us will benefit?’ [...] I don't think people should be slaves to organisations, that sort of blind faith, that is equally unhealthy - but you know balance, you know, value balance, ‘we’, ‘we-us’, not ‘you’ or ‘I’ or ‘management’ or ‘employee’. You know, we are a “we” company, I think, really, and I think we could live that a bit more and ... you know, that is quite important to me”

Here, she is suggesting that people in this company really do live the corporate values, in contrast to ‘any other company I have seen’

Here, the manager expresses her frustration about a current resistance to change she perceives, and for an emphasis on individuals rather than a sense of responsibility for the company as a whole. Her desire for a better balance between competing groups is consistent with her third ladder, particularly concerning cliques – the few benefiting at the expense of the company as a whole.

Additional excerpts from the laddering exercise

“I try, I don't think I manage this all the time but I do try and value difference, I do believe in valuing difference and being a woman that certainly is heightened, is a heightened thing I feel with age, being a woman where I am the only woman on our Board, you know, so - and I think if you can value

difference, then I think you can make a lot more people feel more comfortable and somehow you get more out of them. I don't manage it all the time but I try..."

[On being asked if there is any personal value obviously missing from the ladders] "No ... you know, no. Not that jumps out at me. No, interesting actually because it would be a good question to ask my team, I wonder what they, but I sort of think they would kind of describe me ... like that and some of it they like and some of it they don't. I push very hard because of that but we have a lot of fun because of that, and they are starting to understanding a little bit about HR probably of this, so you know it is good and bad, it is good and bad for them but certainly that is the kind of mix of things I offer - the drive, but we do have quite a lot of fun - hmm, very interesting, very interesting."

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Keeps me in control	Absence of choice			Stimulation	Stagnation	Fairness, Equality, Individuality	Belonging to a group
Continued freedom	Restricted by decisions	Order and neatness	Chaos	Effect change	Going round in circles		
Ambiguity	Certainty, rules	Know the relationships between things	Happy with chaos	Sense of purpose	Doing things for their own sake		
Knowledge	Product	Geographical interest	Cultural interest	Users	Seekers		
Constructs elicited from positions held		Constructs elicited from three non-work activities		Constructs elicited from three work colleagues		Additional Values	
1 st Ladder		2 nd Ladder		3 rd Ladder			

From the manager's account of career history

"Being a very sort of task orientated and ... rational person most of the time, I wanted to do a degree that would position me well for a career where there was a load of money"

"Yeah, there is a couple of, firstly they always regarded labour completely and utterly as a market. It was a commodity; all labour is a commodity ... that was a corporate value. [...] Their idea of good, corporate to employee communications was once a year the general manager would contribute slightly to a little glossy that the internal comms department put together and as an employee we would get one. That's it. [...] Again, the sort of memos that would come down from the chief executive or managing directors office that would go out to everybody and ... it was obvious that they hadn't even read them after, after signing or before signing them before they were duplicated. There was appalling grammar in there for example. I know this guy was not a stupid fool, he wasn't uneducated. You could just read the thing, the sentences didn't scan and things like that and you think if that is what he cares about it, fine, that's a broad statement of the value sets. There was complete and utter rigidity on an awful lot of things where you would have thought well hang on, let's be a bit more flexible."

[Describing initiative shown by a group of managers] "They made a profit on just buying and trading a slot in the delivery and they got a barking from head office for doing that. I thought, 'hang on what behaviours are head office really trying to impose on them there?' You know, its sort of 'don't take risks, and don't do things which are going to enable you to deliver on the customers, don't make a profit and don't do...'. It was the fact that all of that was institutionalised. I mean that was a prime example of, it was that kind of value system. Forget it! Whereas here it you know, it is blatantly commercial, you've got clear measures,

Here, the manager is contrasting the values of the company he worked for previous to joining HITECH. His first point, that all labour is a commodity, appears in conflict with his values of fairness and individuality. He then describes corporate communications, and is disparaging of both the annual 'glossy' distributed to the employees, and memos from the chief executive, which he sees as being sent without care. The reference to rigidity conflicts with the values appearing in his first ladder.

The characteristics of risk avoidance and 'don't do' of his old company can be seen in conflict to his value of stimulation arising out of 'sense of purpose' and 'effect change'. He compares this with HITECH, where he singles out the 'clear measures', which appear to support 'order' and 'knowing the relationships between things', although not in line with 'certainty, rules'. The reference to collective

very different sort of market, you stand or fall according to you own organisations' collective intelligence. There is much more in line with what I felt was right.

Manager's selection & interpretation of the company's corporate values:

“There is a lot of components like respect for the individual, respect for the fact that people have very different ways of working ...[long pause]... the value of, the huge value of a lot of social interaction as the launch pad for a lot of creativity ... or at least maybe not creativity, but sparking of ideas, that kind of thing.”

[On describing a division he used to work in] “That was very different from what the values were when I joined, which was all about functionality and so on. This was, you know, make millions of the stuff cheap and then make them good. That was very, very different, so I actually left that division because I didn't like that, that usage ...[and]... moved to one in the US ... and the value, what that division was really about was enabling things to connect together that wouldn't otherwise connect together easily. So that was kind of functionality and all that.

“I do wonder whether some of the management tools [...] erode some of the [values] which are actually present at the moment, and I value their presence, so for example, ‘diversity’, it tends to be a good thing ... and it is usually expressed in terms of the usual things about gender, ethnic background, cultural background, all those kinds of things. I think style diversity, personal style diversity is also a very key thing to have and I think it does exist here; there is quite a wide set of styles that people have, but the actual measurement system [...] does tend to de-emphasise that.”

“The [Corporate Values] appeared to be all about fairness and citizenship, and well, respect for the individual, and the way it was actually operated by individuals ... could actually mislead you to thinking it was all just about making the place nice to work in. ... [A symbolic action] was always viewed as a really big trust thing, you trust your employees, to which the answer is, ‘well, no, we don't trust them absolutely, we trust them enough that the cost ... would outweigh the benefit of missing that tiny little bit of trust ... so, the [corporate values statement] is a masterpiece, because it combines the hard-nosed commercial bit with what is more recently regarded or described as the hygiene factors.”

Additional excerpts from the laddering exercise

intelligence has no apparent connection to his value system.

My interpretation, linking these statements to values elicited in the laddering exercise

Appears to relate to fairness, equality & individuality, as opposed to belonging to a group.

There is a sense of this in the first ladder, where his control is seen in contrast to ‘absence of choice’, particularly when taken together with his views on diversity.

This manager used the term ‘functionality’ in describing his early

And also it appeared in his elaboration of the first construct in the first ladder:

Here, the manager is giving a particular meaning to diversity, which emphasise diversity in style as opposed to diversity in demographics, and he is arguing that recent changes to measures of assessment are restricting this style diversity.

Terms like ‘individuality’ and ‘ambiguity’, which appear in the personal values elicited, could lead to an acceptance of diversity.

At the start of the interview, this manager described himself as “a task oriented, rational person ... I have got strong scientific skills, but also, to quote some people, a flair for languages”. Here, he seems to be applying a rational logic to the corporate values statement, as a ‘hard nosed commercial’ statement with hygiene factors, and he rationalises the notion of trust in the same way, as a pragmatic cost-benefit exercise.

“I mean all those things are task related. They are, yeah, I do go into driver mode, well apart from the fact that as the job as a project manager involves a certain amount of driving. I do go into driver mode under stress and again that is classic analytic behaviour, becomes a driver under stress. I know I do that.”

“ Well, I don't know if that is missing from that list but a while ago when I sat down and really looked at what kind of things motivated, it was ideas, facts and people in that order. So I like, change has got the ideas bit, knowing where I am is anchoring them to somewhere, facts, and the people's side of it is not really related to this task so ... so people, they are in the top three for me.”

“It is a belief in fairness and again being the analytic I am not sure whether if it is equality or equitability, but something along the lines of, yes, something beginning with q, you know, fairness and equity anyway. Yeah, that one is very important to me and to put a bit more meat on when I rebutted you on: do I want to be in a group? No. I think individuality is very important and recognising people as individuals.”

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Belonging to a team	Being an individual	Freedom to make decisions ¹	Being controlled by others	Stimulation	Ordinary	Loyalty	
Security of sharing	Isolation	In control	Other people's deadlines	Challenging ²	Straight forward		
Being part of a team	Working in isolation	Can do what I want	Structure	Easier to manage	Challenge		
Responsible for team	Individual contribution	Flexible	Structured	Can do	Can't be done		
Constructs elicited from positions held 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from places visited on holiday 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from work colleagues 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values prompted after laddering	

¹This manager recognised the potential conflict in his first two ladder tops: "Freedom of choice versus the group – when it comes down to the wishes of the group and the way I'd go, I would probably go with the group, I imagine".

²The third ladder flipped after the second bipolar construct in that, having elicited 'easier to manage' as the reason for preferring people with a 'can do' attitude, he then contrasted it with 'challenge' and then stated a preference for 'challenge'.

From the manager's account of career history

"I walked through the door really on my first morning and realised I had made a hideous mistake as a young lad of I don't know, early twenties or so, I suppose I would be then, twenty-one maybe, and just determined probably by lunch time that it wasn't where I wanted to be. It was a really desperate environment, very, very, very structured, almost primary school level, you know, when the bell goes you have a break, when the bell goes you start working again. That kind of environment, and so to that end I started really just looking for roles, not quite in desperation - that would be wrong - but looking for something that just would get me out of [that company] at that stage."

Mismatch between this company and his values of 'freedom to make decisions'

"So if you are wanting to summarise my career, if you like, a lot of it has been opportunistic. Some things come up, typically some things seem to have come up that I know nothing about and I can't give you a sensible answer as to why I'd always apparently elected to go that way. Some of it will be, it is just a challenge, some of it will be it is just different. Some of it will also be somebody thinks I can do it so I will, kind of approach, you know. But was it mapped out from day one? No it wasn't. Is it mapped out from here on in? No it isn't and I kind of play it as I find it, but... probably to a degree, probably I'm a bit more structured in my personal life, but I suspect that is because there is a bit more obvious responsibility for people if you like because there are three other members of the family that, you know, do bring responsibility to me or some reliance on me in some way."

Here, the manager is summing up his career. The first part is reflected I his third ladder, with his attraction for the challenge, and his 'can do' attitude. He also indicates that his approach is unplanned and he considers himself to be relatively unstructured – a little more so when he needs to be for his family, which reflects his preferences indicated in the second ladder.

“I don’t think I felt a loyalty sensation. I don’t think as if I had been treated in a disloyal way. I probably did, you know, right at the time, when it happened you know, in the room right then and then probably three hours in the pub afterwards or whatever. I don’t remember feeling that there had been this big loyalty issue and [the company] had done something hideous. I felt more like it wasn’t about me, it was just about it, you know.”

“But my genuine preference is to have a nice relaxed environment, hopefully people feeling relaxed, positive and calm. Because for panic, running around losing our heads doesn’t fundamentally change what we are trying to deal with. That doesn’t help the urgency, that just creates confusion, uncertainty and what have you.”

Manager’s selection & interpretation of the company’s corporate values

[On comparing the company with his previous company]

“And then when I came here ... you were given a set of personal objectives ... you were given a great deal of freedom in terms of how you achieved them [...] There was an interaction between management and employees whereas at [the other company], the interaction, it wasn’t interaction, you were summonsed to go and explain a particular situation. [Here] there would be, a request, you know, can we discuss what has happened here kind of thing. And on from there. So a much more flexible, almost a looser environment. There was less structure, probably dangerously so in those early days.

“We have kind of become, we are nice, you know, we are nice people, genuinely I think [company] people are nice people. What that has meant over the years is that it has tended to become we don’t challenge things because it is kind of difficult to be challenging or, you’ve not actually done something, why haven’t you done it. Well you can do that in a nice way and still get to the nub of the issue.”

“I mean I’ve not, it wouldn’t be fair to say that I have sat down and worried myself about it, but my cut on it would be that by and large the things that are in the [corporate values] allowed you to cross over between, you know, sort of good business sensible type practices, allow them to be reflected on the employees in such a way that they were seen as being positive. They were things that people would find it difficult to disagree with, you know, when in your general life you would like to be encouraging, supportive whatever, whatever.”

“But integrity for me anyway is about me and you, me, and whoever, that is how I deal with you, within a framework that I may have.”

“So I am not sure that I ... I am not sure that I want my, you know, the corporation has to be blamed if I lack integrity. If I lack integrity, I lack integrity and the way that I deal with the situation, suggesting that I may be given difficult things to

This manager is the only one to list ‘loyalty’ as a corporate value, and here he is considering a situation where he might have concluded that the company was being disloyal to him, but in the end he did not see the issue in terms of loyalty.

Here he is expressing a preference for a relaxed environment. This does not appear as such in any ladder, but was implicit in some of his objection to being controlled, in that he does not appreciate interference.

My interpretation, linking these statements to values elicited in the laddering exercise

This manager was very clear about the differences he found between HITECH and his previous company, which was highly structured, and “Dickensian”, as he put it. Here he emphasised ‘freedom’ in choosing how to meet objectives, ‘flexibility’ and less structure, all of which appear in his second ladder.

Here, he interprets integrity in terms of interpersonal relationships, and then goes into a fairly lengthy example of how difficult decisions had recently been put out on the website, rather than for managers to announce them to their teams, something he clearly

the situation, excepting that I may be given difficult things to deal with, but I can still deal with them in a way that has integrity, and that kind of thing.”

[On describing a recent restatement of values document]

“You know all the key stuff like trust, loyalty, resourcefulness are embedded in there in one sense or another, you know, probably you could sit down and say, ‘oh well, personally I would like a little bit skewed towards this or a little bit more skewed towards the other’

disapproves of. He then goes onto explain that, in his view, this is not the ‘corporation’ lacking integrity, but the leaders of the organisation at the present time. I interpret this as a form of loyalty...

Trust is in there, and resourcefulness can be his interpretation of ‘innovation’ or ‘individual responsibility’, but loyalty is not in the corporate values statement, nor did any other manager mention it. It appears as his additional value in the laddering exercise, and, it could be argued, is implicit in his preference for being a part of a team.

Additional excerpts from the laddering exercise

“I like the responsibility of the freedom of being the person that is responsible to make the decision, but I would also have to register that there is anxiety in terms of the responsibility. So if that makes any sense, I can quite happily get off on the fact that it is my decision, I can make it and I am not going to get any interference, but equally I could sit there in my more dark moments ... did I make the right decision?”

“I would prefer to be part of a group, you know, if a work sense I have worked on my own but not for very long and whilst I would probably say it was OK, it was probably OK, it wasn't something that you know if you said to me now for the next 10 years you are going to work on your own, I would probably go well maybe you think I am, but I am not. Freedom of choice, yes, I would probably say that wherever I can seek it out I prefer to be in a position of where I have a choice. Even in my private life I would seek to be in a position where there is a choice, there is always an option. I definitely don't like being somebody who is being driven down a path for long.”

“Freedom of choice versus the group – when it comes down to the wishes of the group and the way I go, I would probably go with the group on balance I would imagine. The things that - probably if you were to say to me what sort of, really put me on the spot, probably one of things that I get really hot under the collar about is loyalty in terms of friendship which probably comes out because of my preference for being in a group, put a lot of store by.”

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Security	Uncertainty	Keeping sharp	Dull	Show competence	Disapproval	Fairness	
Personal confirmation	Understanding others	Keeping up	Being directed by others	Getting positive feedback	No feedback		
Direct buzz	Precarious	Novelty	Stagnation	Completing tasks	No end		
Generate my own ideas	Manage other's ideas	Exploring	Closed tasks	Well-defined	Woolly		
Constructs elicited from three positions held 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from non-work interests 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from non-work interests ¹ 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

¹Two bipolar constructs were elicited from non-work interests, and we were under time-pressure

From the manager's account of career history

"I did the classic thing of leaving school at 17 and when straight to university in Scotland. Did a first degree in Maths, very academically focussed, got a first and won all sorts of prizes and everything. Went on to do a PhD, and did think about getting into a job at that point, but I went on to do a PhD at the University of London, got my PhD in 1993 at the age of 24".

Maybe 'classic' to some, but not to us lesser mortals!

[Discussing research projects] "In each case, I looked to find a group of people who shared some common interests in research, looked for a good name to go and work with. Then, at the end of that, I again considered whether I wanted to carry on in academia, tried to create options for that involving longer-term research positions and lectureships, was unsuccessful in doing that. [...] One of the things I found difficult about the academic career was the uncertainty. So you would get money for a year or two years, you would up sticks, you would pack all your things and ship it overseas, you would have to find somewhere new to live, meet some new people. There was a built-in instability in the academic system which part of me, I think, found interesting and I think I miss a little, but there was also that negative side of that - need to pack up and start again every couple of years. I think I would have solved that by getting a longer term research position but at that point I think I wanted just to think, felt that I was 27, maybe 28, I wanted to think about buying a house. Money was an issue too. The pay was pretty poor. The salaries, most probably no one found great and I fancied ... I fancied the idea of making some more money, so when [the company] offered - in retrospect, was not an enormous starting salary, but it was very good at the time for the position that I was in. So, stability, money and I think, retrospectively, opportunity to learn new things, to create an impact, to get an industrial

In this excerpt, the manager's values as elicited by the laddering exercise seem to be revealed, particularly the value of security, both in terms of stability and in financial security. But there is also a sense of novelty and keeping sharp, the benefits of short-term research projects, and of belonging, which appears to be behind the 'show competence' value (see additional excerpts from the laddering exercise).

experience. But at the time that was all unknown and was not something that really appealed to me, particularly. I was quite wet behind the ears.”

“I would be out on a Friday night with a bunch of other post docs, or whatever, not just from Mathematics but from Pure Science, Physics or Biology, we would all go out together. It was a definite world, comfortable, comfortable...”

“As a manager to some extent you get to have a say. I think that is true of the researcher too, once you are sufficiently senior, but the position I was coming from as a relatively junior researcher into a project manager meant that I didn't really have a concept of what having a say meant. So there is a certain control over your destiny, and the destiny of people who work for you. I get quite a lot of pleasure out of the success of some of the people who work for me. Others make it very difficult for me to enjoy that success along with them. So that is a mixed thing - seeing other people succeed can be very pleasurable but it can also be slightly less than pleasurable because of the way the subject was celebrated and don't include you, or doing things which, you know, yeah...[fades]... Other aspects - I like being able to say 'yes' to people in the sense of somebody in my team might come along with a great idea that costs money and I can look at the budget and say 'yeah, that's a great idea' and got them out to do that, go and make it happen and it happens. So there are some positive things. [...] But right now, I think the negatives overweigh the positives, particularly at a time like this [] where money gets quite constrained, finances get tight, people get a bit twitchy, organisations change continually. So some of that stability that I was looking for by joining [the company] is a bit of a mirage, once you get beyond a certain level in the organisation.

Manager's selection & interpretation of the company's corporate values

“Values of [the company]... There is a sense in which you, everybody, participates in the success of the company and everybody who has an idea and something to say, can say it and will get listened to. So the hierarchy is very weak and that is a great plus if you are an engineer or young manager trying to make things happen. That also has a downside too, which is that it is difficult to get people to take responsibility for things. Sometimes we all sit around in a room and no actions appear and it makes leadership difficult. So I watch my manager, and he really struggles to tell people what to do because it is not part of the culture in [the company]. You reach things through consensus. So, certainly in [this division] particularly, it is non confrontational and it is really about how good your ideas are, not how big your job title is. So those values are very important, I think - to me personally - I think it is also caring. It is a company that cares about the people who work for it so, if somebody is ill then people from [the company] will go and visit that person in hospital, or they will take up a collection and get them a 'get well' present or something. You know, we have paternity leave as

Security, keeping sharp, well-defined...

There is a sense of exclusion in the sentences beginning with 'so that is a mixed thing', and the way his voice fades at the end of that piece suggests a sadness – perhaps of not belonging?

The manager is also indicating a lack of stability in his present role, and that is said with regret.

The values he selects are those to do with belonging: participation in the success, getting listened to, consensus and caring, and a family feel.

well as maternity leave; we have, when the guys who work for me travel on company business over the weekend, I expect them to take a day off at some point, any time they choose as long as it doesn't clash with something very important, to get that time back again. In other companies it is just part of the job. So there is something almost a kind of familial aspect to, it doesn't feel like a big business."

"As soon as you create several tiers of middle management, where people are not directly contributing to the bottom line, they are not actually screwing screws into the holes and making things, then people are going to be looking at position, at relative position, power and authority, all those things. So there is a tremendous amount of that. Personalities breed politics, I believe."

A comment on a the recent 'new interpretation' which tries to suggest there should be no politics...

Additional excerpts from the laddering exercise

"I think I am basically an insecure person. [...] And I think a sense of security is a basic physical need, you know, that hierarchy, belonging."

"I look for a community of people who I respect and who respect me. Whether that is the people I drink with on a Thursday when we discuss, you know, footballs scores, or whether it is a mathematical community, belonging to a community..."

"I think fairness is a good word. I like the world to be fair ... ah, that's it! There is a strong moral sense of what is right and what is wrong. That's why. It is a morality, much more a morality..."

These excerpts seem to support the security and belonging aspects of this manager's values.

APPENDIX G

SCHWARTZ'S UNIVERSAL VALUE TYPES

<u>Motivational value type</u>	<u>Value terms included</u>
Self Direction (Independent thought and action)	<i>Freedom, creativity, independent, choosing one's own goals, curious, self respect</i>
Stimulation (Need for variety and stimulation)	<i>An exciting life, a varied life, daring.</i>
Hedonism (Pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself)	<i>Pleasure, enjoying life</i>
Achievement (Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards)	<i>Successful, capable, ambitious, influential, intelligent.</i>
Power (Attainment of social status and prestige, and control or dominance over people and resources)	<i>Social power, authority, wealth, preserving my public image, social recognition.</i>
Security (Safety, harmony and stability of society, of relationships and of self)	<i>Clean, national security, reciprocation of favours, social order, family security, sense of belonging, healthy.</i>
Conformity (Restraint of actions, inclinations and impulses likely to upset others and violate social expectations or norms)	<i>Obedient, honouring of parents, politeness, self-discipline.</i>
Tradition (Respect, commitment and acceptance of the customs and ideas that one's culture or religion impose on the individual)	<i>Accepting my portion in life, devout, humble, respect for tradition, moderate, detachment</i>
Benevolence (Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact)	<i>Helpful, honest, forgiving, loyal, responsible, a spiritual life, true friendship, mature love, meaning in life.</i>
Universalism (Understanding, appreciation and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature)	<i>Protecting the environment, unity with nature, a world of beauty, broad-minded, social justice, wisdom, equality, a world at peace, inner harmony</i>

Source: Schwartz (1992), pages 5-12

APPENDIX H

ALL LADDER MAPS: FMCG & HITECH

FMCG LADDER MAPS

David Verkaik

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Collective	Individual	Peace	Struggle	Stimulation	Repetition	Honesty	
Strong family bond	Disintegrated	Relaxed	Aggressive	Change	Status quo		
Less materialistic	More materialistic	Holistic thinking	Impulsive	Ingenious	Conformity		
Developing	Developed	Reflective	Highly strung	Fantastic visual effects	Poor visual effects		
Constructs elicited from countries worked 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from work colleagues 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from films seen 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

Sarah Kennedy

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Exciting	Bored rigid	Respecting others	Forcing			Conviction	Compromise
Make an impact	Less impact	Working out what work	Resorting to force	Differences	Blandness		
Specialist	Generalist	Enjoyment	Exasperation	Variety & diversity	Uniformity		
Central strategic role	End-market role	Activity	Social	Unstructured	Orderly		
Constructs elicited from positions held 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from non-work activities 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from places lived 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

Richard Cooper

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Sense of achievement	Being an administrator	Freedom to do what I want	Having things imposed	Be myself	Not relaxed	Inner harmony	
Big fish	Nobody	No pressure	Up against delivery	Open	Minding Ps & Qs		
Make a difference	Cog in a wheel	Relaxed	Restrictive	Comfort	On guard		
Operating companies	Head office	Warm	Hot & cold	Trust totally	Less trust		
Constructs elicited from places worked 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from places visited on holiday 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from work colleagues 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

Colin Cook

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Success	Failure	Exciting	Worry	Accepting others	Feeling uncomfortable	Recognition	
Return on effort	No return	Opportunity to challenge myself	Tension	Relaxed	Stressful		
Recognition	Not recognised	Fit & healthy	Tired & not well	Fit & healthy	Tired & not well		
Tangible success	Status quo	No pressure	Responsibility	No pressure	Responsibility		
Constructs elicited from positions held 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from places lived ¹ 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from places lived 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

¹This ladder split at the third level, and so both parts were followed to a conclusion.

Linda Miller

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Recognition	Ambiguity	Achievement	Failure	Excitement	Dull & boring	Fairness & fair play;	Treated unfairly
Sense of reward	Frustration	Making a difference	Stuck in a rut	Pushing boundaries	Going through the motions	Honesty & integrity	
Immediate feedback	Takes time to come out	Immediate feedback	Takes time to come out	Adrenalin push	Inactivity		
Individual role	Team role	Individual role	Team role	High energy	Chilling out		
Constructs elicited from positions held 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from positions held ¹ 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from non-work activities 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

¹The first ladder split at the third level into two bipolar constructs.

Andy Britten

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Stimulation	Dragging weed	Challenging	Boring	Effective	Ineffective	Human contact	
Working with capable people	Tolerating underperformance	Change	Status quo	Convenience	Inconvenience		
Invest in people	Weak investors	Forward-looking	Backward-looking	Utility	Character		
Constructs elicited from companies worked for 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from non-work interests 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from places lived in 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

Charles Knight

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Achieve things	Fuzzy	Recognition	Impotency			Being with other people	
Rewarding	Frustrating	Expressing myself	Just living	Challenge	Routine		
In control	Need consensus	Creating	Taking it as it comes	Avoiding boredom	Routines		
Operating	Staff	Activities	Pastime	Different	The same		
Constructs elicited from positions held 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from non-work activities 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from countries lived in 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

Stewart Hinds

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Life balance	Single focus	Achievement	Impotence	Never a dull moment	Boredom	Family	
Comfort	Stress	In control	Out of control	The unexpected	Another McDonalds		
Controlling agendas	Licensed chaos	Can make a difference	Just a victim	Sense of adventure	More of the same		
Expertise	Jack-of-all-trades	Hands-on	Hands-off	Developing	Developed		
Constructs elicited from positions held 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from non-work activities 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from places visited 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

HITECH LADDER MAPS

Peter Hughes

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Belonging	Isolation	Relationship with God My faith is integral Life	Take it or leave it Emptiness Hobby	People matter	Messing people around	Family	
Working with people	Self-motivation			Care about people	Task oriented		
Teamwork	Individual work			Good people skills	Poor people skills		
Achieve results through others	Real hands on work yourself						
Constructs elicited from positions held 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from non-work activities 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from work colleagues 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

Susan Marsh

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Achieve more	Busy, but not achieving	Who I am with	Where I am	Accepting differences	Cliques	None given	
Operating with clear directions	Incremental change	People and ambiances	Activities	Non-judgemental	Quick to judge		
Conceptual thinking	Detailed tactics	Absorbing atmospheres	Manufactured fun	Appreciating complexity	Ignorance is bliss		
People management	Individual contributor	Historical	Modern	Operating at deep level	Bowl along in life		
Constructs elicited from positions held 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from places visited on holiday 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from members of family 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

John Roberts

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Having allies	Being a pioneer	Get what I want	Victim of circumstance	Personal growth ¹	Stagnation	Relationships with others	Personal contentment
Being supported	Not supported	Get more out of life	Taking what's dished out	New insights and learning	No new insights		
Conformation	Nasty surprise	In control of environment	Controlled by environment	New experiences	The same		
Involved	Laissez-faire	Go-getting	Reactive	Unfamiliar	Familiar		
Constructs elicited from work colleagues 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from people away from work 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from places visited on holiday 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

¹The manager indicated that this was 'a dominant core value' when presented with the laddering results.

Bernard Nixon

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Belonging to a team	Being an individual	Freedom to make decisions ¹	Being controlled by others	Stimulation	Ordinary	Loyalty	
Security of sharing	Isolation	In control	Other people's deadlines	Challenging ²	Straight forward		
Being part of a team	Working in isolation	Can do what I want	Structure	Easier to manage	Challenge		
Responsible for team	Individual contribution	Flexible	Structured	Can do	Can't be done		
Constructs elicited from positions held 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from places visited on holiday 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from work colleagues 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values prompted after laddering	

¹This manager recognised the potential conflict in his first two ladder tops: "Freedom of choice versus the group – when it comes down to the wishes of the group and the way I'd go, I would probably go with the group, I imagine".

Cathy Richards

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred
Make the world a better place Seeing ideas make a difference People oriented	Indifference	Fun	Boring	Personal growth & development¹	Sticking with where I am	Collaborative working, other people's growth & development
	Research for research's sake	Development & growth	Being static	Challenges my world view	Sticking where I am	
	Impersonal	Challenging	Straight-forward	Discovery of new places & people	Developing what I already know	
		Contemplative	Active	Travel	Activity	
Constructs elicited from projects managed 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from non-work activities 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from places visited on holiday 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values

¹The third ladder is very similar to the second in content

Calum Phillips

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Security	Uncertainty	Keeping sharp	Dull	Show competence	Disapproval	Fairness	
Personal confirmation	Understanding others	Keeping up	Being directed by others	Getting positive feedback	No feedback		
Direct buzz	Precarious	Novelty	Stagnation	Completing tasks	No end		
Generate my own ideas	Manage other's ideas	Exploring	Closed tasks	Well-defined	Woolly		
Constructs elicited from three positions held 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from non-work interests 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from non-work interests ¹ 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

¹Two bipolar constructs were elicited from non-work interests, and we were under time-pressure

Tim Kelly

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Accomplishment	Not making a difference	Enjoyment	Worry & stress	Integrity	Being forced	Respect for other people	
Self-expression	Others' ideas			Independence	Being forced		
Come up with own ideas	Making a success of others' ideas			Freedom	Constraint		
Personal involvement	Building a prototype			Personal choice	Obligation		
Constructs elicited from projects managed 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from non-work activities 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from places visited on holiday 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

Robert Usborne

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite				
Generosity	Meanness	Challenging	Formulaic	Stimulation	Passive recipients	Interaction with other people ¹	Interaction with things				
Giver	Taker							Different every time	Same every time	More open	Set in their ways
Betterment of the recipient	Just a product							Original creative input	Replication	Engages with people easily	Childish social skills
Research about knowledge	Research about products										
Constructs elicited from organisations worked for 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from non-work interests 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from work colleagues 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values					

¹This actually came out in a discussion following the second ladder, rather than when confronted with the ladder-tops. It has a resonance with the third ladder.

Chris Maume

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Freedom	Slavery	Living life to the full	Sub-optimal life	Truth	False	Proclaiming the truth¹	
Create my own choices	Implement other's choices	Challenging	Boredom	Personal integrity	Low cunning		
Autonomy	Being driven	Contrast & variety	Sameness	Trustworthy	Unpredictable & dangerous		
Lakes and mountains	Seaside environment						
Constructs elicited from positions held	Constructs elicited from places visited on holiday	Constructs elicited from world leaders	Constructs elicited from world leaders	Constructs elicited from world leaders	Constructs elicited from world leaders	Additional Values	
1 st Ladder	2 nd Ladder	3 rd Ladder	3 rd Ladder	3 rd Ladder	3 rd Ladder		

¹This is similar to the third ladder, but has an evangelising feel to it, particularly as this manager holds strong Christian beliefs.

Brian Connell

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Achievement	Non-achievement	Meet internal goals	Be externally driven	Fun	Grief	Financial security	
High output ratio	Low output ratio	Doing the things that matter	Doing the next on the list	Balanced	Restricted	Straight talking	Keeping quiet
Efficiency	Waste time	Do the important	Do the urgent	Holistic	Restricted		
UK job	European job	Slow place of life	Fast pace of life	Run profit centres	Run cost centres		
Constructs elicited from three positions held	Constructs elicited from three places lived in	Constructs elicited from three work colleagues	Constructs elicited from three work colleagues	Constructs elicited from three work colleagues	Constructs elicited from three work colleagues	Additional Values	
1 st Ladder	2 nd Ladder	3 rd Ladder	3 rd Ladder	3 rd Ladder	3 rd Ladder		

Ben Harrison

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Live according to my beliefs	Live according to norms	Honesty	Pretence	A simple life	Complexity	Tradition	
Money is not the purpose	Profit is the bottom line	Freedom to make one's own choices	Constraint	Fewer choices	Politics		
Research	Profit-making	Emotive	Technical	Simplicity	Modernism		
Constructs elicited from companies worked for 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from non-work activities 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from places visited on holiday 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

Phil Reeves

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Keeps me in control	Absence of choice			Stimulation	Stagnation	Fairness, Equality, Individuality	Belonging to a group
Continued freedom	Restricted by decisions	Order and neatness	Chaos	Effect change	Going round in circles		
Ambiguity	Certainty, rules	Know the relationships between things	Happy with chaos	Sense of purpose	Doing things for their own sake		
Knowledge	Product	Geographical interest	Cultural interest	Users	Seekers		
Constructs elicited from positions held 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from three non-work activities 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from three work colleagues 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

Chris Bickell

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Stimulating	Handle grinding	Recognition	You know...	Enjoyment	Existing	Personal integrity ²	
Job spec under my control	Obvious what to do	People see you make the future occur	Having no plans	Be spontaneous	Being organised		
New role	Established role	Build bigger pictures	Running by the seat of my pants	Freedom over time	Being organised		
		Exploring & applying	Reactive process	DIY	Package		
Constructs elicited from positions held 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from positions held ¹ 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from places visited on holiday 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	

¹This manager developed two constructs from the same triad, so we worked with both.

²See last section where he defines personal integrity

Graham Peterson

Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite	Preferred	Opposite
Stimulation	Boredom	Being me	Trying to work out who I am	Free thinking	Politicking	Honesty	
A challenge	Just Implementing	Privacy	Be in the commune	Enables freedom and openness	Political agendas		
Does not restrict my thinking	Prescriptive work environment	Treating me like I am special	Fitting in	Generates trust	Uncertainty		
Lot of discretion	Cog in a wheel	Civilised freedom	Treated like cattle	Honest	Deceitful		
Constructs elicited from positions held 1 st Ladder		Constructs elicited from places visited on holiday 2 nd Ladder		Constructs elicited from work colleagues 3 rd Ladder		Additional Values	