

USING POSITIONING THEORY TO  
UNDERSTAND HOW SENIOR MANAGERS  
DEAL WITH SUSTAINABILITY

By

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May 2003

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the  
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

## CERTIFICATION

The candidate does hereby certify that the work contained within this thesis:

- (1) is, except where due acknowledgement has been made, that of the candidate alone;
- (2) has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, in respect for any other academic award; and
- (3) is the result of work, which has been carried out since the official date of commencement of the approved research program.

Signed:



.....  
Lionel John Boxer

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I am most grateful to my supervisors Professor John Dalrymple and Professor Peter Sheldrake for their guidance, advice, enthusiasm, and encouragement throughout the course of preparation, research and thesis writing. Their wisdom and knowledge of the academic process have been critical components enabling me to complete my research.

Due to the nature of my research, I have benefited greatly from two external consultants. Dr Ian Ling, a research fellow with the Education Faculty at the University of Melbourne, and Dr Robin Gray have been most helpful regarding the constructionist research approaches and positioning theory. Ian's work in applying Professor Rom Harré's positioning theory to the work of curriculum coordinators has been a foundation from which I built my approach.

Professor Rom Harré has been a very helpful sounding board regarding my application of his ideas to management from the earliest stages. When I asked him by email if anyone had applied positioning theory to management he replied, 'why not be the first'. Since then, he and Professor Ali Mogghadam of Georgetown University have reflected on my work and included a compilation of several of my conference papers (Boxer 2001, 2002a, 2002b) as a chapter (Boxer inpress) in *The Self and Others*, their upcoming sequel to *Positioning Theory* (Harré and van Langenhove 1999).

In his referee report of Ling's doctoral thesis, Professor C.T. Patrick Diamond implied that an extension to Ling's thesis would be to consider Foucault's work regarding the relationship with knowledge and power. I met with Diamond at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto to discuss his suggestion to look at Foucault. This led me to delve into Foucault's work, which contributed greatly to the proposal of a concept of social flux that is introduced in Chapter 7. I would not have been able to understand Foucault without the help from various people I met on an internet discussion list (foucault@lists.village.virginia.edu at the time of publication of this thesis). Those include Professor Clare O'Farrell (Queensland University of Technology), Professor Stuart Elden (University of Durham), Ali Rizvi (who has been at various universities from Pakistan, London and finally Melbourne), and others who contributed at various times.

RMIT and especially the Faculty of Business have permitted me to conduct my research as a PhD student. For this home in an academic community I am most grateful. Central to this community has been the Centre for Management Quality Research, headed by Professor John Dalrymple. The mutual support and nurturing facilitated by this diverse group has provided a degree of certainty and stability in the instability of a PhD program of study. A wonderful synergy erupts from this Centre.

My absence at social activities and professional societies has been repeatedly commented on; whether this is with glee or dismay I am unsure. My friends in general deserve a vote of thanks.

In an effort to understand the research approach better, I applied it to a situation facing one of my clients. After conducting interviews and analysis in a similar way to that used in my research, I realised that I had some sensitive findings for both my client and their various stakeholders. I realised that I would need to be careful how I dealt with this information and only reveal certain things to certain parties – at least in the short term. When I explained this to a mentor, who was asking about my research, he replied, 'Oh I see you are learning about tact'. When I asked him what he meant, he commented further, 'Well Lionel,

you are not the most tactful person in the world'. This made me think about myself and shed additional light on other comments that people make about me from time to time.

A few weeks later – during a colloquium of my research centre – on reflecting on my realisation resulting from my mentor's comments, I mentioned that my supervisor's comments now made a bit more sense. My supervisor replied that it was a symptom of paranoia. That also was enlightening for me.

In any event, experimenting with the research technique in both my research and my work led me to a greater understanding of my research, the method used in my research, and myself.

Various businesses opened their doors to me in the early stages of my research. While in the UK, I visited the New Lanark historic site of Robert Owen's industrial-revolution-era experiment in what might be referred to as sustainability. In particular, Carolyn Blackburn of the New Lanark Trust was helpful on the day and later introduced me to Professor Jack Quarter of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. Quarter (2000) compared a number of business people who dealt with sustainability.

Having had the opportunity to work with six extraordinary senior managers – the participants in my research – I have learned a great deal. In the anonymity required by university ethical procedures I thank them for their time spent providing true and open answers to my questions.

Finally, I must thank my wife for tolerating my behaviour, which at times must have resembled madness. Without her tolerance I would not have been able to complete this work.

L.J. Boxer

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS USED

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BHP	Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd
CE	Chief Executive
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
HRH	His Royal Highness
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
OEI	Obligatory and Externally Imposed
PBS	Public Broadcasting Service
TBL	Triple Bottom Line
TQM	Total Quality Management
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
WTO	World Trade Organization

## DEFINITIONS

Role	The static component of one's self (Davies and Harré 1990). One's static assignment, as defined in a written job description that has been given to a person when they assume specific role in an organization. 'One's task or function' (Oxford 1984, p. 600).
Position	The dynamic component of one's self (Davies and Harré 1990). The dynamic definition of one's self that has been arrived at through being defined by a role and subsequently modified by a unique social situation.

## GENDER PROTOCOLS

Throughout the text of this thesis, neutral gender protocol has been used. Whereas terms such as chairman may be viewed as implying a male person, this word is perceived to mean manager-of-the-chair, which has been shortened to chair-man. In cases where the chair-man was a man that person's gender has been acknowledged. That is, a woman will be identified through pronouns such as she, her or hers. Where participants in this study are concerned, their identity and gender have been masked and neutral pronouns or constructs have been harnessed. In those cases, the participants name has been used in place of he or she, but where this is obviously repetitive other constructs have been used to make sentences flow with greater fluidity.

## ABSTRACT

Social pressure for sustainability has become a significant factor in Australian business. Made popular by a variety of diverse social movements that employ various tactics, sustainability is increasingly being debated in boardrooms and work areas of both large and small businesses. In this research, sustainability issues are treated as a set of a wider range of obligatory and externally imposed (OEI) issues that are increasingly confronting contemporary business. Of interest to this research is *how senior managers deal with sustainability issues*.

While some businesses excel in dealing with OEI issues, others prevaricate. This research focuses on those businesses that appear to excel in resolving sustainability issues to explore how senior managers deal with sustainability issues. Such understanding is essential for contemporary practising senior managers, as it provides guidance for management behaviour that will enable sustainability and other OEI issues to be *dealt with*.

The author's effort to understand how senior managers deal with sustainability issues has led to the first business context application of Harré's positioning theory. A social constructionist approach, positioning theory is concerned with ordinary conversations, and presumes that these are the building blocks of all other discursive phenomena. The resulting theory builds on positioning theory and provides a point of departure to conduct related research on other organizations that excel in dealing with OEI issues and those that prevaricate.

With positioning theory it has been shown that, in dealing with sustainability issues, senior managers engage in a range of positioning of themselves and others. In doing so, power and knowledge have been considered in the light of Foucault's unique and penetrating concepts. This has led to the proposed augmentation of positioning theory to include a concept of social flux, which is put forward as an indication of social order or culture. Through this development, it has shown how senior managers confront opposition and reinforce support to enable them to achieve and preserve sustainability objectives.

In practical terms, senior managers alter four components of the social order to align the culture with the issues that need to be *dealt with*. These components – rights, duties, morals and actions – are parameters that senior managers tune or level when they deal with sustainability issues. When the social order is appropriately tuned or levelled, it is aligned with the issues that need to be *dealt with*. That alignment enables issues to be resolved in a way appropriate for the organization.

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

This research explores the question *how do senior managers deal with sustainability issues?* As will be shown in Chapter 2, public concern for sustainability has had an increased impact on many organizations in recent years. This situation has been brought on by a growing perception that damage is done to both the environment and society by commercial activities. It will be seen that organizations must demonstrate that they are doing something about sustainability issues to avoid disruption from public pressure.

Businesses are coming under increased pressure to demonstrate that they are dealing with sustainability issues in ways commensurate to the risks involved in their situation. Companies that do not deal with sustainability in an effective way may come under scrutiny of non-governmental activists and even formal regulatory bodies. It will be shown in Chapter 2 that public pressure has resulted in collapsing of both sales and share price. Chapter 3 considers that how sustainability is dealt with is contextually dependent on stakeholders; Des Jardins (1997) asks if it is possible for all parties to agree in the environmental ethics debate. This leads the author to explore if people achieve consensus when they deal with sustainability issues. This research is interested therefore in how people can collaborate through parity as opposed to how people can be imposed upon through power.



To answer the research question, the author has selected Ling's (1998) method previously used to understand how curriculum co-ordinators in independent schools dealt with curriculum issues. This method harnesses Positioning Theory (Davies and Harré 1990, Harré and van Langenhove 1999) to analyse discursive data of people engaged in dealing with issues of interest to the researcher. The portability of that method from education to business is dealt with in Section 4.2. What makes Ling's method attractive is that the issues he was concerned with were similar to sustainability issues in that they were obligatory and externally imposed (OEI).

The following Sections will briefly introduce what is meant by OEI issues and Positioning Theory. Then the structure of the thesis will conclude this Chapter.

## 1.2 Obligatory and Externally Imposed (OEI) Issues

Sustainability issues have been raised in importance by the attention that has been paid to them by ever-widening segments of the general population in recent years. Through public pressure and high profile – sometimes militant – activism sustainability issues have become **Obligatory**. Furthermore, these issues are **Externally Imposed** by expectations of society. Hence, sustainability issues are referred to here as one category of OEI issues.

### 1.2.1 Defining OEI Issues

For the purpose of this research, sustainability and other OEI issues are distinguished from other issues confronting business by the unconditional requirement to deal with the issue. Such an *absolute requirement* is defined by some ultimatum presented by one or more external stakeholder. Tolbert and Zucker (1996) allude to situations where organizations comply with external forces in order to survive. These ultimatums could be in the form of:

- Contractual requirement for the pursuit and adoption of appropriate quality policy or certification when the stakeholder is a customer;

- Legislation that an organization complies with equal opportunity laws when the stakeholder is a governmental organization; or
- Ultimatum that a business satisfies sustainability principles when the stakeholder is a member of an activist organization that threatens to obstruct business operations.

Thus OEI issues must be dealt with if the organization is to continue; that is, have customers, be 'licensed' to operate, and be free to carry on business without interference. In other words, an OEI issue is defined by a parameter that can cause the business to be shut down. In making this definition, imminence of deadline or absolute completion is not an issue. Rather, it is the resolve to treat an issue as being obligatory and to respect the external imposition.

Prevarication is not an option, thinking about it is not an option, nor is constructing a façade of false activity an option. Business continuity depends on resolution of OEI issues.

### 1.2.2 Why OEI Issues are Different

It is assumed that total commitment to dealing with an OEI issue must be made by all members and all sub-units of the organization. In dealing with the issue, all are required to take the issue seriously, contribute to the development of dealing with the issue, and follow all policy and procedures developed to ensure that it is dealt with to the satisfaction of the stakeholder and their specifications, demands or expectations. If an OEI issue is not dealt with appropriately, then the business could cease to exist from damaged reputation alone. Hence, unlike other issues, barriers to dealing with an OEI issue must be confronted and resolved.

The interest of this thesis becomes how senior managers deal with OEI issues, of which sustainability is one category. Throughout the author's 20-year career as a consultant, he has assisted clients with OEI issues, by implementing new criteria that must be achieved. While some organizations have pursued OEI issues with determination and commitment commensurate to the urgency implied by being OEI, others have shown less responsibility, taken considerable time to realize the

seriousness of what they had undertaken, and even prevaricated in their commitment or resolve to do so.

### 1.2.3 Barriers to Dealing with OEI Issues

In observing senior managers dealing with sustainability issues, this research has shown various ways that barriers have been overcome. These include confronting them directly, patiently leading people to deal with them, altering processes to nullify the barriers, programming and choreographing proceedings, leveraging off a charismatic movement, and gently reminding people of the severity of leaving barriers in place.

It is in dealing with barriers that this research ultimately confronts the research question. That question is *how do senior managers deal with sustainability issues?* In answering that question, participants related a variety of recollections about how they dealt with various barriers and the importance of resolving those barriers if they were to deal with the sustainability issues facing them.

## 1.3 Selection of Positioning Theory

The author's experience has shown that there is insufficient understanding of why there is variation in how well organizations get on with doing what must be done. Rather than in the mechanics of change management, it is proposed that understanding of this situation will be found in the social constructionist fusion of anthropology, sociology and psychology that is known as Positioning Theory.

In arriving at this topic, it is realized that research will focus on individuals acting in their immediate societies. That is, this will be a hermeneutic investigation of senior managers constructing themselves and others to deal with sustainability issues in their businesses. This is a realist paradigm driving a retroductive strategy, in which the phenomenon observed will be the discursive positioning of senior managers as they deal with sustainability issues. The author's interest was regarding what had generated the positioning he observed. Thus he has taken a

realist perspective about what was generating positioning. Harré (2002a) argues that in mainstream human sciences, human action occurs in ways that individuals are neither aware nor can influence. While this ontology may not be consistent with constructionist thought about social construction, it is consistent regarding constructionist thought about personal construction. Positioning theory however is about personal construction of self. Personal construction of self implies agency and agency implies realism. That is, a level of consciousness regarding acting. This is explored in Chapter 3.

#### **1.4 Need for a New Myth**

It will be seen that in dealing with sustainability issues, the participants in this research were faced with creating a new way or new perspective for their people. In some ways this resembled dismantling old myths and showing the way to new myths. In considering this myth-breaking and myth-making, the provisional concept of a social flux has been arrived at and is introduced in Chapter 7.

Developing a new myth requires changing not just the organization, but also the way people see themselves and others. Positioning theory, being concerned with the construction and reconstruction of selves, draws on feminist theory and tactics to understand how people struggle with new social situations. It has been used to understand how individuals deal with change in women's health (McKenzie and Cary, 2000), literature analysis (Luberda, 2000), the broader environmental challenge (Harré, Brockmeier, and Mühlhäuser), and education (Ling, 1998).

#### **1.5 Structure of Thesis**

Grounded theory research presents a challenge when writing research reports (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 233-6). This thesis presents data and analysis in the form of case studies, vignettes and findings. While the thesis describes the entire journey taken, many steps of the analysis are not effectively represented in a formal

report. Much of this involved sorting and coding data by hand and with some computer software.

### 1.5.1 Introduction

This Chapter has introduced sustainability as an OEI issue and the challenges that such issues present managers. It explains that positioning theory will provide an analytic tool for determining *how senior managers deal with sustainability issues*.

### 1.5.2 Literature Review

Mounting environmental and social expectations now impacting on managers have been explored. A historical grounding of the sustainability issue leads into an investigation into social activism directed at environmental sustainability. Foucault is introduced here as one whose unique and penetrating work has significantly influenced social analysis in this area. Management attitudes towards sustainability issues are considered. The Chapter ends with a consideration of a sustainability discourse that has developed in recent years and points to the significance of the discursive process itself in this research.

### 1.5.3 Theoretical Foundation for Method

Basing the method soundly in theory, this chapter introduces discourse analysis and Positioning Theory as appropriate tools for data analysis. Barrett, Thomas and Hocevar (1995) argue for a theoretical perspective that places discourse at the centre of the change process and point to the value of the conceptual model in positioning theory, which has been developed to enable understanding of the social causes and effects of discursive positioning. Whereas people are positioned or socially constructed in discourse through consequences of their situations, their moral agency is also explored, and shown to enable people to engage in self and other positioning. A framework that distinguishes between parity and power is harnessed. Various aspects of positioning theory are shown to have evolved Foucault's analysis of various social movements. Foucauldian ideas are shown to be appropriate in accounting for discursive acts / actions in data analysis.

#### 1.5.4 Method

Positioning theory provides the framework for observing how managers deal with sustainability; their discursive positions are the phenomena being observed. This study is phenomenological or experimental. The author was in the positioning in several ways. First, he was listening to participants engage in third-order positioning. That is, discussing their previous discursive acts / actions. As audience in the conversation, he was part of the story telling social construction. Second, participants and the author in questioning and in other ways responding to one another engaged in positioning, locating one another deliberately and accountively during interviews. Narrative data was collected from unstructured interviews in which senior managers provide retrospective reports (Huber and Power 1985). These were then reconstructed through open, axial and selective coding to represent that positioning. Grounded theory has had a strong influence on this research for its capability to disrupt simple surface categories and to describe phenomena as complex and nuanced rather than simply to code and tally categories. When the author found disconfirming evidence, he was able to revise his working theories and correct his interpretations.

To arrive at sufficiently rich detail from interviews, the questions asked were open ended, personal and concrete. Having developed understanding during 20 years helping managers to deal with OEI issues, the author was able to sustain conversations in workplace mode with senior managers regarding sustainability at a meaningful level in terms of complexity and reflexivity. This personal background has affected the author's selection of the research topic and subjects, and contributed to his capability to conduct the dialogical research and present the six authentic narrative reconstructions of the managers (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 1993, pp. 49-50).

#### 1.5.5 Case Studies

The narrative reconstructions are presented in the form of case studies. These are biographical accounts of their agency on sustainability issues. Quotations taken from interviews and subsequent discussions are entered into this thesis in two ways.

- Block text quotations of participants' comments are typed in 11 point font, indented and without quotation marks (this is to distinguish from quotations from published works)
- Shorter quotations of participants' comments are typed into the body of the text in 12 point font and with quotation marks

#### 1.5.6 Vignettes

Vignettes are used to illuminate key themes in each case of how senior managers deliberate about sustainability issues. From these incidental sketches, it is demonstrated that senior managers contend with various powers in organizations that influence the reaction to sustainability issues of themselves and others. It is their effectiveness in the language game (dealing with such forces) that appears to shape their efficacy in dealing with sustainability issues.

#### 1.5.7 Conclusions: Challenging Old Myths and Creating New Myths

Managers' roles and positions as influencers of action is reflected on, as well as the underlying force observed in vignettes. This force is compared to electromagnetic flux and the concept of a social flux is put forward. This flux is perceived not as a parallel to paradigms and other social phenomena, but the cause of such phenomena. Kuhn (1962, p. 10) envisioned paradigms as being 'accepted ... practice ... (that) provide models ... rules and standards'. Social flux can be used to explain why these practices occur and the residual that causes them to remain. It is also built into an enhanced social constructionist model that is derived from positioning theory in Chapter 3. It is suggested that social flux can be described in multi-dimensional qualitative terms and is thus a better alternative to current management analysis tools such as force-field analysis. This framework is used to demonstrate that senior manager's moral agency impacts the positions of themselves and others, and ultimately affects the way in which sustainability issues are perceived and dealt with. This is expanded in a later chapter.

### 1.5.8 Reflections on Research

Results of this research are reviewed and considered in light of ongoing developments. Limitations and extensions are introduced with intent to identify ongoing research to build on the conclusions drawn in Chapter 7.



## Chapter II

### **LITERATURE REVIEW: SUSTAINABILITY IN DISCOURSE**

‘The most important powershift of all ... is the hidden shift in relationships between violence, wealth and knowledge as societies speed toward their collision with tomorrow’. (Toffler 1991, p. 464)

‘The important thing here is not that such changes can be rapid and extensive, or rather it is that this extent and rapidity are only the sign of something else: a modification in the rules of formation of statements which are accepted as scientifically true’. (Foucault 1980a, p.112)

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This Chapter assembles and reviews a body of knowledge relating to dealing with sustainability issues specifically in the context of these being obligatory and externally imposed (OEI) issues. Building on an understanding of sustainability and the associated social-political movement, a review is made of the historical grounding of sustainability. Developments are shown to have reconceived performance measurement. From this foundation, an examination is made of the effects of activism on various movements connected with sustainability, and then a reaction to that activism. The sincerity of managers and how they respond to the need for sustainability is considered, followed by an exploration of how they reject it. An introduction to sustainability discourse leads to an appreciation of the need for a qualitative approach to this research.

In conducting this research, differing meanings in key words and a variation of terms have been observed; publications relating to the *environmental, social and economic* triple bottom line (TBL) refer to this *trinity* in a variety of ways. At the beginning of this project, the research topic was being defined in terms of *TBL*, but it was decided to define the topic as *sustainability* and reserve *TBL* to define a performance measure of *sustainability*. While it is acknowledged that meanings may well vary in some contexts, reading of this thesis will be simplified by using *sustainability* in favour of other terms commonly used. One of the participants in this research put it well.

*Sustainability – that’s what we call it now – and call it sustainability or TBL or whatever and at the end of the day it is just common sense.*

Yet, there may be a hidden hazard in the participant’s simplification. In speaking of dealing with failure in business as ‘a distaste for ... cleaning up old problems’, Juran (1988, p. 3-20) enjoins ‘nothing short of upper-management intervention can break up the impasse’. The author is reminded of Wilson’s (1991, p. 127) observation that could be read to imply those leaders who view challenging issues as common sense are simply lazy and lack resolve.

‘Intellectual laziness and common sense are the same thing. Common sense is just the tradename of the firm’.

This research assumes that leadership is central to dealing with sustainability issues. This is suggested by Cohen (1994), who demonstrates positive correlation between ‘*proactive leadership* on environmental issues and *bottom-line business success*’. James et al (1999) identify the significance of strong leadership in connecting environmental strategy formulation with implementation of that strategy. They summarize that senior managers must form opinion, requisition resources, champion policy, and observe the subordinate relationship of other contributing factors to this leadership. Yet, they conclude, despite such championing by senior managers, failure to implement strategy may occur. This, they suggest, results from not accounting for operational reality or considering capability to undertake a chosen strategy.

As an example of the current priority placed on the sustainability issue, consider Appendix A. In this email to all Ford Employees, Jac Nasser, then CEO of Ford Motor Company reports a meeting where he, his Chairman, the CEO BP Amoco, and John Elkington – who figures prominently in this Chapter – meet to discuss sustainability. Nasser identifies (sustainability) as one of their five key areas of competitive advantage. He accepts that there is a misunderstanding of the meaning of sustainability. He demonstrates his realization of the expectations placed on his business to resolve environmental, social and economic problems. He acknowledges that activists' demands have influenced this realization.

## **2.2 Grounding of Sustainability Issue**

While it has not always been a prominent issue, the idea of sustainability is not new. To demonstrate a historical grounding of sustainability, several examples are briefly cited here. This is not intended as an exhaustive list. Instead, it demonstrates that, for some time, a causal relationship has been understood to exist between stewardship of social and environmental issues and economic performance.

### **2.2.1 Owenism**

Quarter (2000) begins his examination of ten pro-sustainability business leaders with Robert Owen, the industrialist of 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain who was credited with founding the approach later termed Owenism. Owen introduced community support for his workers that included extensive residential, medical, social, and even educational establishments (Arnold 1989, Donnachie and Hewitt 1993, Owen 1841 and 1842). Community service, particularly in the form of education, has been viewed to be important by Roddick (1991, p. 117) as well as all six participants in the research reported in this thesis. Owen (1841 and 1842) urged that economic benefits would flow from responsible stewardship of social as well as environmental factors. He viewed the implementation of his ideology at New Lanark, near Glasgow, Scotland as his 'New View of Society'. While Owenism failed when transplanted to other locations and not led by Owen himself, Owenism

has been cited as a utopian ideal by academics in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, North America and Australia (Hardy and Davidson 1989).

Arnold (1989) reports on Owen's concern for the environment and the integration of society, and contemporary application of his ideas and work. Owen (1841) valued education and lifelong learning from birth as a contribution to society. He viewed that the greatest amount of wealth would be created and knowledge attained if everyone was beneficially employed, and physically and mentally challenged. Owen (1842) expressed his desire for proactive measures that led to 'a pure atmosphere' for everyone.

Owen's influence has been so great, that a movement evolved around his ideas. Owenites draw on ideology and methodology of Owenism. Harrison (1989, p. 14) explains that 'search for community, harmony and wholeness' was at the core of Owen's undertakings. Owenites feel that a sense of community is an essential element for satisfactory human relationships in society. Referring to Owen's writings, Harrison (1989, p. 15) explains Owen's model for 'individual happiness' included 'health of body and mind', 'full education and freedom of thought', and being part of 'a society whose institutions are in unison with the law of nature'. It is interesting to note that Laqueur (1990, p. 228) speaks of the 'utopian socialist Robert Owen'; Owen would appear to be more a capitalist. This suggests that Owenism, like Taylorism (see Section 2.2.4), has evolved into something different than was originally intended.

There is another point of view based on Foucault's (1978, p. 140-1) analysis of capitalism, where he argues that capitalism was only possible by employing people who could be used. He named that attribute 'utility' and put forth that 'docility' was its precursor. Foucault realised that there was a fine balance of 'optimizing forces, aptitudes and life in general without at the same time making them more difficult to govern'. Foucault's (1979) introduction of the term governmentality was used to explain the mechanism of power that achieved that balance. This governmentality created a complex of special types of controlling knowledges that Foucault (1972, p. 15) had previously referred to as 'savoir' and that were distinguished from ordinary knowledge that he had referred to as 'connaissance'.

Central to Foucauldian thought is that truth produced by governmentality may or may not be true. Rather, *savoir* leads to a truth that enables docility. This distinction of static and dynamic knowledge re-emerges when discussing the discursive production of selves in Chapter 3.

Foucault's interest in utility of manpower and docility could explain an alternate reason why Owen invested so heavily in what Foucault (1983) refers to as 'technologies of power'. This being the case, Owen may well have been a smart capitalist and not the great reformer that he has been recorded as.

Donnachie and Hewitt (1993, p. 63) demonstrate what could be seen as sustainability thinking in Owen's motivation. In Owen's words, he made improvements to operations at New Lanark with the intention "to bring the greatest comfort and improvement to the numerous population to whom it afforded employment". However, as he admitted himself, his reforms were also introduced "to produce the greatest ultimate profit to the proprietors." They (p. 65) go on to acknowledge that Owen's system may not have been either unique or original, citing a noted Quaker, Joseph Lancaster, who had implemented the same ideas as Owen.

### 2.2.2 Quakerism

Originally known as the 'Religious Society of Friends', an assembly of religious enthusiasts was founded in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. Curious onlookers, in mocking the zeal with which members would tremble with enthusiasm, coined the term Quakers. In a show of defiant strength, the assembly took what was intended to be defamatory as their own. Apart from rebellious religious doctrine, the Quakers were convinced that an aggregate of benefits would ensue from both concern for the environment and removal of causes of conflict (Walvin 1997). While their perception of benefits likely placed a low priority on economic performance, it could be implied that that they considered economic stability would better enable spiritual pursuits. In assembling an interpretive framework for the observation of pro-sustainability business leaders, Quarter (2000, p. 175) views some aspects as being derived from Quakerism and notes the direct influence on at least one

participant in his research.

Cadbury literature explains that, in 1847, two Quaker brothers started Cadbury Brothers of Birmingham. As such, it is founded on principles of social responsibility and environmental ethics congruent with Quakerism. This literature refers to over a hundred years of social and environmental responsibility. Similar to Owen at New Lanark, Cadbury built schools, homes and churches as a service to its employees. What is new, however, is that the company is today looking at corporate citizenship as it applies globally. For example, during floods in Poland, in 1999, Cadbury vans were donated to move people's furniture and belongings. This was viewed as being good for community cohesion.

While Cadbury has been criticized for appearing to sell chocolate to schools, the company's work with schools is said to be motivated by altruism. Cadbury's educational partnerships reflect a desire to enable people to have disposable income and a more rewarding lifestyle.

### 2.2.3 Prince Albert – Consort to Queen Victoria

Even in the Victorian era, evidence can be found of conflict between sustainability and its alternative (PBS 2001, Weintraub 1987, Strachey 1924). Despite Queen Victoria's preferences, her consort Prince Albert had interest in such utopianisms as avoiding expansionist enterprise, improving working-class housing, eliminating the slave trade, and civilianization of Africa.

With the social and economic developments of the industrial revolution also came a variety of social problems. In her youth, Queen Victoria had been shielded from exposés of the realities of child labour, such as Charles Dickens' writings. However, on learning of harsh treatment in factories and other inequalities in England, Prince Albert took steps to educate the Queen. Being moralistic, conscientious and progressive, his motivation was to advance the social wellbeing of the English and he saw such improvements as contributing to the economic performance of the nation. However, with his death many of Prince Albert's ideals faded from prominence, and failed to be credited sufficient priority to achieve a

place on Queen Victoria's agenda.

In the latter half of her reign and with the absence of her consort's guidance, Queen Victoria appears to have been pulled back and forth by Disraeli and Gladstone, who alternated as prime ministers of Great Britain. (It should be acknowledged here that Dukes of Saxe Coburg Gotha – from which Prince Albert was drawn – were not constitutional rulers and enjoyed considerably more direct authority over their smaller realms than the British Monarch. Conversely, the British Monarch is constitutionally bound to be guided by the Prime Minister. Yet, Queen Victoria was not without agency (see sect 3-2) and while Prince Albert was alive he apparently influenced a *sustainable* course of events.) Disraeli, the Tory, promoted nostalgic and unrealistic traditionalism, while Gladstone, the Whig, supported – and often introduced – social and educational reforms. Swayed by Disraeli's political capability and Gladstone's lack thereof, the Monarch entered Great Britain into more aggressive colonialism and empire expansion. With this, Britain's concern for the well-being of the people and environment of colonies was at best superficial. Had Gladstone been able to match Disraeli's charm, perhaps the substance of Prince Albert's vision would have been sustained; an early example of political influence in sustainability issues. See PBS (2001), Weintraub (1987), and Strachey (1924) for details.

#### 2.2.4 Taylorism

Many of the contemporary proponents of sustainability might well be shocked to learn that Taylor (1967) raised environmental and social issues in his seminal work on scientific management. Dalrymple (2000) explains how Taylor (1967) has been misunderstood, and Griffin (1971, p. 7) suggests that piecemeal adoption of Taylor's system has gravely inhibited the acceptance of scientific management. Taylor (1967, p. 5-6, p. 70-3) justified his pursuit of scientific management through a connection of financial success with a need to prevent the squander of non-renewable resources, and equal concern for the maximum prosperity and opportunity for the employee. He summarizes (1967, p. 143) that scientific management means the end of poverty and an increase in affluence for employees and the wider community.

Gergen (1992, p. 211) sustains the generally perceived connection between scientific management theory and time-and-motion technology. Micklethwait and Wooldridge (1996, p. 19) uphold this misunderstanding by falsely attributing to scientific management the perception of workers as lazy fools, who can only be motivated by greed. Dalrymple (2000, p. 2) explains that it was not Taylor who made this impact of scientific management. It was followers of Taylor who made the movement what it became. He then reminds us of Taylor's insight into the need to understand process work as a prerequisite for process improvement. In this sense, the notion of understanding reflects Foucault's (1972) distinction between *connaissance* and *savoir*, and that of Proverbs (1971, iv, 7), 'get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight'.

### 2.2.5 Sociocracy

Convinced that people are 'uncaring, idle and unreliable egoists', Endenburg (1988, p. 9) suggests that a decision-making system must be 'founded on optimum tolerance for each individual and each group'. He views that Sociocracy is a development on democracy, in the same way that democracy is an improvement on dictatorship. At the heart of his system is his 'principle of consent', which permits decisions to be made only when 'reasoned objection' is not presented (p. 23). Endenburg (1988, p. 56) explains that the principle of consent requires a parity in which 'the exercise of power is controlled'. (A parity / power continuum is introduced in Chapter 3.) For consent to be possible, Endenburg (1988, p. 57-8) suggests that individuals and organizations must be willing and capable of doing what they consent to; if unwillingness or incapability is the reality, the system seizes up.

Quarter (2000, p. 180) informs that Endenburg was influenced by alternative value cultures – Quaker boarding school – that he transferred to his business endeavours. Although he is not associated with revolutionary movements, he has established a centre for sociocratic study.



### 2.2.6 Is there an Identifiable Sustainability Movement?

Most social movements are assembled from a diversity of groups that do not always see all issues in a congruent way. Yet, despite antagonism, all parties share overall objectives of whatever identifies the movement (Metcalf 1989, p. 61). The various groups that come together to comprise the sustainability movement place a varying degree of importance on each of the issues that comprise the TBL. These three issues – environmental, social and economic – will be discussed in the next Section, as well as a fourth – political issues. While the groups making up the sustainability movement may come and go, the issues being dealt with by the movement appear to be consistent.

It is anecdotally accepted that there is a movement, but it does not consolidate in a formal way (Metcalf 1989). Perhaps this indefinableness is to enable activism to occur. Such activism will be discussed after an examination of what has happened to the basic measure of business performance in Section 2.4.

### 2.3 Reconceptualisation of the Bottom Line

Regardless of its nomenclature, the movement behind sustainability is focused on tempering a purely economic approach with environmental and social stewardship. With this in mind, Elkington (1996) coined TBL to refer to an approach that balances these three issues – environmental, social and economic. For a detailed discussion on this sort of reconceptualization refer to post-modern writings of Rosenau (1992), Gergen (1992) and Giddens (1991). Lyotard (1992, p. 93) provides the essence of post-modernism that is drawn on to inform this research.

‘(T)he “post-” of “postmodern” does not signify a movement of *comeback*, *flashback* or *feedback*, that is, not a movement of repetition but a procedure in “ana-”: a procedure of analysis, anamnesis, anagogy and anamorphosis which elaborates an “initial forgetting”’.

Elkington’s (1996, 1998, 1999, 2001) approach to sustainability implies that it is necessary to forget ways of the past before ways of the future can even be perceived. While this may appear extreme, it corresponds to business process re-

engineering principles (Hammer and Champy, 1993). In Appendix A, Nasser reveals how Elkington has helped him to realize a misunderstanding that needs to be forgotten and that new understandings need to be formulated. Elkington developed the ideas of TBL and sustainability on the controversy reported in Rowell (1996) regarding industry's backlash to the environmental movement; two issues in particular. First, Shell International Petroleum Company Limited was apparently involved in assassination – ‘condemned by the British government as “judicial murder”’ (Rowell 1996, p. 1) – of nine Nigerian activists (Rowell 1996, p. 309-19), by an illegal military junta. Second, the same company planned to dispose of a redundant oil-drilling platform (Rowell 1996, p. 323-27), by loading it with concrete and sinking it in the ocean.

Perhaps because Elkington named his consulting business SustainAbility™, other labels have crept into the lexicon of environmental and social movements to differentiate among commercial offerings. Some are proprietary terms, belonging to consulting firms, and others are generic for all to use. In accepting Elkington's nomenclature, the author acknowledges the risk of appearing to be biased by his version of events, and takes precautions to prevent adopting too narrow a view. Despite his commercial interests, it will be seen in subsequent Sub-Sections that Elkington is a defining and seminal force.

Institutional response has reflected increased public concern for environmental and social issues, sustainability and corporate responsibility. For example, in 1997 the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) of the United Nations (UN) received and adopted a plan for achieving sustainable development. Since then, the UN has held annual sustainable development summits and other gatherings to implement the plan (CSD 2001).

Hawken, Lovins and Lovins (1999, p. 10) expressed the obligation of social and environmental stewardship in economic terms, by referring to social and natural processes as if their occurrence were ‘a perpetual annuity’. They suggest that responsible stewardship by businesses who draw on societal and environmental assets would require them to ensure that social and natural processes would continue the same as or better than if their businesses were not operating by making

appropriate investment in advance of drawing on the resources. As interpreted in this thesis, sustainability is concerned with three issues – environmental, social and economic – as well as a fourth – political (Boxer and Dalrymple 2001). These are discussed in the following Sub-Sections.

### 2.3.1 Environmental Issues

Perhaps the predominant factor in the sustainability movement is concern for the environment, and the dominant environmental issue is global warming. Indeed, while sustainability typically relates to the triple bottom line, Elkington (1998) argues it is now strongly skewed towards environmental issues. Yet there may be an even narrower focus.

Although issues such as toxic waste and containment of effluent receive attention, Harré, Brockmeier and Mühlhäuser (1999, p. 32) suggest the mainstream discourse appears to be focused on global warming, with all other issues as subset causes. For example, *greenhouse gas*, *ozone depletion*, *soil degradation* and *greenhouse effect* are four terms used to represent environmental issues. All four relate to global warming either directly or indirectly. The inability to quantify and define scientifically an issue leaves it open to debate; debate about the magnitude and causal connections with other phenomena with environmental issues in the sustainability movement. This is argued for example by Harris and Rieber (1996) and Broecker (2001), and is a dominant feature of general political rhetoric of government and industry.

There is ongoing debate to determine whether or not global warming is scientifically valid. Harris and Rieber (1996) argue that many scientific assumptions and methods of environmentalism are flawed, and Broecker (2001) challenges the science substantiating the concept of global warming and suggests that warming trends generally accepted as being global have been relatively isolated.

Beyond global warming, there are other environmental issues. Toxic residue from long-term operations has left some organizations with enormous liabilities. A case

in point is the Massachusetts Military Reservation (Kavanagh 2002). Having been used by the United States military to fire a wide range of weapons since 1911, there is a considerable residue of a variety of toxins in the land and water tables in the vicinity of the reserve. Resident groups have not only successfully prevented the United States military from using the reserve, but public opinion has influenced judgements against the military making them liable for a forecast total of over one billion dollars in clean-up costs.

### 2.3.2 Social Issues

Another sustainability oversight apparent in the Ok Tedi case is that local people were initially denied any right to benefit from the operation that was imposed on their society. In this case, a prominent Australian company entered into a copper mining operation at a place called Ok Tedi, apparently without considering the social consequences of its approach. Rather than drawing on local people, managers and skilled workers were brought in; local people were only employed in menial tasks, if at all. Effort has been taken to demonstrate that this has now changed (<http://www.oktedi.com/>). It may or may not be valid that local people were not educated and thus incapable of undertaking management or skilled positions. Regardless, the option of not proceeding with building and operating the Ok Tedi mine might have been a more appropriate decision. The cost of dealing with adverse consequences of the Ok Tedi mine is a small fraction of profits, but Akpan (2000) suggests the damage to the reputation of BHP among international activist groups is considerable, especially concerning anthropological issues. This analysis is supported by a joint press release of the Mineral Policy Center, MiningWatch Canada, and MineWatch UK (1999).

Social issues raised by the sustainability movement are varied and far-reaching. Dodson (2000, p. 13) quotes Dick Warburton, a well-known Australian company director who wants wealthy and powerful people to do far more to foster (sustainability). Cox (1998, p. 160-1) explains how social capital (Fukuyama 1995, Putnam 1995 and 2000), being about connecting and working through linkages, increases with use. If social capital is not used then these connections deteriorate, and business operations can fall apart or disappear entirely.

For many years, it has been common for businesses to move into undeveloped regions, and impose on local people a regime of organization, infrastructure and management (Elkington 1999 and 2001, Hawken, Lovins and Lovins 1999, Peters 1999) that has led to 'natural and human capital' being discarded without regard for the benefit that may ensue from their retention (Hawken, Lovins and Lovins 1999, p. 286). This has been made worse by eradicating people's ability to be self sufficient after associated long-term eradication of access to clean drinking water, clean land and clean air (Rowell 1996, p. xi). Kirsch (2000, p. 113) and Banerjee (1999, p. 14) conclude that capitalist development can undermine society if social relations are not factored in rather than factored out. Elkington (1999, p. 85) explains this in terms of 'wealth-creation potential' and – drawing on a World Bank official – that such growth needs to be accompanied by contribution towards education, health and nutrition.

Companies have a similar obligation within their home countries, such that disrespect for social capital does not result in its exploitation or deterioration. As a general rule, Handy (1995, p. 208) suggests foreign company managers need to reflect on whether their treatment of others matches how they treat their own families and society.

### 2.3.3 Economic Issues

At the heart of sustainability is the notion that profit-making businesses need to be able to continue to provide goods and services for society, as well as offer employment for people. Is this true that there is 'the one and only financial bottom line' (Hogarth 2001, p. 75)? Managers tend to be rewarded for meeting targets, and these targets tend to be related to production volumes or financial quotas and they are armed with technologies to aid them in that pursuit.

At best, economists consider that environmental and social issues are captured effectively in *externalities*. From this neoclassical economic perspective, pollution is viewed as an external cost of production (Verhoef 1997, p. 2). This implies pollution results in 'uncompensated costs to others' (Mansfield 1994, p. 327-9) and requires 'government' to 'intervene' to correct 'external diseconomies' (p. 547-9).

The ultimate question posed is whether or not there has been an economic cost imposed on an uninvolved third party by a negligent business. However, in this mind-set, if business pollutes and then nullifies the pollution through some clean-up process there is no harm done from an economic perspective. So, is this sustainability? Verhoef rejects such use of externalities, suggesting that an externality might instead be an 'unpriced effect'. He views this as 'tension between efficiency and equity'. Verhoef (1997, p. 15) suggests the practice of requiring polluters to pay for pollution would enable those with enough money to continue polluting. This could be viewed as highlighting a need for achieving a TBL measurement, where more than financial quantitative measures are relied on.

Yet, Denton (1998) concludes that, rather than containing cost, avoiding fines and fixing mistakes, the real benefit of cleaner production is the savings in operations. Similarly, in the quality movement there is reference to the quality versus cost trade-off (Juran and Gryna 1988, pp. 4.1-4.30). Boxer (1991 and 1993) and Denton (1999) demonstrate the benefits of harnessing employees in the pursuit of the resolution of the causes of pollution, but there is a need to allocate sufficient resources to such initiatives. They do this for neither ethical reasons nor marketing reasons. Rather, they recognize anything that maximizes the output from all their raw material resources, saves money and boosts competitiveness and profits.

In exploring the value created from corporate image and reputation, Fombrun (1996) concludes that economic performance tends to be better for organizations that care about their reputation, and specifically in terms of communities, employees and the environment (Fombrun and Foss 2001). While Fombrun (1996) speaks in terms of respect, trust and building a consistent image, he does allude to behaving in accordance with society's expectations. Environmental and social stewardship could be perceived to be of interest to society. Konar and Cohen (1997) identified a direct correlation between reduction of emissions and increase in market value.

The sustainability movement appears to dismiss the financial bottom-line approach to determining the financial cost of quality. For example, Elkington (1998) and Birch (2002) suggest it may be an error to reduce everything to financial

quantitative terms, when the richness of qualitative description may better demonstrate real *costs*. While it has been argued that they are naïve to suggest that business could be made to care about anything other than financial costs, it has been suggested in previous Sub-Sections, environmental and social loss or benefit is difficult to reduce to a quantitative cost. Roddick (1991, 2000) describes her unconventional approach to business, focusing on resolving moral and economic imbalances in a way that treats environmental and social issues as non-quantitative financial factors. In doing so, she does not start with an optimised financial cost. Rather, an optimised holistic view of responsibility to an aggregate bottom line that is composed of quantitative financial profit and qualitative moral harmony. Hostility towards her success (BBC News Online 2000) may be due to an underlying force that traps business in a paradigm of purely quantitative financial optimisation. Such a force is considered in Chapter 7.

‘A kind of “meta-power” which is structured essentially round a certain number of great prohibition functions; but this meta-power with its prohibitions can only take hold and secure its footing where it is rooted in a whole series of multiple and indefinite power relations that supply the necessary basis for the great negative forms of power’. (Foucault 1980a, p. 122)

This paradigm might also be conceived to be the force that determines share price. Those who are able to manipulate markets and do so for their own benefit might engage the power relations that could affect share price. A broad array of forces can interrupt the logic of this economic paradigm, not the least being politics.

#### 2.3.4 Political Issues

In exploring how politics undermines sustainability, Boxer and Dalrymple (2001) argue that economic, environmental and social factors all interact in a politically charged ether. The American Spectator (2001) reports that then-Senator Al Gore threatened to cut off funding to an unnamed eminent scientist who was once the leading campaigner against global warming. Here Gore could be seen to be influencing an otherwise independent search for the truth. While this is speculative and perhaps opportunistic journalism, politics is a reality and it can be a subterfuge (Boxer and Dalrymple 2001, Harré, Brockmeier and Mühlhäuser 1999.)

Schwendinger and Schwendinger (1974, p. 546) refer to periodic political suppression as being nothing new in America, which raises concern about political patronage. Boxer and Dalrymple (2001) suggest that there appears to be a correlation between political donations and support for sustainability. They conclude that politics often provides a subterfuge for not dealing with sustainability, but they caution that politics is not reported as a fourth bottom line.

Senior managers who appear to deal with sustainability issues appear to do so at least partially to complement their image (Cohen 1994, James et al 1999). In the context of larger social pressures, it makes good sense for senior managers to carefully consider the political implications of dealing with sustainability issues. These implications vary from place to place including a variety of social reactions, the most relevant to this research being activism.

#### 2.3.5 Economic Reflection

Suggesting that all economic success is founded on social stability, Hirsch (1977, p. 12) explains the unsustainable reality of a system that moves forward by undermining its heritage. While he focuses primarily on social issues (and only briefly refers to environmental pollution in terms of the social limits being reached (pp. 2, 57, 64)), he does imply a need to take the non-financial factors of social and environment into account, thus limiting the capability for sustainable economic growth.

Hirsch is a graduate of the London School of Economics, a former editor of *The Economist*, and a professor of international studies at the University of Warwick. Combining economic theory, demographics, and a reflection of the impact of human behaviour in an environment of declining morals, Hirsch offers a substantial critique of modern economic theory. He establishes that there are social limits to economic growth and suggests that these be incorporated in policy development.

Referring to the limits of diversity and individual choice, Hirsch (1977, p. 187) warns that the sustainability of society depends on restricting individual freedom of action. Rather than a protest against environmental and social destruction in



developing countries, militant activism against the World Trade Organization (WTO) may be reaction of established interest against restrictions to their freedom of commerce. Hartcher (2001) identifies wealthy industrialists who fund WTO protests. He suggests they do so in order to obstruct the objectives of the WTO in order to sustain their vested interests established in existing markets.

Hirsch's reflection suggests that there is an imbalance between the environmental, social and economic. This implies a need to balance these components, which appears to be the objective of Elkington's TBL construct and sustainability message. Yet, as seen in Section 2.2 sustainability is nothing new, despite its recent emergence to prominence.

### 2.3.6 Changes to Managers' Capacity to Exercise Personal Value

Whereas in the past Quaker-like personal values could direct management practices towards environmental and social stewardship, a shift in the external legal environment may present consequences that prevent that freedom in publicly listed companies. Hilmer (1993) explains that the contemporary role of the board is to strive to achieve better than average performance. Tompkins (1994) clarifies New Zealand's 1993 Companies Act explaining that a director's duty is 'to "the best interests of the company" - not, it is to be noted, the shareholders or the creditors'. This could be read to imply that satisfying shareholder demands for short-term financial profit is not what directors should do. Furthermore, Dunlop (1999) demonstrates that there is growing awareness that 'shareholder interests are unlikely to be served if stakeholders (e.g. employees, suppliers, creditors, communities) are ignored'. He goes on to offer specific guidance that 'broader corporate objectives' must be considered. This is not to overlook the need to maintain share-price to prevent corporate raiders from taking over companies and stripping assets. Cornfield's (1998) conclusion balances the various factors:

'The duty to maximize shareholder profit will always be exercised within the constraints of the non-shareholder constituency interests and neglect of those interests is likely to affect the long term viability of the corporation'.

## 2.4 Sustainability Focused Activism

Steven Mayne (<http://www.crikey.com.au/>), a shareholder activist has explained in conversation with the author and on various public media that individuals realize they are able to best exercise influence at shareholder meetings, whereas collectives work in and through larger and more diverse public forums. To borrow from marketing (Kotler, Clark and Adam 2001), individuals tend to use a 'rifle' approach and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) use a 'shotgun' approach; NGOs appear to deploy individuals on specific tasks. Regardless, they are reacting against government of one sort or another.

Where specific activism focuses on specific issues (such as the practices of a business), there is a broader threat to unity and utility. Business can no longer carry on as in the past, not necessarily because it is unsustainable to do so, but because activists are influenced by an ideal of *natural capitalism* (Hawken, Lovins and Lovins 1999) and empowered with a self-perception that they can make a difference. The following Sub-Sections examine possible sources of activism and explore how that phenomenon is focused to influence business leaders to deal with a variety of issues such as sustainability.

### 2.4.1 A Foucauldian Perspective on Activism

Cheney (1995) observed that Foucault was a key figure at the time social activism was gaining such momentum that it was able to disengage the United States of America from the Vietnam War. Although not directly involved in activism, Foucault's much quoted analysis of the exercise of power in society can be seen as a way to explain how social order or domination is maintained.

Governmentality (Foucault 1979) – the ease of which society is governed and utilized in productive endeavours – has declined in recent years. Foucault's (1978) interest in docility and utility led to his concept of governmentality; a less governmental society is less docile and of less benefit to the production of wealth. Foucault (1978, p. 86) shows that exertion of power is tolerable only if its mechanism is concealed. With increasing transparency and a decline in the impact

of disciplinary processes (Foucault 1977b) these mechanisms are increasingly apparent. In this light, Ferentzy (2000, p. 222) draws on Foucault to suggest that some beliefs are not as controlling as they once were. O'Farrell, (1997) and McInlay and Starkey (1998) similarly draw on Foucault to suggest that people no longer put up with being told they must comply with things they do not believe to be true.

Foucauldian (1978, p. 89) philosophy can explain that contemporary Western society's control 'is not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus'. Collectively, the many diverse groups that are springing up throughout the world appear to struggle against a common hegemony of Foucauldian bio/disciplinary power, but they are committed to anonymity and unanimity amongst themselves. This too is explained by Foucault (1991, p. 76-78), in which he employs an 'event' concept as a way to break up or disrupt well-established and taken-for-granted continuities in traditional history, and as a tool to ensure that historical events are seen and grasped in their unique singularity and not forced onto pre-established patterns of historical understanding. In recent years significant activism has focused on an event and taken the first letter of the month and date. For example S11 2000, when the WTO was under siege in Melbourne. Not all dissent is radical nor is it violent, but if it is collective even passive dissent is activism.

The recipe for group activism involves assembling a critical mass that embraces the same new mode of thinking (Schiffman 1991, p. 67). While not all activists understand Foucault's ideas, they are caught up in a momentum of dissent. Where there has been a tradition of radicalism devoted to resolving inequalities such as feminism (Weedon 1987), sexual orientation (Warner 1993) and racism (Minwalla 1997), the technologies of radicalism are available to the sustainability movement. For example, Warner (1993, p. xxvi) introduces his book of collected articles on queer politics which he argues:

'rejects a minorizing logic of toleration or simple political interest-representation in favour of a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal'.

Radical thought realizes the ability of 'governmentality' to be achieved from a distance. Combining Latour's (1987, p. 219-232) idea of 'action at a distance' and Foucault's (1979) idea of 'governmentality', Rose (1989, 1996) and Kendall (1997) write about 'government at a distance'. Kendall (1997, p. 90) specifically refers to the 'efficacy' with which Australia was governed as a colony without 'physical presence'. Banerjee (1999, p. 12) raises concerns that non-Western societies and their forms of knowledge have been marginalized. For example, 'based on British common law, Australia became a colony of England because it was settled as *terra nullis* or land belonging to no one'. He goes on to call for change to this 'government at a distance' and other inequalities. Perhaps a decrease in governmentality may increase a societies tendency to be influenced by activism.

#### 2.4.2 Shareholder Activists

Consider the impact one woman had on a major Australian mining business regarding their Jabaluca mine (ABC 2001). Erica Ford decided that she would raise opposition and successfully changed the company's strategy. As a shareholder she confronted the board, assembled a 'critical mass' of supporters (North Ethical Shareholders), manoeuvred herself to a position of authority, took the company to court, and stopped something that she believed was wrong. At the time of this writing she is involved in other campaigns.

While members and officers of NGOs may take part in shareholder activism, they rarely identify their affiliations or 'badge themselves'. This appears to be a Foucauldian disruptive tactic borrowed from radical feminists and others (Calás and Smircich 1992, Parker 2002), in which individuals see value in remaining separate, or in small groups, and uniting for a purpose when appropriate. This appears to be an effective strategy, as it makes shareholder activism a more challenging opposition for business leaders. Businesses are under siege from unpredictable assaults of a variety of groups with different agendas, but common cynicism directed towards corporations. They appear to unite in this opposition under the banner of shareholder activism.

The 2001 merger of a major Australian business (BHP) with a major South African business (Billiton), despite major reservations of shareholders, provides anecdotal evidence that corporations can act at variance with shareholders' desires. In reaction to this sort of behaviour, Steven Mayne operates an Australian internet web site (<http://crikey.com.au>) that enables him to act in an individual capacity to alter the behaviour of corporations and demand a balanced holistic approach and responsibility and accountability, as is reflected on by CEO Morgan (1998.) Mayne takes steps to get elected to the boards of the companies that he targets to dilute control (Age 2002). He claims to have been successful in 2000, having apparently forced a former board member to step down from his board position with Telstra, due to alleged conflicts of interest (Workers Online 2000, Grealy 2000). This was apparently accomplished by threatening to raise these alleged conflicts of interest in his campaign. His tactics include targeting companies that do not meet his standards of performance, and buying shares to enable him to attend shareholder meetings so that he may influence the discourse.

Ferentzy (2000, p. 234) draws on Foucault (1978, p. 26) to show how new developments only become legitimate issues if sufficient conflict can make the issue important. Even then it is not legitimate until the dominant power is comfortable that it can be administered and controlled. Foucault implies that 'conflicts were necessary' and 'economic emergencies had to arise' for instigators of change to have their issues legitimized. More important, he shows how 'a whole technology of control' is needed to be in place and concealed. This permits change to take place while observing the new process and exploiting the new way to a similar degree as the old way was exploited. Pickles (1996, p. 24) agrees that this is a 'complex of discourse, practice and institutional ensemble ... affecting changes in the modalities of power'.

Activism perhaps has a role in bringing urgent issues to the surface, but perhaps it is necessary for activists to work with business to implement changes effectively. This may be to the benefit of the activists, as they will be able to influence the sort and extent of controls that are imposed on issues.

Shareholder activism appears to be having results. Packard and Reinhardt (2000, p. 130) suggest that those companies that do not consider and appropriately deal with risks relating to climate change may come under scrutiny of their shareholders. Beets (1999) explains, many companies are becoming more responsive to investor's concerns about the environment. As mentioned in Sub-Section 2.3.3, Konar and Cohen (1997) demonstrate how businesses that reduced emissions also achieved significant increase in market value. Whether or not this demonstrates a causal relationship between environmental responsibility and market share or that these companies are just managed well – and that environmental responsibility is simply a symptom of good management – is not important. It could be interpreted that contemporary good management embraces environmental (and social) responsibility. Elkington (1998) – formerly an activist and now a contributor to corporate board deliberation – explains that the awareness of this phenomenon has led to sustainability becoming an issue that business needs to incorporate into strategic plans and operations.

## **2.5 Goodwill and Self Interest**

Gellerman (1986) speaks of good managers making bad ethical choices, but Wakin (1984), drawing on Learner (1975, p. 111) goes further, suggesting that 'bottom line' ethics are adhered to by 'careerists', whose behaviour suggests that their blatant self interest overrides every factor. There is likely to be a wide distribution along a continuum characterized by both these extremes. However, Gellerman (1986, p. 3) does refer to cases where individuals 'made a conscious, cold blooded decision to take no protective or remedial action, in the flagrant disregard of the rights of others'.

In drawing on examples of bad ethical choices, Gellerman (1986, pp. 5-7) proposes that there are four rationalizations with which people justify their decisions. First, they perceive what they have decided to be 'within reasonable ethical and legal limits'. Second, it 'is in the individual's or the corporation's best interests'. Third, it 'is "safe" because it will never be found out or publicized'. Fourth, if the action contributes to objectives 'the company will condone it and even protect the person

who engages in it’.

In the subsequent 16 years since Gellerman’s article was published, some spheres may have seen an end of the discourse that leads to these rationalizations. However, there remain examples of blatant disregard, as demonstrated by Rowell (1996) for environmental and social issues; anecdotal evidence of this are the frequent and often violent protests held to demonstrate opposition to WTO and other globalisation initiatives. While this reaction may not be warranted, it reflects a possible negative perception in the wider community.

Foucault (1973, 1978, 1991) observes that those in power influence what becomes the dominant discourse and that they impose that discourse to exert power, even to the point that they establish reality in terms of what benefits themselves. Perhaps it is because controversial discussions frequently are controlled by the discourse imposed by others that Foucault (1991, p. 381) refuses to engage in polemics. Pfeffer (1981, p. 30, 59) observes that those who ‘get what they want’ have ‘the social power to get it’. People in positions of power might well – consciously or unconsciously – dominate decisions regarding sustainability issues and prevent appropriate discourse in the same way that doctor’s *gaze* (Foucault 1973) prevents patients from appropriate medical diagnosis and service (McKenzie and Carey 2000).

### 2.5.1 Influence of Dominant Discourse

Perhaps people in power may simply be blinded by the dominant discourse in their companies, industries and society. Reflecting on what Foucault once said in private to Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983, p. 187), perhaps people are unaware of their agency – the impact of their action. Foucault referred to this as *remanences*.

‘People know what they do; they frequently know why they do; but what they don’t know is what they do does’.

Peters (1999, p. xi-xii) appears to raise this same concept.

‘We get caught up in filling targets, achieving objectives, and meeting deadlines and forget to examine the wider consequences of what we are doing’.

Crosby (1979, p. 13) puts it in another way in relation to quality management.

‘The problem of quality is not what people don’t know about it; the problem is what they think they *do* know about quality’.

Confidence that they *do* think they know something might flow from membership in something perceived to be exclusive. *Gaze*, Foucault’s concept that enables the articulation of why they *do* think they know something, will be explored in Section 2.8, expanded on in Chapter 3, and integrated into a new construct in Chapter 7.

### 2.5.2 Corporate Employee vs Community Employee

Lindorff and Tan (1997, p. 6) conclude that there are two categories – ‘corporate employees’ and ‘community employees’ – regarding personal choice and corporate values. Community employees ‘express strong values regarding social issues such as the environment, community welfare and human rights’, where corporate employees overlook these issues in favour of opportunities for career advancement. This suggests socially aware people, who achieve appointment to business leadership, would likely face a conflict.

### 2.5.3 Pronouncement vs Actual Performance

Drawing on the conclusions of others, James et al (1999) conclude that businesses should incorporate environmental policies into their operations and note such combination would result in cost savings. They focus on how formal policy pronouncements and day-to-day activity varies considerably in many large companies. They suggest managers appear not to care about sustainability, unless of course it becomes a factor in career advancement.

Having the appropriate materials, co-workers, technology and flexibility is critical to implementation of strategy. James et al (1999) observe that the most senior managers often approve strategy without any understanding for the organization’s ability to implement their plans. Issues they cite include resource availability, understanding of subordinate managers, and capability. They conclude that there is little evidence of altruism.



#### 2.5.4 Green Ethics vs *Green* Ethics

Pfeffer (1981, p. 85) observes that in many professions, careerists learn to use power to harness resources to obtain preferred decisions. Wakin (1981, p. 50) suggests that this is not the result of unethical behaviour. Rather it is the sort of ethic – a bottom line ethic – guiding the motivation of such people.

It is possible that the sustainability movement may threaten managers who benefit from what Kirsch (2000, p. 114) refers to as ‘class hegemony’; they could perceive that the green force behind the movement will place their *green* stability at risk. Rowell (1996, p. 126-56) provides an extensive review of the subversion of the environmental movement by corporations and governments. He describes how anti-environmentalists harness language to undermine the green movement. This discourse is related to the author’s research question: *How do senior managers deal with sustainability issues?*

#### 2.6 Responding to the Need for Sustainability

Having been confronted by environmental and social imperatives presented to them, organizations have adopted programs to address sustainability or give that impression. Quarter (2000) describes how socially innovative business owners have provided models for dealing with sustainability issues. Their examples have in part laid the foundation for a wider corporate responsibility movement. Elkington (1998) reports developments that led to sustainability principles influencing corporate governance. In describing the revelation that some senior managers have undergone, he demonstrates the long journeys that have been taken. Elkington cites cases to show how they arrived at the realization of the need to embrace sustainability and draw on the diversity innate in their organizations. Elkington goes on to establish a plan for transition to a sustainable approach that draws on inclusiveness, diversity and a sense of urgency.

Sustainability has been embraced by organizations under Shell’s Board of Directors – after realizing the errors they had made – leading the way for other corporations

to follow (Elkington 1998). Yet, while there are indeed displays of sustainability made by many organizations, Birch (2002) suggests that much of this may be simply rhetoric. He cites a number of international chief executives to suggest that ‘without radical changes in what constitutes the economic thinking ... little, if anything sustainable will be achieved’.

Since being formed in 1989, the St James Ethics Centre has led people to ‘include the ethical dimension in their daily lives’ (St James Ethics Centre). The centre has also assisted a number of diverse government, public, private and not-for-profit organizations ‘to identify and address the ethical dimension of what they do’. Oppen (2001) observes ‘elasticity’ in how Australian businesses define ethics, which imply the validity of the concern raised by Birch (2002), referred to in the previous paragraph. While there have been advances made by those organizations that have sincerely embraced sustainability in recent years, there has also been evidence of organizations avoiding and rejecting the message.

## **2.7 Rejection of Sustainability**

As with any action, there is a reaction to the sustainability movement. For example, the Victorian State Labor government has banned an accredited journalist from attending press releases, because the journalist was perceived to be a activist, who asked disruptive questions (Age 2001). The following Sub-Sections consider three possible ways of rejecting the movement.

### **2.7.1 Challenging Sustainability Zealots**

Landsburg (1993) complains that environmentalists harness mental programming techniques, such as rote repetition and other intrusive myths, superstitions and rituals. He views the resulting environmentalism as naïve. While his argument lampoons social trends and his own defiance, Landsburg demonstrates questionable processes that occur in the sustainability discourse. He develops examples in which conveniently applied unscientific bias and selective logic are shown to form the basis for several environmental and social messages of the sustainability

movement.

### 2.7.2 Scientific Critique

As mentioned in Sub-Section 2.3.1, Broecker (2001) and Harris and Rieber (1996, p. 8) argue that measures used to gauge environmental issues may be 'based on incomplete information or incorrect premises'. They go on to say (p. 11), 'the assumptions necessary to demonstrate [the validity of current measures] are extremely strong and bear no resemblance to man's actual experience'. With this sort of uncertainty, it can be expected that there will be diverse opinions about environmental and social issues among senior managers, who make collaborative decisions. At the same time, Harris and Rieber (1996, p. 20) stress that they do not view environmental considerations as unimportant or that they have an indifferent reaction to depletion of critical resources. Hence, how managers resolve conflicts arising from TBL is a subject worthy of study. Rowell (1996, p. 135) refers to these scientific arguments as 'counter-science'. The clash between '(c)onservationist (radical) Greenspeak ... and sophisticated exploitationist (conservative) Greenspeak' is raised by Harré, Brockmeier and Mühlhäuser (1999, p. 2) and the wider discourse and debate surrounding this contrast is explored in detail.

While Lomborg (2001) does not reject outright the sustainability message, he does challenge the focus of effort. Through a thorough examination of costs and benefits, he demonstrates that many high profile environmental efforts are misspent. His criticism follows a similar line to Landsburg (1993), but it does come from a scientific basis. Although Andersen (1999) and Sørensen (1998) disagree with its validity, Lomborg (2001) has provided a scientifically-sound sceptical view of the assumptions underlying much of the sustainability movement. Lomborg concludes that, on a global scale, the situation is far better than being suggested by many activists, but he acknowledges there remain many local problems to be resolved. His message is not to ignore the sustainability movement, but to focus effort on achievable objectives.

### 2.7.3 Just Marketing

Despite representations by ‘ethical’ entrepreneurs such as Roddick (1991), critics (Petean 1996, Entine 1995, Greenpeace) suggest that sustainability is simply a form of marketing. They insist that products made available by such companies have been created – as have the markets for the products – by the hype of the sustainability issue. Roddick’s (1991, p. 256) concluding statement could be interpreted as an indication of her self-interest.

‘Make no mistake about it – I’m doing this for me’.

Roddick does indeed profit from the products her business creates and sells. In that way, what she is doing could be seen to be done to increase her personal financial wealth. However, if viewed in the context of sustainability – her book implies that this is the perspective Roddick comes from – it is conceivable that Roddick means that she is improving the environment and society so she creates a better world for herself – and others.

## 2.8 Sustainability Discourse

Harré provides two profound works that address both the author’s research topic and his methodology. Of interest here is Harré, Brockmeier and Mühlhäuser (1999), that introduce and explore discourse on environmentalism. Three categories of discourse are identified, written, spoken and pictorial. Harré et al. (1999, p. 43-50) suggest that there is a modern surrogational discourse, that is based on three-dimensional space and straight-line, one-way-only time in the traditional Western sense, and a non-surrogational discourse, that is based on moral ideas.

The same authors warn (p. ix): ‘(w)e perceive, in the increasing greening of English and other Western language, a kind of linguistic *Ersatzhandlung* (redirection), with the very real danger of talk replacing action’. Perhaps this is an example of the sort of ‘modification in the rules of formation of statements which are accepted as scientifically true’ that Foucault (1980a, p. 112) raises. Harré, Brockmeier and

Mühlhäuser (1999, p. 4) are concerned that discursive phenomena have made environmental issues the “crisis of our times”.

‘It comes about through a shift in our ways of seeing and assessing what we see, made possible by the taking up into our discursive resources new vocabularies, new judgemental categories, new metaphors and analogies that have promoted awareness of much that was previously overlooked’.

Should there then be different discourses within organizations that deal more effectively with sustainability issues? If there is a dominant discourse, perhaps that explains why these organizations deal better with sustainability (Rost 1991).

In Chapter 3, a discussion will be presented of how various manifestations of post-modernism – critical legal studies, feminist theory, critical race theory, queer theory – appear to be driving some of the movements surrounding environmental initiatives. However, Harré, Brockmeier and Mühlhäuser (1999, p. 7) raise concerns that a post-modernist approach is thrust onto the environmental debate for no other reason than there is fear of the modernist approach by those taking the lead in the debate. That this is in fact happening – albeit just in part – suggests that business will be increasingly confronted by new and conflicting ideologies. It will be shown in Chapter 3 that these ideologies tend to draw on Foucauldian based cynicism, that, in part, questions the *gaze* of a wide range of professionals, including scientists. Harré, Brockmeier and Mühlhäuser (1999, p. 11) go on to explain, ‘(i)ronically, it is not the seeming irrationalisms of the post-modernist *Zeitgeist* (spirit of the times) but the scientific diagnoses, predicting a seemingly unavoidable ecological catastrophe, that undermine, by means of the authority of science, that very authority’. Whether this is due to the scientific community being influenced by post-modernism, or that one science has identified an error of a previous science, does not alter the effect of the situation business faces. The current situation applies pressure on business to deal with sustainability issues in an increasingly post-modern way.

### 2.8.1 Telling Stories of Sustainability

Through story-telling, Berry (2001) has observed the behaviour of businesses as they cope with sustainability issues can be studied. Stories about the same issues

can vary in organizations because there is often more than one explanation for every issue. For example, less waste can mean finding use for by-products. Alternatively, it can mean less by-product and greater production from the same resources. Berry explains variation and preference amongst stories through Weick's (1995 and 2001) observation that individuals make sense, and Boje's (1991) explanation that dominant stories result from the strongest myths.

Berry (2001) drew on aspects of grounded theory, in which he conducted open and semi-structured interviews. He studied perceptions of corporate environmental behaviour of both executives and operators. His data collection and analysis were conducted iteratively using coding procedures outlined in Strauss and Corbin (1990). This approach will be explained in Chapter 4.

Meeting perceived irrefutable economic demands were identified as paramount by Berry (2001). Attempting to meet sustainability requirements was seen as secondary. He noticed that sustainability issues could be incorporated into business plans and economic paybacks derived, but this required a shift from short-term to long-term economic considerations. Berry argues that ecological or philosophical understanding does not drive sustainability, although public relations publications presented things in this way. Sustainability issues were 'restored' as what Berry refers to as 'business-as-usual' issues.

### 2.8.2 Deliberation and Decision Making Practices Regarding Sustainability

Discourse is viewed by Barrett, Thomas and Hocevar (1995) as being the essence of the change process. Meaning, they say, occurs in the degree of association people have with each other. Moghaddam (1997) provides a perspective of the realities of change with regard to the resilient effects of informal aspects of social relationships. He shows that despite the formal aspects put in place, informal aspects sustain normality. Moghaddam argues for a more anthropological approach to enquiry; he suggests a need to get inside decision making discourse, thus allowing the researcher into informal spaces of subjects. From his insight, deliberation and decision-making-practices may well be influenced by informal aspects of social relationships.

With Moghaddam (1997) in mind, Kenny and Boxer (1996) explored how control and communications in business are context dependent. Their inquiry concerned how individuals invent themselves in compliance to organizational norms. In doing so, they show how people in organizations produce problems, stop change and obstruct progress. People identify themselves with what they presume their jobs or professions require. Hence, as will be seen in Sub-Section 3.5.5, they 'know' and they do not want to be told differently. Kenny and Boxer (1996) develop their argument that observation of such discourses can enable an analyst to make sense of what is spoken.

In exploring sustainability policy development in British coal mines, Smith (2000, 2001) relies on Foucault's ideas about discourse to explore normalization and abnormalization of ideologies and the resulting legitimization and de-legitimization that occurs. In doing so, she refers to other discourse-related research into sustainability-related issues. While the present research concerns the discourse of six senior managers dealing with sustainability issues, Smith is concerned with discourse amongst the general public about policies surrounding environmental regeneration on mine sites.

Moghaddam (1997), Kenny and Boxer (1996) and Smith (2000, 2001) analyse deliberation and decision making practices concerning sustainability using discursive data. Moghaddam (1997, p. 55) suggests this data significantly accesses informal particular micro-social relationships rather than formal general macro-social relationships. As will be seen in Chapter 3, this is in keeping with the social constructionist approach taken in positioning theory, as put forward by Harré and van Langenhove (1999) and others.

### 2.8.3 Sustainability Greenspeak

Although their work relates primarily to environmentalism, Harré, Brockmeier and Mühlhäuser (1999) explain that the message conveyed about sustainability is as much aesthetic as it is moral. They raise concern that linguistic and cultural absorption has resulted from the reduction of substantial messages to palatable rhetoric. Meaning is exchanged for a satisfying holistic rightness. They refer to

this rhetorical language as Greenspeak.

Speaking on the two sides of the sustainability debate either take a position in favour of the status quo or demand reform. As noted in Section 2-7-2, Harré, Brockmeier and Mühlhäuser (1999, p. vii) refer to these as conservatives and conservationists. Each side use different discursive styles to present their ideas and in doing so shape, distort and even create realities. Harré et al warn that due to context dependent complexities of time and space, this superficial message may well replace action by talk.

Deliberation on sustainability issues by senior managers is affected by the created realities in the conservative and conservationist discourses. The conservatives might put forth convincing discourse to reduce urgency, and the conservationists might put forth emotive discourse that causes managers to ignore the message.

#### 2.8.4 Understanding Discourse

Harré, Brockmeier and Mühlhäuser (1999) observe a sustainability crisis of our times that is expressed in terms of symbolic language, such as metaphor. Symbolic language such as metaphor is used when there is a shift in ways of seeing and assessing what is seen. Metaphor is one type of symbolic form of expression that becomes integrated into culture and forms a shared context of meaning that enables individuals to relate to one another.

Moghaddam (1997, p. 39) explains how informal aspects of social relationships form an integral part of culture. He also suggests that the transmission of these informal aspects rely on the informal organization and its mechanisms.

Weedon (1987, p. 108) explains Foucault's understanding of discourse as encapsulating ways of constituting knowledge, the social practices, forms of subjectivity, and power relations. Thought is given meaning by discursive articulation and is a reflection of power relations. Expanding on this, Weedon (1987, p. 113) stresses that Foucauldian power is relational, depending on who imposes control over whom and that this relation is evident in discourses. Hence,



to understand discourse is to understand power relations.

Further reflecting on Foucault, Diamond and Quinby (1988, p. 185-6) refer to strategies of domination and reciprocal resistance that are evident in discourse. Foucault (1978, p. 53-4) shows how discourse on one issue can be used to justify seemingly unrelated issues, thereby grounding them in truth. He demonstrated that discourse on sexuality was exploited to justify racism and even eugenic ordering of society. Duden (1991, p. 4-15) shows how discursive positioning that Foucault describes as clinical gaze becomes a racist-based prestige.

Foucault's is seen to be an authority by both his advocates (Gilman 1982, Warner 1993, O'Farrell 1997) and his critics (Cheney 1995). Drawing on the writings of Foucault it is possible to explore the epistemology of practice of managers dealing with sustainability issues.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

In this Chapter it has been demonstrated that sustainability is not necessarily new, although there is a contemporary enthusiasm for more appropriate stewardship of environmental, social and economic resources. Furthermore, politics that occur at all levels can affect how the rules and resources are managed. Not only is there increased awareness of sustainability, but also some elements of society demand resolution of sustainability issues.

External influence of activism, with the potential to shut down an organization, has made the sustainability issue obligatory. Hence, senior managers need to address sustainability issues and demonstrate both their commitment to do so as well as produce tangible results. With the urgency created by the obligatory nature of the issue and the external influence, internal confrontations will likely occur regarding implementation of related policy. The problem for senior managers involves engaging in work-place discourse that resolves internal confrontations regarding sustainability issues so that they can be appropriately dealt with in the enterprise. It has been suggested here that managers in a work-place engage in discourse on

sustainability in their everyday work and that a framework for analysing their discursive action can be found in positioning theory. This will be expanded in Chapter 3.

In the light of conflicting objectives, managers' commitment to sustainability has been considered. It has been shown that, while there is appreciation of the principles of sustainability, there is also a reluctance to let sustainability obstruct the opportunity to make a profit. The likelihood of conflict introduces the prospect of discursive turmoil surrounding these issues. This has led to consideration of how people talk about sustainability.

It has been shown that there is a body of knowledge concerning sustainability discourse in broader society, but there appears to be no material relating to how business managers deal with sustainability issues within their organizations. Hence, the outcome of a study that examines the discourse of senior managers as they deal with sustainability issues will fill a gap in the literature.

Based on the understanding of sustainability developed in this Chapter, Chapter 3 will explore discursive action and positioning theory as they relate to sustainability. From this foundation a method will be developed in Chapter 4.

## Chapter III

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION FOR METHOD**

‘as far as the general public is concerned, I am the guy who said that knowledge merged with power ... If I had said, or meant, that knowledge was power I would have said so, and having said so, I would have nothing more to say, since, having made them identical, I don't see why I would have taken the trouble to show the different relations between them’.

(Foucault 1988, 264).

#### **3.1 Introduction**

A literature review conducted in Chapter 2 has introduced both the historical grounding and contemporary profile of the sustainability issue. The arguments for and against sustainability have been explored, as has the discourse of sustainability. From this, it has been shown that deliberation of senior managers regarding sustainability issues can be understood through an exploration of the particulars of each discourse.

In this Chapter, the concept of self will be introduced, developed and considered in terms of discursive action. It is through their discourse that people construct themselves and the social order to deal with issues. This leads the author to consider that, for sustainability to be dealt with effectively, senior managers need to construct themselves in a contextually appropriate way, despite the resistance referred to in Section 2.7.

In this Chapter, a theoretical foundation for conducting a discourse analysis of sustainability issues will be laid. Discourse analysis is distinguished from analysis of discourse by the nature of the inquiry. Analysis of discourse relates to the discourse itself (how meaning is achieved through the various components of discourse, such as grammar), while discourse analysis explores the wider context relating to the discourse (use of discourse to determine what is happening in a social situation). As such, the concepts of voice and agency will be explored and with these terms the theoretical foundation will unfold.

Positioning theory is introduced, as it provides the conceptual framework to be used in the data collection and analysis conducted in this research that will rely on derivation of metaphors from the discursive data. It will be shown that positioning occurs through discursive action. Positioning social-psychological as location in conversation can be observed by listening to how people talk about what they have experienced; positions are treated as social constructions. Positioning undertaken by participants will be observed through the discursive data collected during interviews. These descriptions provide qualitative data in the form of verbal condensation of action. These qualitative data show people speaking holistically about themselves and others as persons in their context, rather than merely looking at the people or part of the context in a reductionist way. Thus, an interpretivist approach – retroduction focus on fieldwork to facilitate the emergence of knowledge – has been deployed. In such a paradigm, informing concepts contribute to the framing of description and theory (Schultz and Hatch 1996).

Foucault has influenced academic discourses on power and knowledge and their relationship. His ideas have subsequently served to inform data analysis in this research. As such, a selective review of his work and the Foucauldian genealogy of the method conclude this Chapter.

### **3.2 Voice and Agency**

Groundwork to this Chapter will require an understanding of both voice and agency. Voice is the form in which data has been collected and agency is a

generalization of the parameter that will vary in voice. It will be seen that agency provides a generalized concept for a measure of positioning. In subsequent Sections of this Chapter, an agency-sensitive positioning theory approach will be shown to provide insight into human behaviour.

### 3.2.1 A Concept of Voice

In the context of this research, voice refers to what is heard by others when a person expressed their own direct opinion by speaking or writing. When a person speaks about past experiences, they do so with their voice. That voice identifies them to others as an individual and characterises their approach to dealing with issues and others people.

### 3.2.2 A Concept of Agency

For the purposes here, agency represents the freedom of an individual to operate within and explore their life space defined by physical and social restraints and is the core of their self identity. Giddens (1987, p. 61) explains that people's freedom to act is limited by the social order comprising rules and resources. Hence, one's freedom to act is represented on a continuum of agency between self-capability and imposed social expectations. In some cases, one's agency enables one to alter the social order but then usually not in the particular anticipated way. As will be shown in this Chapter, self identity is not simply the freedom to choose, but the ongoing process of how one negotiates with circumstances and other people.

### 3.2.3 Determining Agency by Listening to Voices

In this discursive study, the voices of six senior managers – their direct opinions – have been heard. Diamond (1992) suggests that helping powerful voices to recover, articulate and then reconstruct their self-understanding – or how they come to know – can achieve knowledge. The six participants in the research may have sought such meaning in participation, but it was not its purpose. While details of the method used in this research will be explained in Chapter 4, it is briefly discussed here to set the scene for development of theory. Participants were asked

to relate experiences that demonstrated their self-conscious dealings with sustainability issues. In these it is argued were held their voices and their agency. Their narratives of their experience were expressed through the positioning framework established in this Chapter. Through this retroductive approach, the role of the senior manager has been seen from both moral and social perspectives. This framework has enabled the language and knowledge of senior managers to be explored and to determine how they are socially embedded and embodied.

Using Harré's positioning theory, the author applied a framework (Ling 1998) previously used in education. This framework – discourse analysis of story-lines – enabled the extraction of an understanding of the position taken by each of the participants in relation to sustainability. Thus, it was possible to embed this position in their descriptions of their work. Positioning theory offers a way to define a human self with reference to its capability to act with agency with respect to the social order in which the person is interacting and perhaps altering.

### **3.3 Positioning Theory**

As interpreted from Foucault (1978 and 1972), society's norms are sustained by the discursive articulation of people (Halford and Leonard 2001, p. 228). Heritage (1984) attributes a similar insight to Garfinkel. Through this process, people define themselves as they make sense of what is said and done (Potter and Wetherell 1987, p. 109). While it is not suggested that Foucault was the first person to use the term, positioning – the process of creating selves through discursive action – was alluded to by Foucault (1972, pp. 50-5). Positioning theory is central in the framework used here to explore the discursive encounters in the context of how senior managers deal with sustainability issues.

Harré and van Langenhove (1992, p. 395) and Harré and Slocum (in press) attribute invention of the concepts of position and positioning in the social sciences to Hollway (1984). This work – a Chapter included in a Foucault-influenced feminist work (Henriques, et al 1984) – is cited by Potter and Wetherell (1987, p. 109) in a discussion of how discourse is a conduit for power. Hollway draws not only upon

Foucault, but also on Lacan, another Continental philosopher contemporary to Foucault. Lacan's Freudian influence leads Hollway (1984, p. 239) to consider desire as a motive force to distinguish individuals. Lacan's ideas enabled Kenny and Boxer (1990) to 'contextualize th(e) "subject", with his ' "ethical system" and (their) higher-order "purpose"' but pay little attention to social reality. It will be seen that positioning theory, which argues that conversation is the basic social entity and hence real, enables this to be done by understanding and defining the self in terms of agency within a local institutional moral order.

Cheney (1995) shows that many feminists drew on Foucault's discourse and power concepts. Building on work of Foucauldian influenced feminists, Davies and Harré (1990) put forth the idea that positioning is an ever-negotiable definition of self. They argue that *position* is a *dynamic* alternative to the *static* concept of *role*, perhaps being elements of a larger construct (Sub-Section 3.3.1). Power and parity are at work in positioning. Harré and van Langenhove (1999), which includes Davies and Harré (1990) and other seminal works on positioning theory, contribute to all Figures and Tables in this Chapter that the author has developed here.

Weedon (1987, pp. 32-35) draws on Foucault to provide a feminist foundation of positioning theory by using terms such as precarious, contradictory and in-process to articulate the subjectivity that is required for the sort of change she has in mind. Luberda (2000) and Willig (1999) allude to this in their applications of positioning theory to analyse the literary work *Middlemarch* and health psychology respectively. Yoon (1999) draws on similar arguments to analyse gender-related discourse in knowledge building communities.

Dominance of women is perceived to be caused by what Weedon calls 'positioned subjectivity', where subjectivity refers to conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of an individual. She takes particular note of Foucault's concept of 'discursive field' that is used to understand how language, social institutions, subjectivity and power work together. Later, Weedon (1987, p. 119) derives from Foucault:

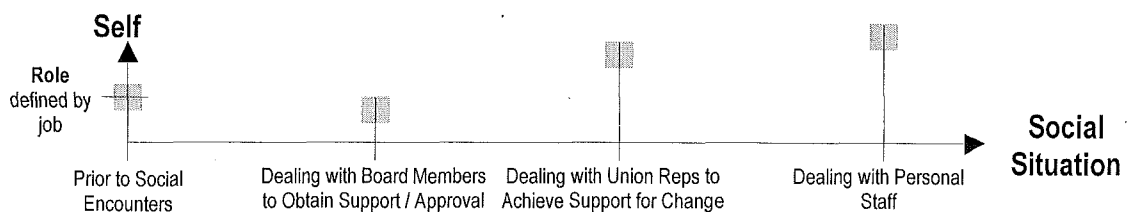
'To speak is to assume a subject position within discourse and to become *subjected* to the power and regulation of the discourse'.

Thomas (1998) draws on Weedon (1987) to show that managers' discourse demonstrates that they identify themselves primarily as managers. Ling (1998) notes a foundation of positioning theory in Gadamer's (1976) philosophical hermeneutics (to do with theories of explanation) and the social constructionist psychology of Vygotsky and Wittgenstein. He also builds on Outhwaite's insight that learning is embedded in language. However, in developing his framework, he limits his interest to self and other positioning, as defined by Harré and van Langenhove (1992).

### 3.3.1 Positions

In offering 'position' as a dynamic alternative for the static concept of 'role', Davies and Harré (1990, p. 45) imply that one's role is reconstructed when one is positioned in conversation.

When a person is assigned a role (say, managing director), their tacit agency is defined as a set of behaviours. The person themselves is ignored in this static definition of their agency. However, reality is more dynamic and finite representation does not reflect how they as persons relate to others in every situation, redefining themselves and the social organization – the process in time and space. Instead, their repositioning dynamically reflect(s) the uniqueness of various social encounters. This construct of position is a representation of 'self'. It is sensitive to contextual and situational variations, in which the self appears in a number of different personae in different conversations.



**Representation of Various Selves**

Figure 3-1



It will be seen that a position is a dynamic notion of self that differs from role, which is a static notion. To make this clear, Figure 3-1 demonstrates some conditions with which a person's self can vary. At risk of confusing the qualitative with quantitiveness, the dynamic nature of positioning is here represented by considering the algebraic definition of a line ( $y = mx + b$ ). While a linear relationship is not intended by this analogy, a person's self (or position) at any one time ( $y$ ) is equal to the positioning ( $m$ ) that occurs during a particular social situation ( $x$ ) added to their appointed role ( $b$ ). Figure 3-1 represents the equation,  $\text{Self} = (\text{Positioning} \times \text{Social Situation}) + \text{Role}$ . For example, the CEO has unique positions when with the board of directors, when with union representatives, and when dealing with personal staff.<sup>1</sup>

Positions can be represented by observed conversations or those related outside the context within which the original conversations occurred. Davies and Harré (1990, p. 48) explain how positions are defined in terms of autobiographical aspects of a conversation.

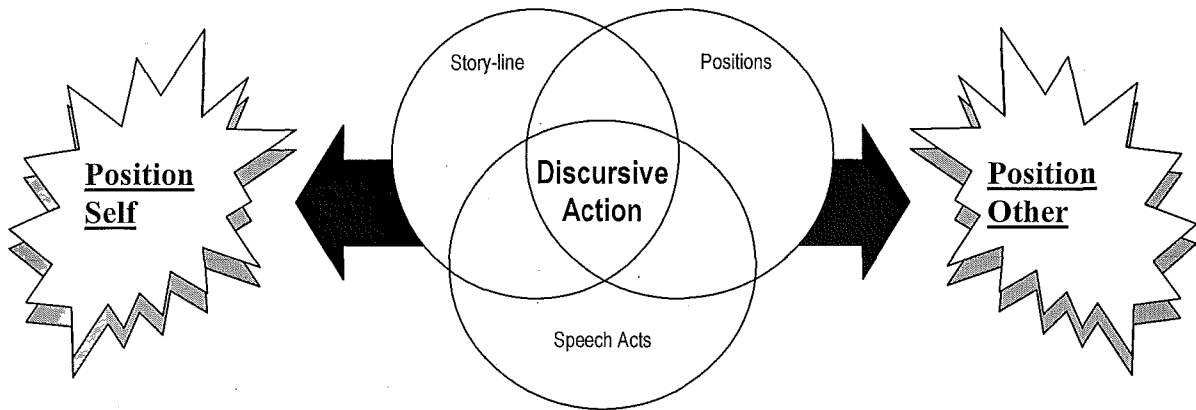
With this, it becomes clear that there is a process through which people are themselves positioned and can position others. Davies and Harré (1990) show how *self* is defined by *position* through discursive action.

'Positions are identified in part by extracting the autobiographical aspects of a conversation in which it becomes possible to find out how each conversant conceives of themselves and of the other participants by seeing what position they take up and in what story, and how they are then positioned'.

Ling's framework relies on the researcher being told about conversations. This can result in a reflection of positioning, known as third-order positioning. To understand this, the next Section provides an overview of various modes of positioning, developed by Harré and van Langenhove (1992).

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<sup>1</sup> On reading this analogy, Moghaddam (2002) replies 'works for me' and Harré (2002b) replies 'I like the analogy. "ax + b" is a nice image and I think it would help someone who does not quite grasp that position does not delete role, but amplifies and refines it as a dynamic concept'.



**Tri-polar Discursive Action Results in Position of Self and / or Other  
First Order Positioning**

Figure 3-2

As a summary of concepts – derived from Harre’s various works – to this point, when people encounter one another, they engage in discursive action that has a tri-polar nature as shown in Figure 3-2. Discourse follows a story-line that is conducted by oneself (person) and other selves (another person), through speech acts. In an organizational context, a person’s self is understood in the position they take up in the conversation and that position may or may not change during the conversation. As positioning occurs a person’s self is affected by the social constructionist model that will be introduced in Section 3.4. The results of this research will contribute to a broader explanation in Chapter 7.

Story-lines represent fragments of lives that include a cast of characters and their points of view that describe events in various ways. The conversations from such interaction occur according to established conventions. From these the underlying moral order of the society can be deduced. Conversations with the same person are expected to be somewhat similar to previous conversations. That is, they are expected to take a similar position and any deviation from the norm can lead to uneasiness indicating repositioning of the self and hence change in the social order. Speech acts are those culturally defined actions that accompany illocutionary force (the speaker’s purpose of an utterance and the background belief and attitude relating to the utterance).

A person enters a conversation, or discursive action with a position that may or may not be changed by the exchanges in the conversation. Likewise, others involved in the conversation may also be repositioned as a result of how the conversation unfolds.

### 3.3.2 Modes of Positioning

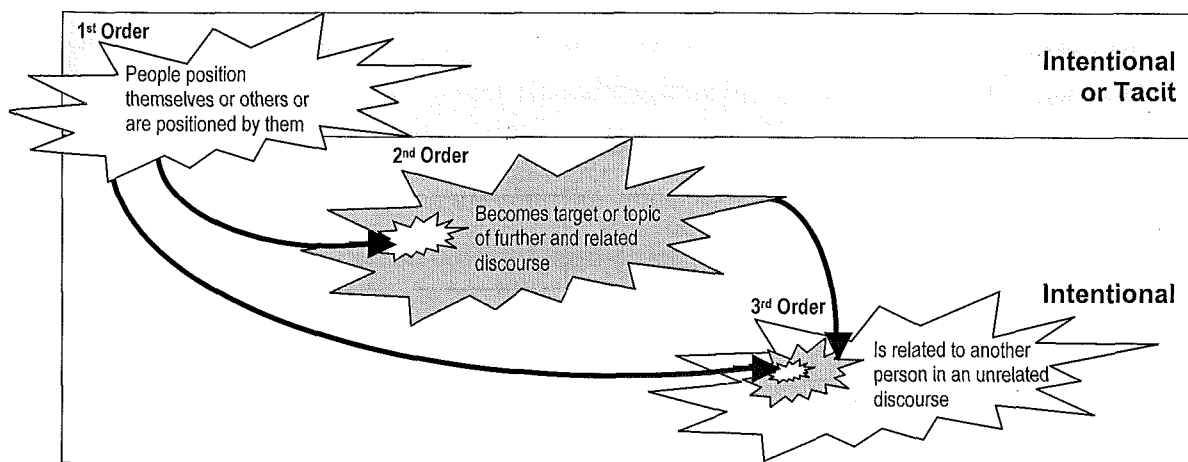
Positioning occurs within, and can be described by four discursive modes (Harré and van Langenhove 1999, p. 20-2). Social modality varies with order, immediacy, social and agency, as represented in Table 3-1.

Order	Immediacy	Social	Agency
1 <sup>st</sup>	Performative	Moral	Tacit
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Accountive	Personal	Intentional
3 <sup>rd</sup>			

**Modes of Positioning**

Table 3-1

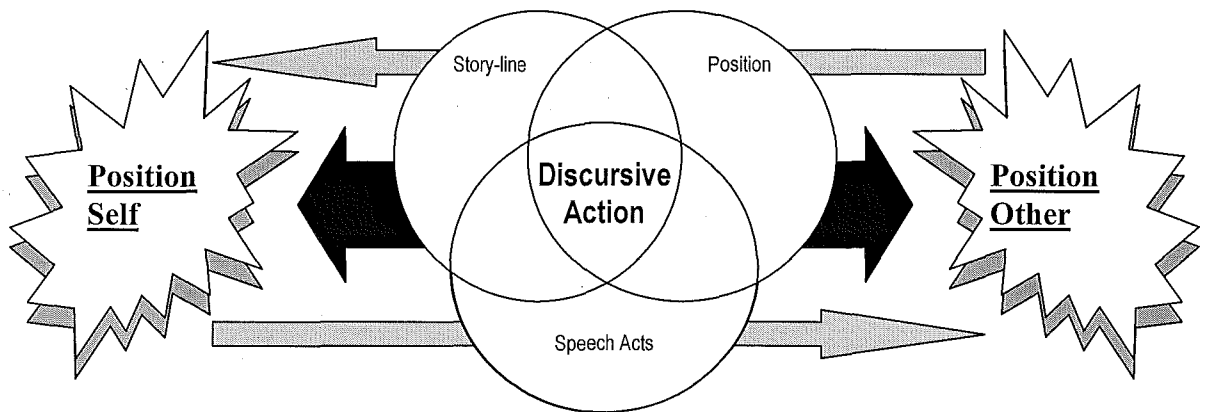
Keeping in mind the graphical representation of positioning introduced in Table 3-1 and Figure 3-2, Figure 3-3 provides a schematic of how these modes of positioning interact. First-order positioning is a subset of second-order position, in that second-order positioning occurs in response to first-order positioning. Similarly, second-order positioning is a subset of third-order positioning. It could be said that third-order positioning provides a narration of an observed social situation.



**Discursive Action Resulting in Positioning**

Figure 3-3

The order implies both the sequence and progression. If the person doing the positioning is unchallenged, then positioning is said to be first order. As soon as that positioning has been challenged, the resulting positioning is second order, as shown in Figure 3-4. Third-order positioning requires a person outside the positioning dynamic to be told about the positioning that has occurred. In this research, the researcher is outside the positioning dynamic. Hence, all positioning data regarding participants in their work-places is third order. However, descriptions of what will be related will label positioning as first- and second-order positioning as appropriate. Where appropriate, positioning that occurs between participants and the researcher during interviews may also be reported.



**Tri-polar Discursive Action Results in Position of Self and / or Other  
With Second Order Positioning**

Figure 3-4

Immediacy relates to the delay with which the position takes effect. Immediate positioning is termed performative. This relates to people simply carrying on as though they accept the first-order positioning that has occurred. On the other hand, delayed or reflexive positioning is referred to as accountive; talking about a prior conversation. This can occur with the other person in the positioning dynamic (second-order), or a person outside (third-order).

Social modality of positioning can also be either moral or personal. Positioning that occurs by virtue of one's role is said to be moral positioning, because it has resulted from a given moral order. Otherwise, personal properties and particulars that affect the social situation result from special causes. For example, if a person

is sick, has a problem, or is doing a non-standard component of their role, then their positioning is said to be personal.

In the context of positioning, agency is either there or not. As was shown in Table 3-1, first order, performative, moral positioning is tacit. All other positioning is intentional. It is the author's view that this is the aspect of Hollway's (1984) work that provides the seed for positioning theory. Tacit positioning occurs with the status quo, whereas intentional positioning may make a change to the status quo.

### 3.3.3 Types of Sustainability Discourse Used in the Framework

In addition to the modes of positioning discussed in Sub-Section 3-3-2, Harré and van Langhoven (1992) present forced and deliberate – two types of – positioning. These can be both directed at oneself or another. Ling modified deliberate to deliberative, drawing on Schwab's concept of deliberation and Gadamer's (1976) fusing of horizons. It will be seen that deliberative positioning is congruent with Endenberg's (1988, p. 9) 'tolerance for each individual and each group'. Where Ling replaced deliberate with deliberative, the author of the current research retains both, and his framework includes six types of sustainability discourse.

A theoretical positioning model, based on the six types of sustainability discourse has been prepared and is summarized in Table 3-2. The following Sub-Sub-Sections describe these six types of sustainability discourse. This model will be further developed with the findings of this research in Chapter 7.

	Deliberative Positioning	Deliberate Positioning	Forced Positioning
Self-Positioning	Deliberative Self-Positioning <b>Deliberative Intent</b>	Deliberate Self-Positioning <b>Deliberate Intent</b>	Forced Self-Positioning <b>Forced Intent</b>
Other-Positioning	Deliberative Positioning of Other <b>Parity</b>	Deliberate Positioning of Other <b>Personal Power</b>	Forced Positioning of Other <b>Institutional Power</b>

Consensus Democratic Parity } ← Continuum → } No Consensus Institutional Power

#### Range of Positioning in Power / Parity Continuum

Table 3-2

### 3.3.3.1 Forced Self-Positioning – Forced Intent

Institutional structure results in placing people in situations they must accept (or reject), thereby forcing them to behave in certain ways; hence, forced positioning. Individuals, in asserting their authority in the institution or drawing on this to accept a responsibility position themselves or repositioning others to accept responsibility, engage in forced positioning. Forced positioning happens through behaving in accordance with one's situation. However, referring to organizational discourse, published job descriptions, or the remarks of other people to position oneself or another is also forced positioning. Senior managers, having been appointed by their organizations are thereby forced positioned by this preferment.

### 3.3.3.2 Deliberate Self-Positioning – Deliberate Intent

Deliberate self-positioning occurs with a goal in mind. It is strategic and follows a deliberate discursive action composed of position, story-line and speech acts. With the position established, it locates other colleagues relative to it, and then the person carries on as they have been positioned. This depends on how senior managers want to present themselves. Deliberate self-positioning will be observed in how senior managers position themselves and others in the course of this research.

### 3.3.3.3 Deliberative Self-Positioning – Deliberative Intent

A collaborative repositioning of self occurs during deliberative self-positioning. This may occur through actively pursuing knowledge from within or outside the organization. In doing so, the senior manager accepts a parity situation regarding the establishment of their own position. The manager engages with the community in a holistic and open exchange to arrive collaboratively at a position for the manager that is mutually accepted.

#### 3.3.3.4 Forced Positioning of Others – Institutional Power

All forms of positioning of others can occur with the persons present or in their absence. Forced positioning of others can constitute complex positioning games. For example, a chairman can force chief executives to position staff. This is a display of power that imposes positions on others through organizational discourse. The objective being to bring people into order in a similar way as Foucault (Section 3.5) implies by docility and utility.

#### 3.3.3.5 Deliberate Positioning of Others – Personal Power

A person may deliberately position another in situations where the other person needs to adopt a different position to enable an organizational objective to be attained. In this case it would be second-order positioning. As opposed to being forced by the organization structure to position others, the chief executive may self-position themselves to be able to deliberately position others. In such situations each party is aware of who is positioning and who is being positioned.

When people are the target of gossip, third-order positioning occurs. In gossiping, gossipers also position themselves in a certain way. Similarly, moral reproach – a professional should behave in a certain manner that is congruent with their training, professional ethics, and community expectations – is third-order positioning.

#### 3.3.3.6 Deliberative Positioning of Others – Parity

Here there is a merger between positioning of self and positioning of others. In this case there is not just consensus, but a sense of collaboration, in which Gadamer's fusing of horizons is invoked. Ling formulates this as a point at which complex interactions arise as a result of power differences. At this point, power differences can be hidden within the collaborative context. Of interest to this research is how senior managers arrive at the collaborative point of parity or if they do at all.

### 3.3.4 Interactive vs Reflective Positioning

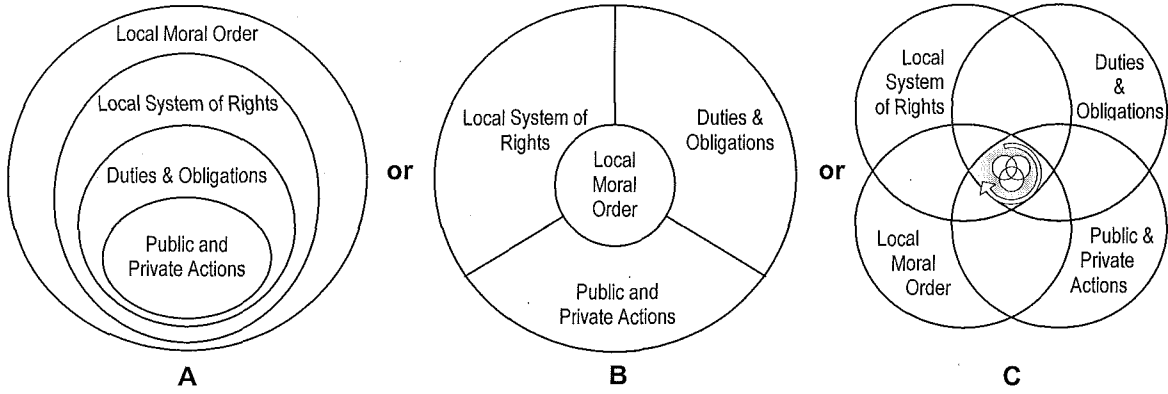
Positioning can result from *reflective* positioning, where one person positions themselves independent of other people. All three examples in this Section demonstrated positioning as a result of *interactive* positioning, where more than one person was involved (Davies and Harré 1990, p. 48). What is it about the three discursive actions that is different? It could be said that the culture is different, but what of the culture?

Foucault (1977b, p. 27) suggests that power relations are not univocal, rather they characterize moments of conflict, at which point relative positions can become less defined or even unstable. This instability can lead to ‘temporary inversion of the power relations’, where those who usually have been conferred with less authority can influence change. Discursive action and positioning takes place within a *social order*. Whereas Harré and van Langenhove (1999, p. 3) refer to this as a ‘local moral order’, which is composed of ‘rights’, ‘obligations’ and ‘acts’, the author perceives that the moral order, rights, obligations and acts are four components that define a larger social order. Such a concept of social order could provide a discursive way of defining and thinking about culture.

### 3.4 Place at Which Positioning Occurs

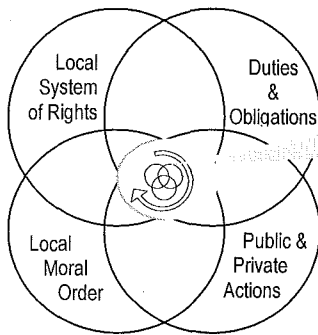
Discursive action does not occur in a vacuum; story-lines, conversations and speech acts are all influenced by the moral order of a group. Social order is a constructionist concept, as it is innate – formed by and within the group through negotiation along a power and parity continuum. In considering what a social order is and how it works, a social constructionist model – based on Harré’s various works and insight from Foucault’s ideas discussed later in this Chapter – is proposed in various configurations in Figures 3-5A, B and C.



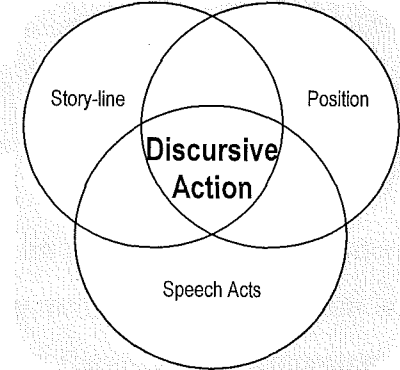


**Various Conceptions of the Social Constructionist Model**  
Figures 3-5 A, B, and C

The local moral order could be perceived to be a function of the local system of rights, duties and obligations, and public and private acts as shown in Figures 3-5A and 3-5B. While no model is perfect, Figure 3-5C is a more useful configuration for demonstrating the overlap where positioning takes place and the dynamics that could be likened to an electric current. As shown by Figures 3-6A and 3-6B, the tri-polar discursive action occurs in the overlapping space.



**Social Constructionist Model**  
Figure 3-6 A



**Tri-polar Discursive Action**  
Figure 3-6 B

The dynamics that occur in this model will be explored in Chapter 7 in conjunction with results of this research. The four components of the social constructionist model are explained in subsequent Sub-Sections. These are seen to form a social order.

#### 3.4.1 Local Moral Order

A moral order (perhaps a moral climate) defines how individuals may view themselves and others, as well as how they should interact with others. This is based on Harré's (1983) notion that individuality is linguistically determined within a context that has a moral order and linguistic and political rules. A society is commonly thought of as being at a national or municipal level, but here society is meant to refer to an organization; perhaps even parts of an organization. Both large and small societies form moral orders and these, in turn form the reason people feel obliged to behave the way they do. The moral order is defined by these three other parameters of the social constructionist model (Figure 3-6A) and all four affect each other in a mutually dependent dynamic.

#### 3.4.2 Local System of Rights

It is expected that people would assume certain rights based on their perceived relationship with others. Those rights relate to how they should acknowledge one another, extending to courtesies and protocols of behaviour.

#### 3.4.3 Duties and Obligations

In every moral order people are expected to do certain things. The moral order requires conformance with those expectations, and any deviation from that norm is disruptive and harmful to the stability. As Davies and Harré (1990) demonstrate through a clash between conflicting moral orders, emotional outbursts can occur when people disagree about their duties and obligations.

#### 3.4.4 Public and Private Acts

People can act passively or deliberately, which raises the issue of agency. Are those involved submissively accepting their courses of action or are they proactively engaging in a discourse to select and depict an alternate? How the population tends to act in a society will contribute the moral order and the moral order will determine how individuals feel comfortable acting.

### 3.5 Influence of Foucauldian Ideas as Sensitizing Concepts

Foucault's influence was referred to briefly in Chapter 2. Here a review of his ideas will be made, expanding on concepts that are relevant to this research. The author's intention is not to purport that Foucault is the panacea to understanding all human interaction. Rather, that his ideas provide some hints of where to look, or as Bové (1995, p. 239) reports that those who take Foucault seriously appreciate his insight as opposed to his specific conclusions. Foucault (1994, p. 524) said 'I write for users, not for readers'. Sheridan (1980, p. 225) concludes that Foucault's influence is as a 'slayer of dragons, a breaker of systems'. Cheney (1995, p. 92) urges that Foucault is a good starting point to understand the origins of a way of thinking that has begun to change the larger society. Weedon, (1987, p. 35) explains that Foucault's discursive concepts can be used 'to understand the relationship between language, social institutions, subjectivity and power'.

The London School of Economics (1999) identifies Foucault as one of the more important sociological thinkers of the present day. Hoy (1985) suggests that exploring continental philosophy (for example, Lacan, Gadamer, Derrida, Foucault) could be a novel source of inspiration for anglophone theorists. Established and respected management academics have published work supporting the application of Foucauldian ideas. Three such management authors include Clegg (1997 and 1998), Knights (1992) and Grice (1997). They all see great value in Foucault's insight. Clegg in particular has replied to a question presented to him at a business conference by saying, '*they need a good dose of Foucault*'. By this he implies that Foucault provides a disruptive influence that enables people to break out of constraining paradigms.

It could be said that Foucault tracks down things that make human beings' lives difficult and then tries to do show people how to think about what he finds. He does this as well as enabling the articulation of what is often perceived as being unsayable with empirical assiduousness. The several Foucauldian ideas, codes and orders explored here provide insight to resolve some of the difficulties faced by senior managers in their deliberation. Findings will demonstrate that some participants deal with situations in a way that can be explained by Foucault's ideas.

### 3.5.1 Gaze

Midway in Foucault's (1973) career, he arrived at a construction he referred to as gaze. Initially, gaze described an exudation or aura of the medical profession. Foucault suggested gaze empowers each doctor to observe, judge, diagnose and prescribe (Gilman 1982, p. xi-xii, Keyes 1997, pp. 434-5). The gaze was not an attribute of the individual, but one of the profession or group. This was possible due to the high esteem in which the medical profession is held by society.

People believed doctors, because they perceived that they were unquestionably right. Acceptance into the medical fraternity carried an indisputable authority. Similarly, Giddens (1991, p. 27) presents the notion of 'expert systems' to represent the way 'lay persons consult "professionals" – lawyers, architects, doctors, and so forth'. Foucault applied this notion of gaze to other professions and subsequently, others applied gaze to various social movements. For example, Weedon (1987, p. 23), in considering '*normal* subject positions open to women' and Foucault's work with discourse and power, suggests a feminist construct of male gaze. With this she explains the oppression of and control over women by a paternalistic society. While some may perceive this to be paranoia, Ross-Smith (2000, p. 20) observes that there is a potential for women to slip into stereotypical feminine roles in the presence of male managers. In this current research, the possibility of a management gaze was first noticed in the data collected, after the researcher had been sensitized with the notion of male gaze and similar derivations.

Foucault's (1980a, p. 115) self reflection on his exploration of societal control over perception and acceptance of imposed forms of knowledge led him to realize that the central theme of his work is regarding power and its relation with knowledge.

### 3.5.2 Discipline

Leading on from Foucault's (1973) study of the birth of the clinic, he extends his exploration into the penal system. Foucault (1977b) traces the evolution of discipline from physical pain inflicted on the body, through the mental anguish of incarceration, to self-imposed discipline. By self-imposed, Foucault is observing

how people in society do the right thing, because they think they are being watched. He develops this from his analysis of Bentham's (1995) panopticon writings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Halford and Leonard 2001, p. 35). Again, the idea of authority emerges; here Foucault introduces the notion of surveillance to his gaze construct.

Jeremy Bentham was a highly respected 19<sup>th</sup> century societal critic, whose ideas influenced the evolution of public administration and social policy. The panopticon, designed by Bentham, is a prison design that incorporates a central watchtower in a ring-shaped prison-cell building. It is particularly Bentham's panopticon prison design through which Foucault explains asymmetric power. The panopticon concept placed prison authorities such that they could observe all prisoners, yet the prisoners were unsure whether or not they were being watched. The configuration of the structure enables what Foucault referred to as a 'differential of power' and 'technologies of power' (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983). To Foucault, the very essence of power was embodied in the panopticon-notion of asymmetry of seeing without being seen (of being able to obtain knowledge without giving any knowledge in return).

It is through observing this perceived ability to know all about prisoners that Foucault appears to recognize the power/knowledge connection. Potentially, each prisoner could be observed all of the time. That knowledge enabled the observers to impose power over those being observed.

From the panoptic concept that self-discipline is a result of fear of being under surveillance, power in society could be seen to be a function of the perception that individuals or groups perceive that they are observable. This phenomenon is evident in the growing demand for transparency in private and public organizations.

### 3.5.3 Power/Knowledge and Resistance

Foucault (1980a) realizes that knowledge is a basis for power. Rather than being something to be possessed, Foucault demonstrates that the force of power is not static. Rather, power can only be seen as an exchange between individuals or groups. Foucault (1985a) deals with 'technologies of the self', referring to how

people become objects of knowledge and, through revealing their deepest personal truths, they become controlled and can control themselves. In doing so, they constrain themselves by the way they construct themselves during their discourse with others.

In exploring Foucault's observation of resistance being a reaction to power, Diamond and Quinby (1988, p. 185-6) suggests that resistance to power is dispersed and fragmented throughout the social field. Resistance could be perceived as an inevitable accompaniment of power. That is, where power occurs, resistance can be expected to surface.

Resistance could be seen to occur in several modes when senior managers' deliberation about sustainability issues is examined. Activism directed at the complacency of organizations regarding sustainability could be perceived as a form of resistance. Senior managers themselves could be resistant to the need to deal with the sustainability issue. Similarly, subordinate managers and staff could resist moves to comply with policies intended to resolve sustainability issues. The wider population could resist the sustainability issue.

Whereas resistance has been shown to be a natural reaction to power, its intensity may be caused by an extension of power. This sort of resistance is seen to accompany a reduction in the governmentality, which is discussed in the next Sub-Section.

#### 3.5.4 Governmentality

In considering the security, territory and population of society, Foucault (1979, p. 20) arrives at the idea of governmentality. By this he refers to the collected fragments of a society's structures, organizations, approaches and deliberations, and – specifically – the capacity of that aggregate to *normalise* people and their behaviour by the conjoint effort of technologies of power and technologies of the self (Halford and Leonard 2001, p. 228). From this foundation, Foucault evolves ideas relating to how discipline 'makes' individuals, and how perfect discipline enables 'a single gaze to see everything constantly' (Sheridan 1980, p. 152).

With governmentality comes the opportunity to create docility and utility in members of that organization (Sheridan 1980, p. 192) or engender a feeling in individuals that they are important parts of a society (Marshall 1995). Through making the population docile, their utility for productive use increases. That is, docile people are more likely to comply with instructions and accept limitations based on what Foucault (1977b) terms as 'public illegalities'. Knights (1992) suggests that achieving governmentality is a function of management, and views Foucault's insight as being a valuable alternate perspective on management studies. He argues that management studied as a positivist science overlooks the obstruction of reality caused by the normalizing powers of the discipline. Foucault's critical insight, on the other hand, focuses on how power in organizations may either sustain or undermine positive knowledge.

A docile population is receptive to imposed forms of knowledge that are accepted as scientifically true. Foucault (1980a, p. 112) informs that it is the power circulating among statements that affects acceptance, not the statements themselves. This could be reflected in Sauer's (1994) analysis of a fatal mine accident. She illustrates how underlying models of causality influence the structure of technical reports and the nature of the argument over responsibility and authority in technological disasters. Rather than ensuring unbiased issue resolution, it appears that the controlling agency has imposed its power to prevent errors being attributed to that agency. Rather, causes must be expressed in terms of management, human, engineering or technical errors. The publication, rather than the situation reported, becomes the focus of debate. Before discussing this phenomenon in the next Section, consider the effect of docility on resistance.

It could be determined that resistance is facilitated by a society that refuses to behave in a docile manner. As discussed previously, a decline in docility can accompany a decline in utility; and a decline in governmentality. Being familiar with Foucault and aware of that connection, a variety of activist movements have systematically and progressively attacked practices with an object of undermining the docile societies enjoyed by modern capitalist proletariat. This has presented a challenge to traditional organization and brought into play new ways of approaching power and knowledge. With this a demand for transparency and

increased scrutiny of organizational decision-making by ordinary citizens has become commonplace (Fombrun 1996).

Where activists perceive sensitive issues have not been dealt with appropriately, they are likely to confront decision-makers with a sense of self-righteous confidence. Their self-assurance could be explained as a derivation from the decline of governmentality.

### 3.5.5 Dossier

With demands for transparency and freedom to scrutinize business operations and other enterprises, the need for careful release of information has become increasingly important. Adept public figures realize that inconsistencies in their comments will be identified and assaulted by adversaries. For example, when repeatedly scrutinized about sensitive political topics, politicians can be seen saying, 'I stand by what I said previously'. They do not want to risk contradicting what they know has been recorded on film or in print. For example, in the film *Notting Hill*, when the Julia Roberts character says, 'Whenever there is a story about me they will dig this up ... newspapers last forever'.

Foucault (1975) demonstrates the power of dossiers in his study of the legal proceedings of a man who kills various members of his family. Foucault demonstrates that, on creation of the dossier surrounding the case, the man ceases to be. Instead, he becomes the dossier. Rather than asking the man, the dossier is scrutinized. Foucault (1980b) demonstrates similar phenomena in the case of a French hermaphrodite. Foucault (1972, pp. 6-7) summarizes these inquiries as 'the questioning of the document', in which he views documents as things to be actively worked upon as opposed to passively read. Foucault expands this via later comments about 'publishing the truth' (Sheridan 1980, p. 140) to include a wider 'library' of both formal and informal documents. Foucault (1972, p. 125-9) explains the aggregate of documents as a historical *a priori* that can place a discourse in time, which he ties into a map-reading metaphor, as explained in the next Sub-Section.



In an interview, Foucault explains his reluctance to engage in polemics with people who he knew would deny him the right to be heard (Rabinow 1984, p. 381-3). Foucault sees polemics as controversial disputations that do not permit open discourse, due to the entrenched values held by either side of the debate. Instead he seems to have published what he knows to be true and refers his detractors to his publications.

### 3.5.6 Savoir via Repérage

In his discussion of the discursive field, there is a distinction made by Foucault (1969) between superficial and substantial knowledge, but this is lost in translation from French to English. Preferring to discuss *savoir* (substantial knowledge) in favour of *connaissance* (superficial knowledge), Foucault (1972, p. 143, 1969, p. 152) makes it clear that he is looking for something of substance by his topographical analogy of *repérage* (1972 is the English version, whereas 1969 is the original French).

Military personnel understand how to read a map in such a way that they can gain a substantial understanding of the general contour and specific features of the ground which it represents. Elden (2001) explains that *repérage* is a term Foucault borrows from the military to explain this map-reading process. However, *repérage* is not used in English translations of Foucault's work. To further convolute translation, the meaning-laden 'formation' (1969, p. 152) is translated to a more benign 'field' (1972, p. 143). To say that something is 'an effect of the discursive *field* in which it is *mapped*', loses the dynamic derivative quality intended. Rather, Foucault appears to have intended to allude to extracting substantial knowledge from understanding the dynamics of the situation through purposeful consideration. Unlike a field, a formation evolves and, unlike mapping, *repérage* implies a tactical decision based on developments of the formation in question.

It could be suggested that the process of unfreezing, changing and refreezing can be mapped through Foucault's insight into discursive action. *Repérage* may enable articulation of the way that senior managers engage in discursive action to position and reposition others.

Earlier in the same work, Foucault (1972, p. 50-55) introduces the idea of positioning. He ties together the idea of institutional sites with the documentary field (composed of various dossiers), which he refers to as 'sites of discourse'. Within these sites he suggests that people occupy 'positions as subjects'. Given the bibliography of Davies and Harré (1990), of which about a third draws directly on Foucault's work (including Davies (1989)), Foucault appears to introduce positioning theory.

'In the proposed analysis, instead of referring back to *the* synthesis or *the* unifying function of *a* subject, the various enunciative modalities manifest his dispersion. To the various statuses, the various sites, the various positions that he can occupy or be given when making a discourse. To the discontinuity of the planes from which he speaks. And if these planes are linked by a system of relations, this system is not established by the synthetic activity of a conscious identical with itself, dumb and anterior to all speech, but by the specificity of a discursive practice'. (Foucault 1972, p. 54-5)

It is true that Harré (2000) explains that Davies and Harré (1990), rather than drawing on Foucault, were influenced more directly by English-speaking philosophers and their work, such as Goffman's interest in self (1959, 1961, 1963, and 1967) and Garfinkel's ethnomethodology (1967 and 1986). It is true that Davies and Harré (1990) references include several works by Goffman and Garfinkel. Yet, over a third of the 22 references they cited drew extensively on Foucault. Furthermore, Goffman (1961) could be seen to parallel Foucault (1977b) and Foucault is complimentary of Goffman's analysis of power relations (Rabinow 1984, p. 247).

### 3.5.7 A Foucauldian Sustainability Question

From time to time during the course of this research, bystanders to this research would answer the research question 'How do senior managers deal with sustainability issues?' with 'They don't'. Invariably the researcher has replied, 'They don't until they get caught, and then they deal with it a great deal'. With this in mind, and having been sensitized by Foucault's ideas, a retrospective Foucauldian question related to this research might be:

*Could governmentality provide a basis from which to understand legitimization and de-legitimization of issues?*

or perhaps:

*What is the limit of activism, legislation or consumer backlash that will cause organizations to behave as desired by those imposing the activism, legislation or consumer backlash?*

### **3.6 Genealogy of a Method**

This Chapter has shown that positioning theory can enable understanding of human behaviour. The analytical framework enables senior managers' reality regarding how they deliberate regarding sustainability issues to be socially constructed through discourse analysis of transcripts of their explanations.

The nature of discursive data implies it will contain metaphorical representation of reality. Through the course of developing new insights, particularly through reading Foucault, the author was sensitized to seeing far more in interview data, leading to identification of categories and concepts. This was happening, as Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 182) predict, 'while patiently waiting for something to happen or someone to say something interesting'.

Research projects in the humanities, social sciences and education have seen the scientific method paradigm of positivism giving way to a variety of post-positivist approaches (Lather 1991, p. 7). Lather suggests that a phenomenological approach enables a capability to seek understanding of some defined response to human behaviour. She explains that such an approach draws on verbal communication as a major object for analysis. From phenomenological research projects emerge increasing iterations of understanding that result in evolution of the research question.

The methodology is based on an approach that assumes social actors construct their own realities and that these realities in turn construct and reconstruct actors, or in the words of Davies and Harré (1990, p. 46) constitute and reconstitute. Favouring the social character of knowledge, Berger and Luckman (1967) reject the perception that knowledge mirrors reality. Reflecting on Foucauldian concepts of

discourse McCarthy (1996, pp. 37-45) implies that the empirical object of inquiry should be the discourses where knowledge is produced. Assuming that the self and other realities are socially constructed through discourse (McCarthy 1996, Davies and Harré 1990, and Giddens 1991), it can be suggested that professional identity can influence the way professionals talk about information seeking and use. Hence, it is assumed that discursive action will play a part in determining how senior managers deal with sustainability issues and what tools, as Vygotsky (1981, p. 137) put it they may employ in dealing with the related information.

‘various systems for counting; mnemonic techniques; algebraic symbol systems; works of art; writing; schemes, diagrams, maps and mechanical drawings; all sorts of conventional signs; and so on’.

Grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Strauss and Corbin 1990, Glaser 1992, and Sheldon 1998) has influenced this research to harness its strengths in investigating a relatively unknown phenomenon, to gain a fresh approach, and to learn what it is like (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 37) for a senior manager to deal with sustainability issues. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) would view this method as taking an ‘emic-perspective’ or insider’s point of view. Chapter 4 develops such an approach to be the method used in this research.

In setting out to understand how senior managers deal with sustainability issues, the author has been influenced largely by the work of Ling (1998). In this work, he explores Schwab’s (1969a, 1969b) deliberation-based decision-making framework and draws on Harré’s positioning theory to inquire whether or not curriculum co-ordinators engage in good deliberation. While Harré is known as a realist and retains that perspective, in later works he (Harré and Secord 1972, Harré 1979, Harré 1983, Davies and Harré 1990, Harré and Gillett 1994, Harré and van Langenhove 1999) draws on discursive practice to understand the way people construct realities. Schwab puts forth a philosophy of parity and a collaborative approach to dealing with curriculum change induced by student protest. Such forced change could be referred to as Obligatory and Externally Imposed (OEI).

### 3.6.1 Foundation in Academic Curriculum Management

On a general level, Ling (1998) demonstrates that the dynamic aspects of discursive action can be understood through positioning theory. However, a specific attribute derived from Ling provides a way to understand how people deal with obligatory and externally initiated change. He examined six curriculum co-ordinators who dealt with OEI issues such as whether or not to equate independent high school curriculum with that of state imposed curriculum and the public demand for incorporation of personal computer use in independent high school programs. These are both typical of changes that businesses routinely face. Adopting a particular curriculum could be equated to adopting sustainability programs. Similarly, the introduction of personal computers is a challenge that has been faced by most businesses. These are challenges that businesses face and, based on that, it is suggested here that Ling's approach will be transferable to a business application.

In his examination, Ling tape-recorded interviews with each participant and subjected the transcripts of those interviews to intensive coding to identify the positioning that occurred. In doing so, he observed the phenomena of positioning. Through further consideration, Ling determined that there were multiple realities of curriculum co-ordination that were defined by metaphors as social representations of the positioning he observed. Multiple realities of dealing with sustainability is likewise assumed to exist.

### 3.6.2 Enhancing Theoretical Sensitivity with Foucault's Ideas

Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 84) suggest that breaking through assumptions can be facilitated by using comparisons. They inform that it is necessary to draw on personal knowledge, professional knowledge and technical literature. As suggested by Diamond (1998), in this research Foucauldian ideas about the relationship between knowledge and power, and other things have fuelled the identification of categories during coding. Thereafter, these provided stimuli to notice properties and dimensions of those categories.

Greater understanding of positioning theory was achieved once it was realized that Foucault (1972, pp. 50-5) provided seminal ideas for the cycle of its development. In drawing on Foucault (1970, 1972 and specifically 1978), Potter and Wetherell (1987, p. 109) acknowledge the effect of *position* caused by *linguistic practices* and have confirmed this interpretation.

‘In this tradition, people become *fixed* in position through the range of linguistic practices available to them to make sense’.

That positioning theory derives from radical feminism suggests that it may be congruent with those OEI issues that are made obligatory and externally imposed by social activism. While this might appear to be a tenuous connection on the surface, it is assumed that part of the difficulty in dealing with OEI issues is the variance between managers and their social activist opponents. As such, positioning theory provides a different paradigm, not for the purposes of achieving harmony, but from which to understand what is going on. Yet as Harré remains a realist, positioning theory provides a safe vantage point from which to observe while sustaining allegiance to a realist perspective.

Foucault (1972, p. 205, 1980a, p. 115, Klages 2001) explains that his work with people and their discourse was to determine an understanding of power and its relation to knowledge. Such an approach complements the hermeneutic tradition on which retroductive research strategy rests. Blaikie (2000, p. 139) suggests that hermeneutics generates concepts that fit the problem at hand, and work to provide useful description and understanding.

### 3.6.3 Retroductive Strategy – Realism

In contrast with the positivist view that knowledge arises through deduction or induction, realists suggest that knowledge arises from experience beyond the statistics derived by deduction or induction. The experience observed by this approach is explained through a retroductive strategy of learning through an iterative process, and progressively developing a model that explains the phenomenon being observed. Blaikie (2000, p. 165) explains that, while the reasoning does not lead to certainty, it does find a solution to the research problem.

Retroductive strategy required initial learning from participants about how they conceptualized and made sense of the issues being studied. Redescribing their accounts in terms of positioning theory was done, while retaining the meaning given by participants. This approach led the author to draw analogies from other disciplines (Blaikie 2000, p. 167), which enabled him to construct the technical or social scientific model of the activity observed that is discussed in Chapter 7.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

The conceptual framework for this thesis has evolved from Ling (1998) and is influenced by the context of the study. Additionally, in observing the place for Foucault in Ling (1998), Diamond's (1998) referee report – referring to Popkewitz and Brennan (1998) – and Said (2000) has led the author to expand Ling (1998) in that direction. This is one fortuitous digression that eventually contributed to this framework in three ways.

It is clear from both personal comments and inquiry into her work, that Davies (2000a, 2000b) brought considerable Foucauldian influence to Davies and Harré's (1990) seminal work on positioning theory. Secondly, Foucault has been shown to be a driving force in the activism that has led to the phenomenon of sustainability, which is the topic of inquiry in this research. Finally, Foucault has provided insight for the development of the construct of social flux that is used in Chapter 7 to articulate how senior managers deal with sustainability issues.

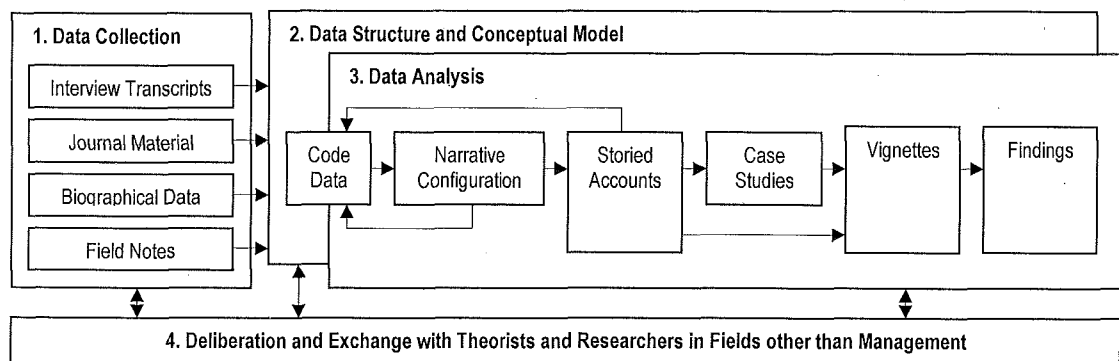
Theoretical ideas and models put forward in this Chapter have established the tools and laid a foundation for the research method. The next Chapter will develop the method used for data collection and analysis.

## Chapter IV

### METHOD

#### 4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3 positioning theory was explained and put forward as a way to derive meaning from deliberation regarding sustainability issues. Through observing discursive phenomena that occur in a matrix of socially-constructed binary dimensions, positioning is identified by qualitative appraisal of parity or power, self or other, subjectivity or objectivity, public or private, and technical or moral values (Ling 1998, p.151). This Chapter presents a method that has been outlined in Figure 4-1. It is based on an approach used by Ling (1998) that has been influenced by positioning theory, narrative research, phenomenology, and grounded theory. Before doing so, the portability of the method will be demonstrated.



Overview of Research Method

Figure 4-1



## 4.2 Portability of Ling's Approach

Positioning, being grounded in conversation, requires a method that deals with discourse. The method needs to capture and describe the person engaging in positioning, those with whom the person interacts, the process of positioning and type of positioning ultimately adopted by those involved. The tradition of narrative studies provides an appropriate method to capture this information. Such a method was developed by Ling (1998) for listening to curriculum co-ordinators relate their experiences – in dealing with curriculum issues with heads of departments and school principals – and subsequently developing cases. Yin (1994, p. 6) suggests that “‘how’ ... questions ... are likely to lead to the use of case studies’. It is proposed that this method can be applied in a business context to observe *how* senior managers deliberate about sustainability issues.

### 4.2.1 Managers Help Others Learn

All people engage in discourse and, while context may vary, the same social dynamics are at work. Rudgley (2001) shows that even Ice Age peoples were our social and intellectual equals, apparently engaging in discursive action to develop their relationships. It could be suggested that contemporary professional managers being leaders and coaches, their work largely involves learning themselves and developing others. Senge (1990, pp. 298-300) explains that the new role of managers is learning, helping others to learn and ‘designing the organization’s learning processes’, which in a way resembles teaching and curriculum co-ordination.

### 4.2.2 Managers Have Personal Practical Knowledge

Ling (1998, p. 46) drew on a body of research in the education discipline that used narrative as a foundational approach. Two different streams of thought were consolidated into his method. In the first stream, there was an objective of capturing the voice of the person being studied in context of institutional discourses so it was heard and incorporated as a central feature in the output of investigations into the person of management. The second stream applied narrative reconstruction

to determine personal practical knowledge or agency of each manager. It is from this that the core of the method is formed; narratives assist in determining the context within which people develop both practical and formal knowledge of doing their work.

Because this ontological research concerns a search for meaning within personal practical knowledge, a retroductive research strategy has been adopted. In doing so, it is presumed that what is known is largely abstract and created by communities (Healy and Perry 2000) in conversation. Thus the author acknowledges an imperfect and unproven yet perceptible nature of reality and he assumes plausible truth from his findings. The author is exploring what he believes must have caused observable data. From this retroductive strategy, a qualitative method has been assembled, which includes interviews, 'metaphorical' narrative reconstruction, theoretical studies to explain findings, and formation of description for a prospective theory (Blaikie 2000, pp. 108-127). Metaphorical constructs are noted as useful in interpretation by Huberman and Miles (1994), and Blaikie (2000, p. 25) ties indirect methods, creative imagination and analogy with retroduction. However, Harré (1986, p. 7) warns that metaphor is a deviation from scientific argument, implying that it is necessary to return to theoretical terms to achieve formal validity in the accounts.

#### 4.2.3 All Individuals have a Personal Practical Knowledge

The insight gleaned from Ling's approach has two effects on this research. First, it introduces insight from the curriculum co-ordination field into business management. Second, and perhaps of greater essence, it prepares the researcher to think about the data in terms of one's 'personal practical knowledge'; where Ling's knowledge was concerning curriculum co-ordination, the author's research involves the 'personal practical knowledge' of business management issues.

Ling's approach is useful for this research, as it provides a window on to a reality beyond what people say into the world of ideas, science, language, ethics, and institutions (Healy and Perry 2000, pp. 120-1). In keeping with Ling's approach, the method used here has been designed to satisfy Healy and Perry's criteria for

qualitative research within the realism paradigm, as summarized by the author in Table 4-1.

Criteria	Question to Ask	Appropriate Techniques
Ontological Appropriateness	Is the research dealing with complex social phenomena?	Selection of a 'how' problem: <i>How do senior managers deal with sustainability issues?</i> Select senior managers who are successfully dealing with sustainability and willing to reflect.
Contingent Validity	Is the research sensitive to context?	Aim to describe why sustainability was dealt with as it was and define context – participants and their organizations – in which they were observed.
Multiple Perceptions of Participants and of Peer Researchers	Does the research inquire through several windows to reality and combine these?	Multiple interviews to provide a variety of perspectives about the same reality, which enables triangulation. Encourage participants to be self-descriptive and aware of their own values.
Methodological Trustworthiness	Is the research auditable through records that map progress?	Conduct in-depth interviews that have an interview protocol, with questions based on answering research question. Then develop descriptions using quotations to understand things born of people's minds, but independent of any one person. Maintain traceability through to interview data.
Analytic Generalisation	Does the research result in developing understanding?	Identify research issues before data collection, to formulate interview protocol that will provide data for developing prospective theory.
Construct Vitality	Is the information about constructs measured in the research?	Information about constructs are measured by use of prior theory from discourse and positioning, case study database, and triangulation.

### Criteria for Qualitative Research Within the Realism Paradigm

(as modified from Healy and Perry (2000, p. 122))

Table 4-1

#### 4.2.4 Similar Issues Being Dealt With

Ling's participants – six curriculum co-ordinators at independent high schools in Melbourne – dealt with the introduction of externally imposed curriculum and technology issues. These included coping with change in an organizational environment and asking questions such as, *How much should an independent school follow the curriculum imposed on government schools?* The independent schools were under no obligation to implement prescribed K-10 curriculum for government schools, but there were social issues such as making sure that students coming from government schools to independent schools felt as though they could join. Regarding technology issues, there was a perception that personal computers had great value and a belief that there was a need to work with staff and get them involved in the implementation process.

Managers in complex organizations face similar issues to those explored by Ling. For example, these days all organizations are required to adopt and integrate various sorts of technology. Furthermore, the introduction of environmental and social stewardship could be seen to be similar and to present similar challenges as state-imposed curriculum issues to independent schools. While the specific issues surrounding curriculum co-ordination in independent high schools are different from those found in business management, an independent high school is an entity that depends on sound economic management. Furthermore, all institutions produce 'powerful institutional narratives' (Sheridan 1992, p. 91) that individuals in authority need to contend with demonstrating that they can control if they are to achieve objectives.

### **4.3 Overview of Research**

The method developed for this research is presented in Figure 4-1 (shown at the opening of this chapter) and overviewed in the remaining Sub-Sections of this Section. Subsequent Sections discuss the method in detail. However, as depicted in Figure 4-1, it is not necessarily a linear process. Instead, a series of iterations result in revisiting each step and refining the conceptual model, data analysis, and findings achieved.

#### **4.3.1 Data Collection**

Data has been collected primarily through transcripts of interviews (see Section 4.4), but journal materials, biographical data and field notes have contributed to a holistic contextual understanding. Journal materials are records of conversations outside of formal interviews, biographical data relates to the participants, and field notes were taken during interviews and follow-up discussions.

As explained in Section 3.6, data was collected from those senior managers who were dealing with sustainability issues well. They have experienced doing what is being searched for in this research. The selves that they reveal in their discourse have provided evidence of how sustainability issues were dealt with.

Interviews have been conducted with six chief executives and general managers, who were engaged in dealing with sustainability issues, because of their potential to contribute rich and varied descriptions of how they dealt with sustainability issues. Details of participants and their selection are in Section 4.5. In keeping with Heidegger's (1962) 'everyday life-world' influence on grounded theory, representativeness is not considered to be an issue (Blaikie 2000, p. 206). Rather, a phenomenological approach is taken; one that describes how senior managers were engaged in dealing with sustainability issues without theory, deduction or assumptions from other disciplines, but from the phenomenon itself.

Field notes were collected prior to, during and following each interview. These notes contribute descriptions of the organizations within which participants worked. From these, an understanding is derived of the local culture and structure.

#### 4.3.2 Data Structure – Narrative Reconstruction

Prior to analysis, data was reduced to consolidate the vast amount of data collected through interviews. This is largely explained in Section 4.4.

Briefly, transcripts were scanned for various stories being told by participants, from which understanding was derived by coding the data into categories and configuring the narrative so that storied accounts or cases – and later vignettes – could be developed. This sort of understanding is alluded to by Foucault's (1972, pp. 141-5) map reading analogy, where he speaks of *mapping*, meaning from the *formation* of discourse one finds. From this he explains there are things to *know* at all places in the *formation* and that 'there is no immediately recognizable resemblance'. Narratives reconstructed in these groups will separate irrelevant discourse from narratives, and provide opportunities to analyse consistent data relating to each participant.

#### 4.3.3 Data Analysis

Positioning theory (Davies and Harré, 1991) provides the theoretical basis for data analysis. Chapter 3 refers to several diverse applications of positioning theory to

understand discursive action and derive meaning from that discursive action. To reduce researcher bias, it was decided to engage coding procedures. Open, axial and selective coding has been conducted as outlined in Strauss and Corbin (1990) in their explanation of grounded theory. Concepts developed through this coding have been used to develop narratives of experience, which Connelly and Clandinin (1988, p. 59) explain are a way people 'make meaning of their lives'.

Various software data-analysis tools were considered. Due to the richness of data and the lack of standard lexicon for discussion topics in this research, *Bookworm* (Howard 2000) was selected as the most appropriate software tool. However, it became increasingly apparent that simply reading transcripts, colour coding, cutting and pasting was more effective. After several iterations of analysis, it was realized that the data was sufficiently small to handle without a computer. Furthermore, the volume of work that could be done with computer-aided analysis did not repay loss of richness. Software was used mostly in the earlier steps of analysis during open coding.

Borrowed from grounded theory, the iterative process of *open*, *axial* and *selective* coding enabled the researcher to invent and impose concepts on the data (Blaikie 2000, p. 241). The three types of coding involve cycles of *chunking*, *conceptualizing* and *categorization* of data (*open* coding), *reassembling categories* of chunked data into strategies used to respond to phenomena (*axial* coding), and *selecting core categories* around which to build theories or descriptions (*selective* coding). It is about these built theories – grounded in data – that a final descriptive narrative can be reconstructed. As with the grounded theory approach, this cycle of coding will overlap data structuring and data analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Strauss and Corbin 1990, Blaikie 2000).

In keeping with Blaikie (2000, p. 27) a conceptual model was conceived early during analysis and revised with ongoing iteration of coding (as shown in Figure 4-1). As instructed by Blaikie (p. 76), this conceptual model endeavoured to explain a pattern by locating the causal mechanism that produced it. Later, Blaikie (p. 166-7) notes that Harré and Secord (1972) accept abstract descriptions influenced by linguistic philosophers and psychologists. Hence, the author's harnessing of

Foucauldian ideas has been congruent with Harré's broader approach. Blaikie (1993, p. 167) advises that drawing analogies from other disciplines is a useful aid to retrodution.

Once narratives were reconstructed, case studies were written in Chapter 5, from which vignettes were drawn in Chapter 6. Findings were further developed in discussions in Chapter 7.

#### **4.4 Interviews**

Interviews were selected as the primary source of data for this research. The objective was to arrive at rich meaningful stories through which participants would relate meaning. Archival records referred to by participants were noted and read, if available. The participants were observed for personal characteristics, as were their offices. Of interest were physical artefacts such as photographs and awards (Yin, 1994). Prior to and following interviews, media releases concerning the institutions were observed.

##### **4.4.1 Interview Protocol**

In his research, Ling (1998) used a series of questions he had derived from Weber (1990). On reflection and with minor alteration, these questions were determined to be appropriate for this current research also. The opening question, as Ling (1998, p. 51) observes was a crucial leading question that intended to entice participants to open up at the earliest stage.

In all cases, each question was answered, but the order in which the questions asked varied, and there were variations in the quantity and quality of their answers. Some required refocusing to address the scope of the author's research, some needed to be urged on, while others would not stop talking. In some cases, participants answered questions without the need for them to be asked. Each interview began with the same question:

*What is one of the most memorable experiences you have ever had as a senior manager regarding sustainability issues? Tell me what happened? Describe it in detail.*

In unique ways, each interview took peculiar twists. Participants understood questions in different ways and provide answers of varying detail and duration. In some cases it was necessary to intervene to get the discussion on topic, and in others the variation provided greater opportunities for developing constructs.

As mentioned above, subsequent questions were adapted from Ling's research and modified to address the sustainability topic, which he had adopted from Weber (1990). The questions used are as follows:

*What are the tensions that senior managers with TBL responsibility experience? Think of the cause of tensions or dilemmas that you have experienced. Tell me what happened. Describe it in detail.*

*Are there any special commitments that you feel as a senior manager, with TBL responsibility? What are they? Give me an example of such a commitment. Describe it in detail.*

*Do you have a particular view of what constitutes knowledge of TBL? Is there an event that highlights this for you? Tell me what happened. Describe it in detail.*

*I would like you to think about the understanding that you have as a senior manager, with TBL responsibility. Is there an event that describes how you gained these understandings? Tell me what happened. Describe it in detail.*

*Do you feel that your colleagues understand what it is that you do? Is there an event that highlights this? Tell me what happened. Describe it in detail.*

*What is it like being a senior manager in your organization? Think of an event that highlights this. Tell me what happened. Describe it in detail.*

As Ling (1998, p. 52) observed, these questions were most provocative and contributed to a thorough 'excavation'. While some participants needed some ongoing focusing, the quality and volume of data is reflected in case studies and vignettes.



#### 4.4.2 Interview Process

It occurred that little persuasion was required; most participants spoke extensively on just the first question. With that initiation, each interview proceeded differently. One participant immediately said the question was inappropriate and rephrased it for the researcher. In that case, the manager in question had not yet encountered a sustainability issue and they chose to refer to other kinds of changes that were organization-wide. These, the participant said, would be indicative of how they were planning to deal with sustainability issues. It was in reflecting on this situation and in discussion with a visiting professor that the author arrived at the term obligatory and externally imposed issues. In doing so, the author realized that sustainability issues are part of a wider construct.

Each participant received the questions in Sub-Section 4.4.1 in advance and was informed that the interviews would be semi-structured and that they may choose to answer or not answer the questions. They were also advised that interviews would be tape-recorded.

On arrival, the author was faced with a situation not dissimilar to what a consultant faces when meeting a prospective client. Three of the participants had met the author previously, and three had never met him. Having been a consultant for 20 years, the author was comfortable meeting new people and attending to the work at hand. Being busy people, the senior managers were comfortable answering the author's questions, but it was necessary to guide the process.

It was evident that a high level of trust was placed on the research process; all original materials have been codified and secured, such that there is no indication of individual or organizational names, and care has been taken to disguise the situations to prevent disclosure. In some cases, license was taken to alter the make-up of the organization (such as size, location, and activities undertaken) but this did not alter the data collected.

#### 4.4.3 Impact of Participants' and Researcher's Experience

The epistemological status of the stories told during the interview was shaped by the relationship established with the participant. Furthermore, what the participants were prepared to speak about and how they interpreted questions affected the nature of interaction with them during the interview. The degree of influence of speaking to a researcher was considered during the interviews, and steps were taken to reduce any adverse impact.

In the application of narratives for professional development, Wood (1992) sought to pass the locus of control to those with which she worked. In doing so, the individual's voice became central to the work at hand and to the development of expectations. Through listening to voice, the researcher hears *the direct opinion of the person*. Diamond (1992, p. 67), in discussing voice suggests that people need to be listened to and be permitted to speak in the direct opinion of the person. Ling (1998, p. 52) assembled Diamond's focus on voice -- and the need to permit it to be heard in collaborative discourse -- into a parameter for his research. However, through this and other considerations of voice, Ling realized the need to break with 'traditional academic voice' and the 'conventions of scholarly writing'. His description of method required adherence to his understanding of 'personal practical knowledge'. With that, the results of his investigations provided the rich textural detail for his method.

Trust conveyed through such processes and issues were more easily resolved. Being impressed with Wood's approach, Ling (1998, p. 49) made it part of his approach to look for examples of similar phenomena displayed by his participants.

The insight gleaned from Ling's approach has had important effects on this research. It prepares the researcher to think about the data in terms of one's 'personal practical knowledge'; where Ling's knowledge was concerning curriculum co-ordination, the researcher's research involves the 'personal practical knowledge' of business issues. Some things influenced Ling and others have influenced the researcher, but they were both interested in how individuals dealt with conflict in their relevant situations.

#### 4.4.4 Dealing with Contextual Variations

Cox (1993) explains how predominant groups affect the behaviour of those who live and work within them. From their involvement in unique organizations, each participant in the current research was influenced by the context of their organization. Hence, what they related about dealing with sustainability issues was unique but the same. Each participant brought organizationally unique issues and organizationally unique ways of dealing with those issues. Likewise, they demonstrated personally unique approaches of dealing with those issues. Yet, the obligatory and externally imposed nature of the sustainability issues remained the same. To gather necessary data in the current research required a contextually sensitive approach that was able to identify what was common among the participants.

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) recognize that the practical and experiential knowledge of educational professionals has been shaped by their purposes and values. They view that the personal and practical knowledge of professionals and the way it is modified and developed is best understood through narrative. Their narrative method involves synthesizing biographical data, journal material, interview transcripts and field notes into narrative reconstruction. It is not the exceptional that Clandinin (1989, p. 125) suggests is of interest. Rather it is the meaning intimately linked with the individual's personal practical knowledge. It is from these unique discourses that contextual insight merges with generic understanding.

In light of the requirement for validity of this method, context becomes a factor of central importance (Ling 1998, p. 49, Fenstermacher 1994, Clandinin and Connelly 1996). With context in mind, narrative reconstructions were produced to give meaning to everyday dealings with sustainability issues experienced by managers in their places of work. The approach allows the researcher to hold the context and the person in focus at all times. Formal psychological accounts tend to lose focus on the context and sociological studies lose focus on the person at the point of analysis.

#### **4.5 Selection and Preparation of Participants**

Preliminary inductive desk research was conducted of the 1998/1999 annual reports of top 50 Australian listed businesses to identify those that appeared to deal with sustainability-related issues to any degree. The rationale was that shareholders are the most important stakeholder to listed businesses; the annual report is the key communication tool with shareholders; if management deems something to be important to the business it would be referred to in some detail in the annual report. Each annual report was read, noting evidence of sustainability issues. While some organizations glossed over philanthropy, less than ten per cent appeared to be dealing with sustainability in a way that reflected the realization demonstrated by Nasser (1999). From this desk research, it appears that those organizations dealing with sustainability issues tend to be involved in resource extraction or use of those resources. However, other organizations did espouse the same sort of commitment that was observed.

Based on Eisenhardt (1989), between four and ten participants from the top ten per cent of the author's desk research were sought from resource, manufacturing, service (in which there was potential for misuse of social or natural resources), and education. These sorts of institutions were approached to participate. A combination of networking, forthright requests, and luck resolved this challenge. As a recurring theme through the author's research, Ling has suggested that serendipity played a part in acquiring participants.

Huber and Power (1985) advise that it is best to choose participants who have the moral authority here considered as comprehensive knowledge of the issue. They warn that selecting the wrong people may limit findings. Of relevance to this research is to avoid people who are motivated to provide inaccurate or biased data, and those who may be limited with respect to cognition or facts. For that reason, the author has selected chief executives or those dealing especially with sustainability issues. They also suggest that people may consciously or unconsciously alter facts to increase their self esteem or to protect themselves. This led the author to select individuals who were known to have dealt effectively with

sustainability issues. In all cases, the individuals were recommended to him by virtue of their attitudes towards sustainability.

Golden (1992) suggests that participants need to be motivated and prepared to provide appropriate information. To accomplish this, the author did not press people into participating. Then, during interviews, he followed the series of questions – listed in Sub-Section 4.1.1 – that guided participants through the material he needed to be covered. Golden also raises the concern that CEOs might forget the way things were before major strategic changes. To prevent this, he was careful not to involve CEOs whose organizations had recently encountered significant organizational change.

Whereas Ling's (1998) research is directed at definable job categories within a precise industry, this research is asking a question regarding a broad range of individuals. Senior managers exist in many types of organizations, and the term covers everything from the owner of a family business to a chief executive of a multi-national corporation.

#### **4.6 Participants and their Organizations**

Participants, as summarized in Table 4-2, ranged in age from early 30s to mid 60s. There were senior managers of both genders in this research, but that gender is not identified to ensure anonymity. All have at least one tertiary qualification and two are PhD qualified. Industries range from high to low tech, manufacturing to service, and local to global operations. Participants all met the following criteria:

- Senior manager (either CEO or invested with significant authority responsible for definable activity, with ability to make strategic decisions)
- Australian organization or multinational with relative autonomy
- Engaged in obligatory and externally imposed (OEI) changes – preferably relating to sustainability

<b>Name</b>	<b>Experience</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Industry</b>
Berti Fender	22 years	Trendply	Building products
Robyn Floyd	18 years	Convenco	Entertainment
Kim Warren	35 years	Alto Chemicals	Petrochemical
Ange Dunn	32 years	Silverwood	Research
Leslie Schmidt	24 years	Stanwick	Service Organization
Hillary Black	28 years	Glenwood	Public Service Organization

### **Participants**

Table 4-2

As mentioned earlier, participants and their organizations have been disguised to prevent their identity being determined. Furthermore androgynous first names have been selected to disguise gender.

Unlike Ling's (1998) research that was able to classify the target population clearly, managers who deal with sustainability issues well are not consolidated in an identifiable group. As such, the circumstances of finding participants varied greatly.

#### 4.6.1 Berti Fender – Trendply

Trendply was selected due to public proclamation made about its commitment to sustainability and that it was a multinational business operating in Australia. The author inquired about the possibility of interviewing the chief executive. A reply to the author's email suggested that he would not be in Australia for at least a year, but the Australian general manager, Berti Fender would be available for an interview. The author realized that Berti shared the enthusiasm for the chairman's sustainability initiative.

After five years, Berti views the Australian General Manager role at Trendply as the best job Berti has ever had, having come from what they considered to be the worst job of their career. With a clear sense of the sort of company Berti wanted to work for, they were immediately attracted to Trendply after being told what the company stood for. Berti explained, 'This is too good to be true. Just in case this is true, I have got to take this job to see if it is a reality or not'. Berti accepted 'the job with a proviso – if I get there and it is just words and not reality then maybe I will

not stay that long, but quite frankly I came in and, if anything, I was pleasantly surprised’.

Trendply was founded in the mid 1970s and has become the largest global manufacturer of a particular construction product. Its brand is well known and its products installed in many offices and factories throughout the world. The Australian operation imports raw materials, which are processed in Australia for domestic and export markets. Globally, the business is impressively profitable, but its share price has fluctuated due to unstable performance with respect to targets. Berti explains, ‘Even in the years we were getting hammered, it was only because we had set unrealistic expectations for the market; we were still very profitable, but those results were not what the market expected’. As the business is listed on the NASDAC, during ‘1998, 1999 and probably most of 2000 (along with) dot.com companies we really copped a hammering on our share price’.

#### 4.6.2 Robyn Floyd – Convenco

In this case, the participant was a second-tier manager, whose perspective the author was keen to include from direct involvement and leadership in dealing with recent NGO protests against globalisation activities (during this research, Robyn was promoted to general manager). In this case, Robyn enabled the continuation of operations in the face of highly disruptive and, in some cases, dangerous circumstances.

Robyn Floyd was selected based on how *normal* business operations were sustained throughout militant siege of their place of work. The author met Robyn in the Convenco tower above the very site that had been under siege only a few weeks earlier.

Having autonomy and a level of support invests Robyn with a capacity to get things done. Robyn is further complemented by ‘an organization that moves very quickly; it is easy to get executive support to make decisions’. From this it could be suggested that the Board of Convenco extends a message that it intends to enable subordinates to get on with development and implementation of their ideas. This

appears to produce a culture 'that moves very quickly; it is very easy to get hold of money to do things'.

Robyn's strong ethic about 'the way you work', which is attributed to 'more of their parents than anything else', supports the daily challenges and Robyn notes that some others did not have the same opportunities as Robyn did in this regard. This is revealed in a situation that requires Robyn to deal with waste disposal and general cleanliness. Within the Convenco facility there are both internal and external tenants, who are all contractually obliged to perform a degree of housekeeping. Foucault observes 'Obedience cannot be guaranteed ... if only because of the complexity and contingency of agency, as a nexus of calculation. Discretion need not entail dissent: it may be organizationally creative, productive, reproductive' (Clegg 1998, p. 41).

While Robyn was a special-project manager on the commencement of this research, Robyn was made general manager of contracted services before follow-up interviews took place. It was interesting the approach did not alter on promotion and in the subsequent months.

#### 4.6.3 Kim Warren – Alto Chemical

Alto Chemicals is a multinational chemical extractor, producer and distributor. Its brand is among the best-known consumer lines, and it is part of most communities in the world.

Kim Warren has worked with this multinational corporation for their entire career. Working in various parts of the world, Kim has held diverse positions that would be expected by a corporate executive, who had been groomed for the highest positions in the business. Kim's perspective was based on experience, preparation and exposure to the traditions on which Alto Chemical had been established.



#### 4.6.4 Leslie Schmidt – Stanwick

The Chief Executive of a Melbourne institution, which is commencing a commitment to sustainability, was keen to contribute to this research. In their inaugural address as Chief Executive of the Stanwick, Leslie had committed very publicly to pursuing a sustainable future. The author was promptly given an appointment at the next available opening and, within a few weeks, the author was in Leslie's office.

A rather abrupt and self-assured person was introduced as Leslie Schmidt and briskly ushered me to the office. On the way there, the author was particularly impressed to pass what appeared to be a problem-solving group engaged in dealing with an issue and writing ideas on a flip chart.

Stanwick is a large and diverse institution that is facing social upheaval due to changes to government funding. It also has a considerable environmental footprint due to the extensive real-estate holdings and volumes of material consumed.

#### 4.6.5 Hillary Black – Glenwood

The author was fortunate to hear Hillary Black's enthusiastic overview of how Glenwood had embraced sustainability and driven it through the company's public service organization and into the broader community. The author was briefly able to explain this research to them before Hillary departed.

Glenwood is undergoing dramatic changes to infrastructure, recreation facilities and buildings. It has embraced a holistic sustainability program, and has received awards for progress and involvement in the sustainability arena. Having achieved this level of success, Glenwood has turned some of its efforts to guide and help other similar organizations in their sustainability journey.

#### 4.6.6 Ange Dunn – Silverwood

The CEO of an environmentally focused research and development organization was most happy to participate. It was not until ten months later that we met at Silverwood offices.

Ange explained that a consortium of government, industry and universities (all sharing a common desire to develop sustainability-based operational enhancements to utility operation) funds their business. As such, the business was involved in managing a budget, as opposed to earning a profit. Yet, the continuation of funding was an ongoing economic reality that did indeed combine with environmental and social issues, as implied by the TBL concept. Ange nevertheless made a judgement on their understanding of this research and, as a result, provides a unique inside perspective to decisions made by several CEOs in the state of Victoria.

#### 4.7 Narrative Reconstruction Through Narratives of Experience

The positioning that will be observed in this research occurs as an effect of the discursive action offered and described by participants. Components of discourse include the position at the beginning of the conversation, the story-line that unfolds, and the speech acts that occur. In positioning self and others, these components interact to produce both tacit and intentional positioning, as was summarized in Table 3-1. Only intentional positioning is of interest to this research.

With examples of intentional positioning isolated, these will be determined as being *forced*, *deliberate* or *deliberative* positioning. *Forced* positioning is defined as a result of established interest, ideology, information and institutional need. *Deliberate* positioning occurs with one-sided deliberate action. *Deliberative* – as opposed to *deliberate* – positioning is distinguished by being a function of Schwab's process of deliberation, in which a consensus is achieved through a collaborative achievement. In short, *forced* positioning is the way things are as a result of the societal situation, whereas *deliberate* and *deliberative* positioning take

place with deliberate attempts to exercise power (deliberately) or achieve parity (deliberatively).

Observation of positioning was enabled through collection of narrative data that represented the variety of discursive action. As used in this research, narrative study is a tradition largely derived from the education discipline. From this discipline, the author was able to draw on an approach of narrative reconstruction to determine personal practical knowledge. To enable narrative reconstruction, interview data were required.

During interviews, participants were invited to talk about their experiences with sustainability through an interview process that was covered in Section 4.4. This process resulted in rich textual data in the form of narratives, story telling, biographic narratives regarding others, autobiography, and any documents they may have been offered during interviews. Particular attention was paid to any such artefacts in light of Vygotsky's tools referred to in Section 3.6. An example of such a piece is presented in Appendix A.

Once selected, effort was made to triangulate, or qualify participants' comments through published documents and, in some cases, anecdotal comments by members of their organizations. As Golden (1992) suggests that 'past facts or behaviours' can be expected to be more verifiable than 'past beliefs and intentions', the author has focused his interest on specific instances, and how participants behaved and felt about what happened.

#### 4.7.1 Narratives of Experience

Data collected is in the form of narratives of experience; participants spoke about their experience with sustainability issues. These narratives were *lived*, being participant's context specific descriptions about what they had *experienced* or been through. Davies and Harré (1990) explain how harnessing such lived narratives provides a clear insight into how people make sense of their lives about their historically and linguistically constructed selves by a continuous process of telling and retelling stories. People live stories through 'narratives or experience'

(Clandinin and Connelly 1988) and reaffirm the experience. Clandinin and Connelly say (p. 79) 'the study of narratives ... is ... a study of the individual in context'. They repeat and modify anecdotes about themselves in ways that put the past into more favourable terms and craft *raison d'être* for their future.

The author has limited the scope of this research to situations previous to and at the time of interviews. To develop lived narratives of the present and past, the author drew on Connelly and Clandinin (1988, p. 44-54) to limit his research to the interviewing of participants and story telling. Once conducted, each interview has been transcribed and subject to analysis, from which case studies (Chapter 5) and vignettes (Chapter 6) have been prepared to enable findings to be presented (Yin 1994, Eisenhardt 1989, and Dyer and Wilkins 1991).

To arrive at sufficiently rich detail from interviews, the questions asked were open-ended, personal and concrete. It was necessary to engage with others in a way to collect meaningful information relevant to the situation under investigation.

Learning about individual senior managers and their experiences dealing with sustainability issues was done through these narratives of experience. The place of positioning theory was to make determinate meaning in the narrative based dialogical accounts.

#### 4.7.2 The Phenomenon is the Positioning

The senior managers interviewed were telling selected stories about their experience with sustainability issues. The stories were guided through the interview-questioning process, through the participants' choices of appropriate stories, and from the analysis and reporting in the writing of the thesis. From these, instances of positioning were identified.

Participants explained how they dealt with sustainability issues and in doing so through their voice they revealed how – with variation of agency – they engaged in positioning of themselves and others. Each participant presented different issues for discussion and demonstrated different approaches to dealing with those issues.

With interview transcripts – narratives of experience – of participants’ recollection of deliberating about sustainability, a variety of perspectives were provided for further analysis. Rather than the actual experiences of the person under observation, the focus of the narrative was defined by the research question *How do senior managers deal with sustainability issues?* As borrowed from the principles of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), the direction of the research was guided by the unexpected and interesting stories that were revealed. As such, interviews with participants and subsequent follow-up interviews included elements of what was uncovered. These resulted in expanded understanding of the positioning that took place.

#### 4.7.3 Structuring Narratives Through Contextual Representative Metaphors

In an effort to consolidate the enormous quantity of data collected during interviews, Connelly and Clandinin (1988, p. 59-60) suggest the development of a particular language to enable the essential elements of knowledge to emerge. Davies and Harré (1990, p. 52-3) explain that positioning of an unfolding narrative is needed for people to interact; it is through such positioning that positions are constituted upon actors. Metaphors are assigned to describe the positioning that occurs. They go on to suggest that, through altering the discourse, actors can alter the positions that are construed upon them. This repositioning can be marked in the discourse and analysed at the junction of the speaker’s intentions and organisational necessity.

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) put forth that the metaphor, once arrived at for understanding ‘a way of action’, should become part of that practice. Hence, metaphors become representational descriptors of doing things, for example dealing with sustainability issues. Symbolic language is harnessed to develop the particular language.

In this thesis, metaphor had a paramount place in providing that symbolic description, for from these metaphors positions followed. Further derivation resulted in the emergence of personal practical knowledge of the senior managers regarding their dealings with sustainability issues.

#### 4.7.4 Program for Narrative Reconstructions

To collect narratives of experience in which positioning could be marked, it was necessary to manage and control each interview so that participants would contribute appropriate data. This was done by preparing open-ended questions, as listed in Sub-Section 4.3.1, and conducting interviews that permitted each participant to expand on each situation.

Through asking them to provide details and expand about how situations made them feel, rich textual data was collected. In that data were examples of how senior managers engaged in positioning themselves and others, as well as how others positioned them.

Reducing the data through representational metaphors produced a concise picture of each participant that could be offered for further discussion. These metaphors also provided the basis for case study preparation and subsequently to derive vignettes.

In summary of the preceding Sub-Sections, these steps were planned to achieve narrative reconstructions.

1. Interviews were conducted to capture a memorable event when the manager dealt with a sustainability issue.
2. Initial interpretation of transcript in which these factors became guides for the reconstruction of narratives in the form of case studies:
  - Manager's voice as a hint for core categories
  - Evidence of trust and collaboration
  - Clash of manager's priorities
3. A second interview to judge discursive positioning metaphors.
4. Consideration of reaction of managers.
5. Preparation of Interpretation

#### 4.8 Bringing Metaphors into View in Case Studies

Coding procedures resulted in categories being developed. From these categories came meaningful ideas through identifying properties and determining dimensions (Strauss and Corbin 1990). This enabled the author to deal with his participant's stories within stories (Sheridan 1992, pp. 87-8) that had been previously experienced.

Sheridan (1992, p. 83-5), who has also been influenced by Foucault (1972), challenges readers to become 'an active participant and interpreter of the text' and goes on to show how the understanding derived from this learning alters one's actions and affects subordinates 'own making of meaning'.

'Telling what we experience ... about our (working) lives ... in active language within a narrative can make room for language that is both personal and evocative. A text that itself acts out that telling in personal language makes possible a connection between persons as individuals and brings readers closer to an experience of the other's experience.' Sheridan (1992, p. 88)

Reflecting on the author's interpretations required him to present his ideas to participants and others in such a way that they were able to understand and reflect. This required the author's expressions to include contextual, yet generic language. Clearly defined and simple metaphors finally emerge from the richness of data, through qualitative descriptions.

Bringing the metaphors into both a single view and one that is holistic was accomplished. Each metaphor presents a personal construct of the management of sustainability and the TBL observed in this research. When consolidated, they provided a model that represented how senior managers deal with sustainability issues, while each voice remained distinct. To be successful, metaphors represented individuals and the collective of participants. The individual voices could be heard as they scrutinized the powerful in their deliberation about sustainability issues. Finally, each participant's voice was identified through metaphors, positioned and then linked, in a holistic way, via the conceptual framework established in Chapter 3.

#### **4.9 Vignettes – Extrapolation of Memorable Experience**

Urquhart (2001) and Barter and Reynold (1999) argue that vignettes can be useful in presenting a mass of textual information or a data analysis. A vignette is a writing device that could be described as a slice of life. It is not a complete story, nor is it a scene; it does not have a beginning, middle and end. Its purpose is not to provide a narrative, but to offer a glimpse of an essential element out of that narrative for consideration during research. The vignette catches and freezes a moment in space and time that expresses a reality that needs to be discussed. Urquhart shows that vignettes can be used iteratively to develop ideas and arrive at an agreed understanding of the situation being studied.

Sheridan (1992, p. 88) spoke of vignettes or ‘arranging snippets of stories to illustrate themes’. Vignettes emerged out of representational metaphors and, as in Ling’s (1998) research, these were discussed with participants before final versions were completed.

#### **4.10 Conclusions**

In this Chapter, the author has presented the method used to collect, structure and analyse data. Within the positioning framework established in Chapter 3, a program for narrative analysis of interview data has been developed. This includes the representation of that data in case studies and vignettes. The next Chapter presents case studies, and that following will present vignettes.



## Chapter V

### INTERVIEW DATA COLLECTED

#### 5.1 Introduction

In this research interviews were conducted with six senior managers. The data from these interviews about critical incidents in the management of sustainability issues are represented here as narrative reconstructions in case study form. In the discussions metaphors used by the managers to describe their own positioning practices emerge in their recollections of social episodes where sustainability issues had been discussed. These metaphors were central to each reconstruction and portrayal.

Participants in this study were selected, because they were seen to be dealing effectively with OEI issues. Some had been dealing with sustainability for some time, and others were about to initiate increased receptiveness to and passion for sustainability. Each participant has had successful and full careers to prepare for their current role. Continuing as strong and involved leaders in their businesses, they are perceived to have a high degree of interaction with subordinates. Generally the data in these cases show how they socially construct their 'roles' in a way that illustrates Bruner's (1990) notion that culture and experience shapes thought.

Each case is a construction that has been achieved through identifying a

representational metaphor (Wagner, 1996, p. 96-105), in order to derive a common adopted symbolic language about each participant as an individual and, later, in Chapter 7 collectively. This is viewed as congruent to Strauss and Corbin's (1990) advice initially to derive concepts from data and then to consolidate concepts into categories. Bono (1998) argues that metaphors are social, cognitive, and discursive tools for engaging nature and making knowledge, and it is in this light that they are employed here. Each case is built around a metaphor in which were located social representations of each senior manager. In Chapter 6, these metaphors will be further refined through vignettes and then, in Chapter 7, consolidated into findings for discussion, as guided by the conceptual model shown in Figure 4-1.

## **5.2 Berti Fender - Educator**

The Trendply chairman, who had gone through a personal transformation, defined sustainability as obligatory. After having built Trendply to be one of the largest global building-products businesses, the chairman realized that milestone had been achieved at the cost of environmental and social resources. With a devout zeal, the chairman adopted sustainability, and drove it throughout the business. In the Australian context, sustainability was not just obligatory; the chairman externally imposed it, and appointed Berti Fender as Australian chief executive to see it implemented.

*The chairman and founder of our company had his epiphany, as he calls it, where he really took on board the fact that we needed to fundamentally change the business. That we couldn't keep on doing what we were doing – pursuing the take make, and waste type processes.*

Having previously managed several businesses that had successfully dealt with OEI issues, Berti Fender was well prepared to lead the challenging corporate-wide sustainability initiative throughout the Australian division of the company. Berti felt momentum within Trendply from not just the chairman's 'epiphany', but also from the general attitude towards getting things done in the business. When approached to take the role of Australian general manager, Berti was sceptical that the business was as good as it had been made out to be. It could be said that Berti's previous experience led Berti to be positioned as sceptical that any organization

could care about environmental and social issues. Berti, however, was prepared to be shown that this scepticism was unfounded. In accepting that such an alternate view may be possible, Berti was affected by forced re-positioning of the chairman and the existing social order to demonstrate that Berti could rely on the new situation.

*I said, 'Look this is too good to be true'. I said, 'Are you seriously telling me that this is what the company is trying to be' and he said, 'Absolutely', and I said, 'Just in case this is true, I have got to take this job and see if it is reality or not'. But to be fair, I came in with a bit of scepticism, because I thought well particularly having had disappointment with a previous role, I said 'OK I will take the job with a proviso – if I get there and it is just words and not reality then maybe I will not stay that long', but quite frankly I came in and, if anything, I was pleasantly surprised.*

Policy had been set that would see Trendply initially becoming sustainable and eventually restorative. Globally, the chairman had initiated the sustainability approach; but within the Australian context, Berti had full responsibility for its implementation. Berti appreciated the momentum created by the chairman's initiative and accepted the challenge presented to him.

*A lot of the early progress had been top down, driven by the chairman. The only way you can become sustainable and really get the rate of improvement that you need is getting the people at the working levels right across the business connected to what it is you are trying to do and committed to it.*

Connectedness is achieved by Berti's harnessing of existing communications approaches that deploy information throughout the company. Through sending information all over the business about sustainability, as well as a reassuring message, Berti was able to raise awareness and confidence of Trendply staff. In doing so, Berti deliberately positioned the staff as part of the company's sustainability movement. This enabled the sustainability agenda to be imposed.

*That has really resulted in significant improvement, because we got the people at the right levels involved. The chairman initiated a process at the beginning of 2000 that was called our sustainability cascading process, and that started the way. The chairman sat down with all the people that reported directly to him and they did a series of questions that were around 'What does sustainability mean to you?' 'What values are important?' 'How much profit is enough?' 'What are the big issues for the world in terms of the environment – what should a company's role be in responding to those issues?' etc, etc. So it was more of a dialogue process, that wasn't saying 'This is sustainability,*

*learn it', but they had this dialogue 'What is sustainability?' 'What does it mean to you?' etc, etc. So, that process was filtered right the way down through the organization. So, that throughout the course of 2000 every one of our 7,000 associates – or 8,000 associates – across the business would have participated in one of those sustainability sessions and dialogues. So, a lot of information was gathered from that. And, I think there was 340 something meetings around the world and they have collated all the information from that; and in fact only recently the chairman sent a letter around summarizing the results from all of those meetings; and there is another process that we are about to go through that is sustainability cascading round 2 throughout 2000 to be completed by December 2001. And that is all about raising people's consciousness and getting that sustainability ethic embedded in the business and really getting that connection.*

Berti harnessed the chairman's initiative and leveraged off the understanding and consciousness created by corporate communications. The chairman's initiative also positioned Berti. Initially, Berti went through a self-learning or repositioning process to understand the issues and conform to the chairman's expectations, and embraced the training and selling functions that were incorporated in the corporate communications. Berti presented sustainability ideas to Trendply employees as well as customers of the company. There was no resistance to Berti's self- and other-positioning, which appeared to be due to the social order in the wider community. The author asked Berti about selling the new company image or vision of sustainability to customers.

*It happens to a fair degree. One of our documents (lists) all the different bodies and groups that we are involved in. The vision also talks about being restorative, we are not just looking at being sustainable ourselves, but through that education process with like-minded people.*

Berti took on positions that were inherent in the social order implied by the chairman and reinforced by various company documents. The wider community or market appears to have been previously positioned to be sympathetic towards sustainability issues. His natural inclination towards sustainability ideals is reinforced by forced positioning through the social order a reconceptualisation of the customer as consumer without social conscience. This enabled Berti to pursue and promote this sustainability message with confidence.

*We have plenty of conversations with them. I will be presenting a talk in couple of weeks time to the Australian property council group, where a number of facility managers will be in the room, and will be talking about our sustainability. That is what we have been asked to talk about.*

That Berti had been asked to talk about sustainability to his customers could be seen as an indication that Berti's deliberate self-positioning as an effective manager of sustainability has been accepted. Furthermore, that customers had sought Berti to engage in discussions suggests that there is an opportunity to arrive at consensus agreements. However, economic realities could be seen to have undermined this positioning apparently taken on by some customers. Instead, other forces led to alternate positioning to be available to customers; positioning that was beneficial to customers, but not Berti. Rather than deliberative positioning being achieved, Berti was deliberately positioned by customers or perhaps force-positioned by the situation.

*It is frustrating, because we have a lot of conversations where people say that's great and they really enjoy the conversation and its really good that you guys are doing this stuff, keep it up, but a week later someone in their organization will need to make a purchasing decision and they will go purely on price and will not recognise what is the true cost of that product. Have you thought of what is going to happen in six or seven years time when you come to refurbish – or replace – or what have you. Unfortunately you have a number of our competitors I would not exactly call fair. We have a lot of people in the market-place who are out there claiming that their product is on par with our product and theirs is environmentally friendly, you know a lot of those claims are absolute garbage, but I was talking yesterday with our (material) supplier that we need to go back to a much more technical sell, putting some comparative analysis in front of a lot of our clients. Well, the problem is that a lot of the people who are making the purchasing decisions are poorly educated – when I say poorly educated, they do not really understand (our product) from a technical perspective – from a sustainability perspective. The people often selling it to them are often very aggressive – people with an aggressive sell – and you put those two combinations together and we are often just not getting the business because of a combination of ill-informed client buying from an aggressive sales person.*

Based on this recent experience in the industry, Berti attributed third-order positions to both customers and competitors. Berti perceives that customers saw themselves as having made good decisions, and not being aware of the larger purchase price and ongoing service costs. Competitors were perceived as having taken advantage of their poorly positioned customers. In that light, it appeared that customers were reluctant to take into account the whole life cost, and that competitors were willing to manipulate situations to their advantage. In an attempt to help these stakeholders realize the benefits of joining Trendply in their sustainability initiatives, Berti engaged in an education process to help customers assume more appropriate deliberate repositioning. This is an attempt at deliberative

positioning between Berti and customers.

*A number of facility managers will be in the room, and will be talking about our sustainability position. We had the chairman out last year; we had a breakfast with about 200 people in Melbourne here: all of our key business contacts here. We are always out doing the networking. I think we are – the chairman talks about boxing above our weight – for a company our size we have got this image and reputation that is incongruent to the true size of the company. I think that is because we are quite active in trying to send the message out and trying to communicate that to our clients. We just have to get the link between that industry reputation and networking, and actually securing clients. The idea eventually will be to have manufacturing, distribution, installation and collection.*

Various communications were used by Berti to reposition customers as knowledgeable partners in the supply chain of Trendply services. Education was critical in this process – Trendply had recently introduced a life-cycle service extension to their products. At the core of this service was environmental stewardship. If customers were not aware of the environmental and total cycle cost benefits offered by Trendply, then they were not capable of selecting the best value. Another outcome of this education was that the less sustainable products offered by some competitors have been shown to be less value through a third order positioning. Berti was able to position culpable competitors as such and thereby position Trendply people in general as offering a trustworthier alternative.

Berti and the chairman also conducted education in sustainability issues for the wider community. For example, a concerted effort focused on the shareholder community-led Trendply's sustainability initiatives to be viewed more favourably.

*There is certainly a growing commitment, but there still needs to be further commitment. People get further down the education and connection process, but I think that is where we are headed. The share price has come back again, because (a) we have started to see some improved results and (b) a couple of the share analysts who did not understand what the chairman has been going on about for couple of years now are starting to. There are only about four analysts that look at our company, as I mentioned before, and I think there are one or two of them that are now saying 'Oh hang on. OK. There might be something to this (sustainability) maybe we have to understand what this guy was saying – where he was trying to take the company – but maybe he is just ahead of the game and he does understand it and this is the way after all'. I think as this recognition is starting to become evident, the share price will have more favourable treatment.*

Berti and the chairman have conducted a concerted effort to reposition analysts as wanting to be supportive about Trendply's commitment to sustainability. With that education of the wider community, Trendply's commitment to sustainability was attributed a legitimacy. Dossiers were created that suggested the building industry had an obligation to deal with sustainability. These were put into the investment community and accepted. Having been invited to speak at trade shows and publishing books and reports about sustainability established the dossiers needed to legitimize Trendply's interest in sustainability and their decision to commit whole-heartedly to it.

The actions of competitors and economic imperatives provided considerable opposition to Berti in the pursuit of positioning of customers. In some ways, direct communication with customers was ineffective. Instead, Berti engaged in constant restatement and refinement of the value of the idea of sustainability and what the idea meant in practice to all parties deliberately positioned as insiders in the campaign.

*I gave a little talk to the Natural Step conference the other day. You know we certainly talk about sustainability, but I guess I take a somewhat practical commonsense approach to the whole thing. That's one of the comments I made at the talk that I gave the other day; sustainability – that's what we call it now – and call it sustainability or TBL or whatever, and at the end of the day it is just common sense. Now I mean does it make sense that I reduce my material to reduce cost to improve margin to improve profit. Does it make sense that I try to be socially sustainable, by making sure that people who turn up for work stay motivated, connected to what it is that we are doing, feel part of the bigger purpose etc, etc? Does it make sense that (if I reduce waste and improve social conditions) I actually get a better financial result? One of the impediments that we have with the whole sustainability thing is people (not) understanding what it is, connecting to it, feeling a part of it, committed to it, etc. So, it is very much an education and connection-type thing. I think one of the barriers is that people think it is something complex, they think it is something difficult, and there are all these terms over the past couple of decades – we have had quality and we have had TQM, and we have had all this stuff, and it is now TBL and sustainability. You know it is just all these different terms and definitions that are imposed on people. One of the ways in which I encourage people is 'Don't be discouraged by the terminology; it is actually really common-sense stuff; it is not really complex, it is actually quite simple' and I certainly try to explain it to people in those terms.*

The message communicated was that sustainability was a natural next step or development making everyone happier. Berti was decidedly not moralistic, instead reassuring and, rather than risking consensus, benignly indicating that

people had the opportunity rather than responsibility to accept that sustainability was the right way to proceed.

Central to Berti's involvement with sustainability is education. Berti has taken steps to engage in self-education and demonstrate commitment to educate all those stakeholders whose support was critical to acceptance of sustainability. Their efforts have enabled the business to be supported by the investment community and to customers having an understanding of the benefits of using Trendply solutions. This case study reveals that Berti engages in both deliberate and deliberative positioning. While Berti was affected by forced positioning, it was deliberate positioning that Berti harnessed to drive sustainability ideals through the business and into the business community. However, deliberative positioning was difficult to achieve due to the tactics of competitors. Uncertainty of how customers would react to lower prices and short-term pressures appeared to prevent consensus from being achieved with staff or shareholders.

### **5.3 Robin Floyd – Coach**

Robyn Floyd moved to Convenco prior to the initial interview, having previously worked in the finance industry. Convenco is a prominent convention centre near the Melbourne Central Business District. Due to its size and the activities conducted within its facilities, Convenco is constantly in the public eye and viewed with scrutiny.

*Whatever we do, we draw attention to ourselves. The community holds us to very high standards in the way we conduct our business. There is a huge social footprint by virtue of the size of this complex.*

This situation personally positions Robyn. While it is a service industry, there are sustainability issues that confront Robyn. These include waste disposal, compliance with internal and external standards, and regulating the compliance of external tenants with those standards, and behaviour of patrons in the vicinity of the facility.



While Berti approached sustainability issues in a facilitating role, Robyn was more heroic. Robyn's narrative is of a strong individual with a powerful instinct to care for staff and pursue sustainability objectives as a social responsibility of the business. Berti accepted the forced positioning by the chairman, while Robyn self-presents as a person challenging the limitations to the role assigned and pressing executive management for support.

Board-level support and a high degree of autonomy invests Robyn with a capacity to get things done. Robyn is further complemented by an organization that moves very quickly to provide executive support to make decisions. Robyn explained that the Board at Convenco transmits a message that it intends to enable subordinates to get on with development and implementation of its ideas.

Robyn's part in preparing for and working with sustainability issues – one of which was the constraint of a militant siege of the Convenco facility – led the author to include them in his research. This disruption occurred when an international trade meeting was held at Convenco and thousands of activists converged on the site. The author met Robyn in the Convenco offices above the very site that had been under siege only a few weeks earlier.

At the beginning of the interview the author asked Robyn to relate a memorable experience dealing with sustainability issues. This began a discussion about dealing with a recent high-profile meeting of global business leaders that had attracted considerable attention of a range of activists. Robyn's focus was largely on their duty to subordinates and how it was necessary to cope with their reaction to *the event*.

*We required staff to come to work to do the job, but of course they were aware that there would be protestor activity. So, they had to come to work in a threatened work-place. What we did (to cope with that situation) was communicate. We told them that there had been a lot of planning that was going into place with their welfare in mind. We had security (and) radio control with the control room throughout the duration. It was a matter of reassuring them that all this planning had gone into place. We had a number of people who were actually fainting with stress-related conditions. So, they were being counselled and reassured on the spot.*

Robyn realised that staff would be under stress during the event and that this would be magnified through uncertainty. Robyn's concern for positioning others led to the staff being able to deal with the event. Robyn was aware of what people would go along with and Robyn's first-order positioning of others reflects this. Prior to the event Robyn took steps to reassure staff about planning that had been undertaken and then reassured them about the measures that had been taken to ensure their safety and security. During the implementation, staff were monitored and offered counselling in situations where they were not being sheltered from the events that had taken place up to that time. People were led to believe that they would be supported and, when they confronted difficult situations, they received the support they had been promised.

With an understanding that the interest of staff had been taken care of, the focus of the interview turned to Robyn's personal situation. The author asked Robyn what feelings were invoked personally, which provided further understanding.

*You come to your place of work and you have people passing out around you. You have swarms of protestors making their way down to your place of work. It is a stressful situation. Because you are management, you have to rise above that one level. They expect more from you. You have the exact same reactions, but I guess it is a higher degree of self-control you have to exercise, because they are looking for leadership and for reassurance.*

Robyn found strength in taking on leadership responsibility. In doing so, Robyn assumed a position whereby interest in staff's welfare was enough to preoccupy and remove the distraction of personal danger. Robyn realized – especially in critical situations – which people needed to feel someone was taking care of their interests; they were being counselled and reassured *in situ*. In accepting responsibility to take care for staff's interests, Robyn was positioning them as being dependent on their ability to ensure a safe and stable environment for them to go about their work. The Author asked again about Robyn's concern for personal safety.

*There is no question that it (my concern for my personal safety) was very high leading up to (the event), because there was a period of uncertainty. There was expectation, but you had no idea until you actually arrived on day one. So, very high anxiety to begin for all staff concerned. As we got in and the confrontation, which was expected, did occur, it then started to reduce. Why? Because you were so focused on maintaining the operation. So, it (anxiety) peaked and then it started to slide away. You got absorbed. So, it became a*

*whole lot more manageable. The planning has gone in beforehand, now it is all about execution. It is the execution of contingency – I cannot do that, so therefore I have to do this. Staff welfare was just part of it. There were lots of visits from senior management to ensure that there were familiar faces (for staff to see).*

At a later stage Robyn likened the operation to a submarine, in which people live ‘*in-situ*’ and go on and off duty around the clock. Robyn even used the term ‘*hot bunk*’ to describe how people woke their successor at the end of shifts; this suggests an operation of military precision. There was a realization that senior managers had a leadership responsibility to keep people informed – to educate. Having planned and prepared, Robyn was confident and in control. The preparation had established a system that impacted on Robyn and the staff. Robyn ensured that familiar management people were seen frequently to reassure staff. Managers had adopted positions of responsibility and positioned their staff as beneficiaries of their reassurance. While this provided visual evidence that staff welfare was being dealt with appropriately, there was another benefit. When the author asked about staff members who sympathized with the protesters, Robyn explained how management’s presence appeared to eliminate this tendency.

*We have no doubt that when you have issues like globalisation or any other controversial political issue, there will be within our own staff ranks certainly a bipartisan view; some people in favour and some not.*

The author asked Robyn whether or not there were tensions related to that bipartisanism.

*There was no evidence of that. There could well have been. Once people were here (they knew they had to do their jobs). From our perspective, there was nothing we could do about what was external. So, the important thing was to get everyone engaged in delivering excellent customer service under extraordinary conditions.*

Robyn depended greatly on the professionalism of staff. Through harnessing the skills and competence of staff, Robyn was able to keep people focused on their work and distract staff from the commotion occurring on the site. This raised the issue of being confident in staff skill, competence and capability of dealing with stress. The author asked Robyn whether or not this was a function of the sort of people who do hospitality work.

*Absolutely. When we recruit we look for a certain type of person. It is the type of person we go after; you believe in customer service or you don't. So, when we were faced with the event, the expectation was that the staff would perform, because they are company staff. And they did.*

The sort of person Robyn employed was capable of delivering the service. The term ‘*a certain type of person*’ implies someone whose performance can be defined in what could be described as a Foucauldian dossier – a curriculum vitae. A further Foucauldian notion is that this ‘*certain type of person*’ is legitimized by the gaze of Convenco and any other sort of person de-legitimized. To clarify this, the author suggested that those who did not have that degree of professionalism would not be in the hospitality industry. Robyn thought about this, but disagreed.

*I think they (people with less professionalism) could be in the (hospitality) industry, but certainly not here. The expectations are that much higher.*

Robyn perceived that all staff members assumed positions of being highly professional, but suggested a caveat. Staff members were expected to be skilled and capable of doing their jobs, but they could not be expected to sustain that level of service without standards set and regulated by management. The idea of coaching first became apparent here. Robyn acknowledged that the expression ‘*expectations are that much higher*’ refers to those standards. Robyn had to define those standards through first understanding various needs and obligations of the organization. For instance, the need to prevent branded waste from surfacing inside or outside the facility was something that Robyn identified as essential. Then, it was necessary to determine the most appropriate things to be done and to establish standards that could be enforced.

*More and more because of the scale of this business, we have to be focused on issues that are intangible or other than financial, if you like. A very good example is the amount of waste we generate. If all that waste (is) going to land fill then we become very visible. In other words, we have an example that we have to set. So, what have we done? Well, we have engaged specialists in what I call integrated waste management, which is handling from the point of generation to the point of disposal. We are paying a premium for expertise, which I am happy to pay, because now I am dealing with specialists in the area of waste management.*

Here Robyn assumes a position of setting an example to be followed throughout the community. Robyn coached people to create opportunities to improve. This

example is defined by the ability to ensure that waste is removed and disposed of to a certain standard. While Robyn does not have the personal expertise to determine what that standard should be, understanding was acquired through external consultants who specialize in the area. Robyn related a similar situation regarding the issue of access for disabled people.

*If you are dealing with disabled people – again it goes back to social responsibility. So, you need to make provision at law – disabled access and that sort of thing – but how do you take that next step? I know how you do it. You set up (disability) management team, on which I sit, and then you have a consultant who is disabled, to provide input to the (business) about how the property needs to change to continue to meet the needs of disabled patrons.*

Again, Robyn harnessed a consultant from whom knowledge and application was transferred and authority was derived. At a subsequent interview with the researcher, they discussed how Robyn ‘pulls information out of people’ and gains knowledge that is harnessed as a sort of power. With this authority, Robyn was able to assume a position that enabled education and selling of appropriate approaches. In both the waste management and disability access situations, Robyn realised the vulnerable nature of the organization and the need to appear to behave in an exemplary manner. This satisfied public expectation.

Robyn acknowledged that Convento was largely about people providing services to other people; services to fellow employees, contractors and the public. Furthermore, these services had to be performed to the highest standards.

*When you think about most of my areas of responsibilities and if you look at a pie chart of costs to run them, labour (is about) 98 per cent. What it basically means is that if you are going to achieve specific business objects, it is about leveraging the labour component. How do you get people to do things (that they wouldn't normally want to do) in this sort of environment 24 hours a day, seven days a week?*

While ‘leveraging the labour component’ may imply a notion of forcefulness, Robyn engaged in deliberative positioning through connection with people. When the author suggested that people might care about higher standards in their own home more than they would at work, Robyn expanded.

*So, we spend a lot of time focusing on people issues: which goes to their welfare, the environment in which they work, (and) morale. We have to do things like involvement in the decision making process – all the standard stuff we have to do – if we do not do it, we do not get the leverage on the labour ad we do not deliver on our business plan.*

Having noticed Robyn's adoption of a wide variety of progressive management approaches the author asked 'Why do you have this perspective that allows you to deal with these things relatively well?' Robyn discussed other related approaches, and then reflected on personal experience of taking on leadership.

*At a very early formative stage in my career I was able to connect with people that was fundamental to being able to deliver, but I did not have the resources or could not make the decisions or whatever. I think (my ability to perceive people's needs) was more of my parents than anything else. I had the benefits of a very very good childhood with responsible parents. That basically built values that lasted a lifetime, always providing guidance (about) not only professional but personal situations. They (those who take advantage of situations or don't respect resources) did not have the same opportunities as I did. I think it begins very very early on in life.*

At a subsequent interview, the author and Robyn discussed the difference between sending out emails to people and getting in front of them to lead them; 'What have I done to build a bridge from where they are to this leadership model?' Robyn sensed an obligation to help people to understand situations, with an objective of enabling people to do their work. When the author asked if being unable to access resources frustrated these people, Robyn agreed and explained further.

*As I have gone on, particularly in the situation I find myself in now, I am very aware of this (the inability of staff to get all the resources they need on their own). I rely on the doer. I am not the doer. So, therefore I have to redefine what my role actually is. What I actually do is I allocate resources. It is about selecting the right people and then allocating resources. I do not have to micro-manage, because I have the experts in each one of those areas. That frees me then to focus on my real job, which comes back to setting the goals in the right directions for the right projects.*

Being a manager for Robyn meant allocating people and resources to activities and providing clear rules or instructions. However, the right people were essential for that task.

*I have very very stringent recruitment criteria. I like to recruit against business objectives. I do not recruit according to a recipe or model.*

*Sometimes I come up against HR practitioners that may not understand the drivers in my business. At the end of the day I go in and fight for my right to appoint someone that, if I am responsible for, I have to be comfortable with.*

The author asked Robyn to expand on that comment and whether or not the human resources (HR) practitioners say ‘*If you are going to accept responsibility, then we will watch what happens*’. Robyn replied, and continued.

*Ultimately, yes. Ultimately they will let me go, because it has got to be the decision of the business. It always sounds disrespectful – I do not mean to be – they have a role and they perform that well and they support me.*

At a subsequent interview, Robyn explained that there was tension created with HR practitioners in this episode. Robyn explained this in terms of varying degrees of frustration.

*I am prepared to be frustrated up to a certain point, but beyond that point I am not prepared to be frustrated. It becomes an issue of diminishing returns. That is the point that I go to executive management and say ‘Hey guys this is just not working’. We continue to fight against the inertia of ‘I know how to do it this way’. We have got to overcome that inertia.*

This tension was necessary to change the rules being imposed on Robyn. In this way, Robyn was engaging in second-order positioning to alter the authority of the HR practitioners over the business and to increase the autonomy regarding recruitment activities within the business. Robyn took this flexibility beyond hiring, and imposed personal insight and skills to modify work conditions.

*We always look for ways we can go above and beyond. In the car park, I receive compliments (that) are basically all directed to one guy that makes people feel special every time they arrive. That moment of truth is at the car park booth before they even set foot in the complex. This guy makes them feel really special. So what we have done then is made him a roving ambassador. We put him in a special ambassador’s uniform; we are going to get him out there flashing his cheesy grin. It is above and beyond what you would expect in a car park. This is purely customer service, welcoming them on arrival; making them feel good.*

By putting the ‘ambassador’ into a new uniform, Robyn enables that person to assume a position of official receptionist. The ‘ambassador’ already was repositioning himself from simply a collector of money to a new persona. Rather than require the ‘ambassador’ to conform to his assigned role, Robyn collaborated

to enable the ‘ambassador’ to be a legitimate role through deliberative repositioning; Robyn provided a role for that person to grow into. At the same time, that action causes those who arrive to assume positions of patrons. The norm of the organization is made clear ‘*You come to Convenco to be entertained. So, prepare yourself.*’ When they arrive at Convenco, staff and contractors all adopt positions based on customer service. This is accomplished through training in and enforcement of procedures and performance standards.

*We have a number of extensive training programs in each of our areas that go above and beyond the technical. That is, it is about the way the service is delivered. I spend a lot of my time thinking about – in this complex – ‘Why do people do things the way they do?’ We have external tenants (who) have to comply with all our policies and procedures. For whatever reasons, certain things do not happen as they should. (Rather than) slap the tenants and say ‘That is bad’, my argument is why do people not do what they are supposed to do? Is it convenience? Cost? Because human nature is to try to find a short cut. So, my argument is why can I not take my service (and) push the boundaries of my service to the point where, if it is something that I can solve, and that I can take responsibility for and deliver them a service that frees them of that obligation, and (if) it is costly to me, then all I do is impute that into a rent over time. Then I am in complete control. They can focus on the business of making money.*

Robyn resolved tardy compliance with procedures by assuming a position that enabled the exertion of authority and the imposition of a solution. Rather than threatening or fining disobedient tenants, Robyn preferred to offer a solution, but this could only be done from a strong point. Strength was found in understanding the situation better than the tenant and coming to negotiations with a prepared solution.

*We had to identify what the issue was and who the perpetrator was. We approached and said ‘We have a non compliance issue here which is a serious concern to us’. Unless we are prepared to enforce breach, we do not have anything other than saying ‘Hey guys please comply’. You do not get a lot of leverage. What I would rather do is spin it around and say ‘Here is what I would like to do for you; there is a cost attached, but we can take away all the pain associated with that activity’. We are offering a ready-made solution.*

Having previously taken time to understand the situation and devise a solution, Robyn has assumed a position of a helpful associate and engages in coaching and selling. Throughout Robyn’s approach there is a common theme of achieving understanding, education and enforcement of performance criteria. Having learned about a situation, Robyn is determined and strives to achieve a co-operative



arrangement with others when dealing with sustainability issues. Robyn's determination and co-operative approach is summed up in this reaction to receiving performance that is less than expected.

*It makes me feel that I have more work to do, because I accept personal responsibility.*

That responsibility is reflected in Robyn's predominating concern for positioning of others. This occurred through a balance between forced, deliberate and deliberative positioning. Being dissatisfied with role limitations, Robyn took steps to redefine it. Robyn Floyd was an upper middle manager during the initial interview, but midway through the research Robyn was promoted to general manager of facility services. This role was largely defined by Robyn's ability to reposition self and other to the benefit of the organization as well as Robyn's career in a win / win outcome.

#### **5.4 Kim Warren – Patience**

A publicly known figure, Kim Warren appears in various media news reports from time to time. Kim has been a part of Alto Chemicals (Alto) for their entire career. Kim was groomed for the role of chief executive by holding a number of prominent posts throughout the world, as well as attending pre-eminent academic programs. As would be expected from a career in a multinational, Kim is of course a stoical individual – albeit friendly. The author had not met Kim prior to the interview, but it was common knowledge that this person had contributed greatly to the sustainability progress Alto had achieved in recent years.

Like most multinational petrochemical firms, Alto has been confronted by criticism for many years. In the past ten years especially, the business has dealt with public relations disasters relating to sustainability issues. While the most prominent of these problems have occurred overseas, repercussions have filtered to the Australian operation.

In preparation for the meeting, Kim selected two issues that had previously been in the public domain. So, Kim was comfortable discussing these at length. The interview got off to a good start. The author's consulting experience enabled him to step directly into the discussion, but Kim appeared to be leading the author on a tangent, which initially left the author unsure whether Kim was being friendly or cunningly attempting to consume time and thereby divulge as little as possible. As time went on, and in subsequent conversations, it was clear that Kim was indeed interested in the research being conducted. Before the researcher began Kim asked, *'How did you come to be in Australia?'*

Kim was well prepared, and immediately began answering the first question:

*What is one of the most memorable experiences that you have had as a senior manager regarding TBL issues?*

Kim related a recent spillage in impersonal terms, without attributing the situation to anyone else, in the role as chief executive. Despite questions to the contrary, Kim refused to allocate responsibility for the situation to anyone else, which becomes a common theme in this interview.

*Due to an operational error, a discharge of a particularly foul-smelling substance made its way all over the (water way). I was the line directly responsible for that. So it is difficult not to be, when you are the chief executive.*

Through forced positioning – a sense of duty – Kim had accepted responsibility for the spill and had dealt with the situation through to resolution. Kim said it had been resolved, and referred the author to a printed publication regarding the incident. The report, while confidential, was distributed externally to relevant authorities to demonstrate responsible *'corrective and preventive action commensurate with the seriousness of the situation'*. This treatment of the incident conformed to the published procedures of Alto, which in turn conformed to various regulations governing the industry.

Compliance with internal and external regulations as well as Alto 'ritual' governed how the spillage was dealt with, and Kim was not prepared to risk offering a verbal

comment that might vary from that published. Later, when discussing corrective action, Kim again referred to the incident, but on being questioned about the details of the incident, again referred to the report.

*The report on the thing is available somewhere, if you are interested. I cannot remember if it is confidential or not, but even if it is there is no reason why you should not read it and treat it confidentially, but it was that that caused us, as a group, to think about the way we were expressing our priorities.*

Here Kim demonstrated the power perceived in a published document. The report contained an archived and verifiable record – a Foucauldian dossier – of the incident and all decisions that had been made regarding that incident. It recorded analysis that had been conducted as well as specific recommendations regarding resolution. That is, it defined actions that Kim was meant to undertake. The defined actions required Kim and the management team to engage in consensus and deal with the OEI issue. The report altered their ‘*established interest, ideology, information and organization*’; the report resulted in forced positioning, this time based on the authority of the published report. Kim knew its value, and the reverence placed on this *archived* and *retrievable* record suggests awareness of the power it carries. The report documented the process that had been followed to resolve the issue in such a way as to demonstrate that Alto recognised its seriousness.

*It was pretty motivational for people. So, it was a process like many of these things of partly turning the problem into opportunity – when you have an issue as public as that it is difficult for people to argue about what the priorities are – and partly a process of gradual consensus building, but you know the reorientation of priorities is not more important, in fact it is probably less important than the opening up of the culture.*

In explaining this, Kim had been force-positioned by the whole corporate history that as chief executive must be embraced and embodied. All responsibility stops at Kim and once the report was published, it had to be complied with. Kim engaged in deliberate positioning of subordinate managers when Kim required them to comply with the report; they said that the incident report ‘*was pretty motivational for people*’. However, Kim displayed a degree of patience, ‘*partly a process of gradual consensus building*’. Furthermore, here Kim alluded to the broader challenge of ‘*opening up the culture*’, and then expanded on this.

*You spend a lot of work in trying to help people to change and I would say we have achieved a certain amount. Both structured work; and not just courses, but exercises and things. We had a process where a large number of projects were carried out by inter-functional teams.*

Kim demonstrated that they offered people an opportunity to come to terms with change on their own, through experiences that reinforced the sort of culture required. Some people resisted that positioning and adopted second-order positioning, implying that they would not take sustainability seriously. Kim preferred that deliberative positioning would take place, but clearly stated that – when confronted by those who had not adopted new ways – Kim was prepared to take action and give people ultimatums.

*You have two things that you do with people like that. One of them is to try and work with them to see (if) they are able to reflect the kind of view that you believe they should be having as part of your business, and the second thing – that last resort – is to remove them.*

Kim was prepared to remove people who were not prepared to comply with the way things need to be. This reflects Endenburg's (1988, p. 57-8) observation that if people are unwilling, then the system seizes up. In fact at a subsequent interview, Kim reinforced a commitment to removing inappropriate people.

*In general, the biggest mistake I have made in my business career is being unwilling to kick people out rather than the other way around.*

While Kim made attempts to help people reposition themselves, there was not enough resolve to engage in deliberate repositioning of some people. The nature of the social order appears to have led to removal of recalcitrants as being the preferred alternative. Although in that same interview, Kim expressed reluctance to begin widespread slashing of staff as a change management practice.

*It is the fact that is very clear that you do not get cultural change without some change of people; on the other hand it is also clear that you lose a lot of corporate memories, you lose a lot of expertise, you lose a lot of loyalty, and you de-motivate a lot of people; if you take a kind of chainsaw approach to the whole thing. So, I tend to talk round about 20 per cent. I think in most organizations that need significant cultural change, a change of around about 20 per cent of the decision makers is usually called for. You will find consultants often talking 80 or 85 per cent. I disagree, but it does need to be enough new people to be able to challenge and significantly influence.*

In calling for 'new people to challenge and significantly influence', the notion of altering the 'established interest, ideology, information and organization' reappears. That is, to be able to engage in forced positioning through imposing the rules of the organization. Kim perhaps has been too fair at times. In response to Kim's preference to help people come to terms with changes at their own pace, I suggested that an appropriate metaphor for their approach dealing with sustainability issues was patience. Kim responded quite negatively to that at first.

*As a metaphor to describe 'What I think about sustainability?' I do not think it is a very good metaphor. Two reasons. One is personal, I am naturally not a patient person. Patience means what used to be called Parkinson's law of delay equals nothing ever happens. Second, while sustainability and all of the issues involved with it are inherently very very long term, there is too much wasting time in discussing, rather than actually starting to think about things that should be done. That is what I think. Therefore, I think to surround the whole thing with patience is really quite wrong.*

On discussing this in the context of a holistic approach to helping people to cope with new ways and accommodating their needs, Kim was less doubtful. When shown that patience relating to factors that needed resolution in dealing with the wider issue of sustainability, Kim replied in a more positive light.

*If you were to use patience as an ingredient to a successful discussion of sustainability, I would say yes.*

Kim clearly demonstrated a degree of patience in expressing compassion for some senior managers. Yet, Kim rejected patience as a metaphor to describe their discourse regarding sustainability. While retaining the metaphor of patience, the author coupled it with determination to correspond with Kim's reaction to the metaphor.

Related to patience, Kim was reluctant to impose sustainability on those senior managers reporting directly to the chief executive. Rather, Kim explained that the realities of time constraints and the pressure already imposed on people made it difficult for them to pursue sustainability in addition to their existing responsibilities. Kim began this by acknowledging the responsibility to perform financially.

*If you do not create shareholder value then you cannot do the other things. So there are those who say that we should concentrate on where the real value is and the other stuff is all peripheral. There are others who say, particularly if you are a large and global company, that your place in society or your licence to operate is determined by your performance in all these things. But in general, broadly speaking, the consciousness has increased dramatically, and certainly amongst young people the commitment is great.*

With this, Kim demonstrated reluctance to impose changes on already overtasked people and preferred to patiently rely on those who are inclined to take on special projects. Realizing the inherent enthusiasm in some staff for sustainability issues, Kim deliberately positioned them as having authority to deal with sustainability issues.

*Often you will find that this is led particularly by young people. We have a number of processes that enable young people to be very active.*

When confronted with this, Kim rejected the notion that all people needed to be changed and refused to accept that they were prepared to permit some people – even at the highest levels – to avoid dealing with additional issues. This is not to say that Kim permitted non-compliance, rather that some people were viewed to be too busy to deal with the issues.

*I do not think so, Lionel. It is not so much that. It is that in any large organization at this point in time, most people are under immense pressure. They are travelling a great deal, you know they are just working very long hours, they have great pressures and so on. To find the time therefore to interest themselves in areas which are not directly relevant to the job that they have got to achieve – and they are probably already not having enough time with their families – is a challenge. And that is part of the reason that it tends to be the younger people who are prepared to give up some of their time. We are gradually trying to become more receptive to some of those activities, to the extent possible.*

Here Kim showed a compassionate or benevolent force that is evident in the way the business is run. Certain people who worked behind the scenes appeared to enjoy immunity to some realities facing the wider business. In a follow-up discussion, Kim was confronted with their reliance on harnessing young people's enthusiasm and the concern was raised that they may encounter a lack of support. Kim agreed with the author's concern.

*I think this is absolutely true. I think that one of the great things about companies like this particular company is that young people are very much a driving force for it. On the other hand, you do not get change unless you get passion from the top.*

Kim acknowledged the need for the chief executive to confer the utmost importance on sustainability issues. Indeed, such issues were placed at the beginning of all meeting agendas. Kim engaged in forced positioning of others in doing this. Yet, the TBL perspective reminds them that financial responsibility is as important as ecological or social responsibility.

*If you do not create shareholder value then you cannot do the other things, because you do not have the wherewithal to do them.*

Kim's focus was not directed at those few who are charged with the economic sustainability of the business. Kim was satisfied that the planning models had incorporated ecological and social factors. Kim remained convinced that the reality of business imposed limiting factors on how much could be accomplished within time frames.

*I would say objections were more to do with time constraints than people denying the importance of issues that needed to be dealt with. Philosophically as I say you will still find some people who will say the role of a large company is to earn money and that is it, but not many – but not many. I would say there is a pretty universal commitment to and liking for the way in which the company has increasingly looked to these areas (ecological and social), while realizing you have actually got to deliver performance and value creation, otherwise you are not there in the long term.*

Where Kim did see a need to deal with sustainability issues was in the rank and file of the business, which includes subordinate line managers. Kim's greatest concern at the time of the interview was brought to the company's attention by an embarrassing publicly-leaked audit result. Analysis of the cause of the non-conformances identified in the audit led to the identification and publishing of corrective action requirements. These were not just published internally in confidential reports. Rather, the entire transcripts were made available through the public authority that conducted the audit.

Kim was again forced positioned by published documents and needed to make clear that the positioning regarding sustainability was effected. Problems needed to be acknowledged and responsibility accepted.

*My reaction was extreme disappointment, for all sorts of reasons, plus an element of self-reproach. Disappointment that such a thing could exist without our being aware of it, and self reproach for the reason that evidently the message that we had put through about improving our financial performance had not been sufficiently accompanied by a message that says there is one thing that is more important than financial performance, and that is safety and environmental performance.*

Again, alterations to ‘established interest, ideology, information and organization’ resulted in forced self-positioning of Kim to impose still more changes on the organization. Kim once more accepted personal responsibility for a sustainability incident. Again, there was demonstration of a patient, but determined approach to seeing change through the rest of the organization.

*We ran many many courses aimed at opening up communication within the organization. Clearly the specific problems that existed we repaired with urgency. We put money into them, but – that has got to be done – but more importantly taking steps to ensure that we do not end up with a problem like that again.*

Formal procedures dealt with short-term corrective action, and the people involved accepted positions as defined by their formal roles in that capacity. However, the resolution of the cause of the problem was dealt with in a patient way. Deliberative positioning occurred through this patient determined approach, such that people learned and contributed toward improved communication.

*A couple of years later, we were still having problems. Not as bad, but rather similar. Still resulting from a lack of open communication. I think in the ensuing period we have probably taken some pretty significant steps forward. So I think it is a lot more open.*

Kim was committed to seeing the communications open up, but also to seeing that people were given an opportunity to realize the need themselves. This suggested that Kim preferred to engage in deliberative positioning regarding OEI issues. Even in critical communications issues, Kim was prepared to be patient and permit deliberation to occur with *parity* as opposed to forcing with *power*.



*People must communicate properly, because you cannot manage properly unless you have proper information. If the information is blocked from flowing upwards, you do not have proper information so you make mistakes that you otherwise would not make. That is not just a safety issue, as you know. If they are not prepared to do that, it is not their fault, it is your fault. So you have to do something about the culture to help people to do something about it.*

‘Do something about the culture to help people to do something about it’ implied a preference to engage in deliberative positioning. With Foucault (1977 and 1988) in mind, enabling people to learn and develop knowledge suggests that a degree of parity was being achieved. Through permitting people to challenge and dissent, initial disparity gave way to learning and eventually parity resumed; disparity of knowledge as opposed to disparity of people. Yet, at the same time, Kim was prepared to remove people to see that issues were dealt with as required. In a follow-up interview, Kim confirmed the view held.

*We are not actually talking about alternatives; we are talking about different parts of the whole. It is the basic difference between short-term and long-term shareholder value; and any company which expects to be of significance in the longer term is going to be engaging in sustainable activities, otherwise it is just simply not going to be acceptable.*

Kim explained how the organization had ‘opened up’. Kim explained about increased accountability, increased reporting, increased willingness to be subject to external scrutiny, having external audits, and listening to the views that other people have.

*I would say there is a pretty universal commitment to and liking for the way in which the stats of the company has increasingly looked to these areas, while recognizing that you have actually got to deliver performance and value creation, otherwise you are not there in the long term.*

Kim demonstrated a degree of urgency, yet tempered by patience. The organization had force positioned Kim as chief executive and all subordinates had been in turn force positioned. Kim assumed deliberate positioning which in turn led to forced positioning. Deliberative positioning had not been possible.

Kim accepted a place in the community of CEOs of Australia’s largest and most significant companies. Kim recognized underlying forces at work both in the broader community and within Alto. Kim engaged in deliberate self-positioning

above all others and accepted the responsibility and isolation that came with the leadership appointment. At the same time, Kim listened to others and incorporated their views into a consensus approach.

*You have to understand that in both of these decisions you are not dealing with black and white issues. You are dealing with a budget that you have to accept priorities within and sometimes the priorities place too little emphasis on some of these integrity issues and management I think – to the degree that management puts an extreme pressure on, without very explicitly making sure that these kinds of things are dealt with – management is remiss; and I think that we were remiss in putting messages which were very clear about (what) we wanted in terms of financial results, but less clear about the need to maintain the priority in terms of safety and the environment. It was not intentional, but it was clearly so after the fact.*

In discussing the underlying force that appeared to prevent organizations from achieving change, Kim expanded.

*You have to work pretty hard to open up that atmosphere. The atmosphere between management and awards staff in a manufacturing organization under great financial pressure tends to be a little difficult anyway. Some managers become very structured and very hierarchical in the way in which they communicate and you somehow have to get the right people in there. Ultimately I believe that if you are going to put your finger on it anywhere you put it on the management. Most of these problems are resolvable and if a manager is the kind of person who gets out and around and talks to people and listens to people and demonstrates he is prepared to react, then the atmosphere gets changed and so it is really an indictment of the kind of managers that you have got if it is not working properly. It is just an excuse to go talking about industrial relations and unions and so on and so forth. Ultimately most of these problems are solvable by managers as we have seen time after time.*

In relation to the introduction of OEI issues, such as sustainability, Kim demonstrated a desire to see people arrive collaboratively at a decision that they are either going to accept the new way or accept dismissal. While the alternative may have needed to be initiated by the business, Kim ensured that all people were given the opportunity to engage in deliberative positioning. Deliberate, or one-sided power-based positioning resulted when the individual refused to reciprocate in deliberative parity-based positioning.

Being Australian CEO of an enormous corporation, Kim balanced the introduction of sustainability with the immovable status quo. The mix of forced, deliberate and deliberative positioning observed in Kim's behaviour reflected the formality that

underlies the social order. Forced positioning was common in all issues, while deliberate positioning required the approval of the powerful. Deliberative positioning did not appear to be an easy option in such an environment.

### 5.5 Ange Dunn – Sagacious Conscience

Ange Dunn was chief executive of Silverwood research and development laboratories. Ange and the Silverwood team worked on behalf of several organizations that had shared a need for improvement to their environmental performance. As the Silverwood business model involved several businesses with conflicting priorities, Ange was interested to participate in this research.

Ange explained that Silverwood was funded by a consortium of government, industry and universities that shared a common desire to develop sustainability-based operational enhancements to utility operation. Each business in this consortium was referred to as an alliance *partner*, each with a *partner* chief executive and an overall alliance chairman to lead the consortium. As such, Silverwood was involved in managing a budget and delivering a service, as opposed to earning a profit. Yet, the continuation of funding was an ongoing economic reality that did indeed combine with environmental and social issues, as implied by a TBL concept. Ange provided a unique inside perspective to decisions made by several CEOs in the state of Victoria, with whom Ange works closely.

*The biggest conflict for partner chief executives (chief executives of our alliance partner businesses) is in terms of the fact that they are losing money at the moment hand over fist. The issue that they have to deal with is, A) not being profitable and B) threats from the physical environment. Their investment is so large that they simply can't allow something to occur that might erode that value quite substantially. So they must be seen to be responsible in dealing with the environment.*

Here Ange explained how the chief executives of each partner business have been forced positioned by institutional situations; they all ran businesses that were highly capitalized and not making a profit. That is, Ange observed that chief executives have assumed self-positioning to be disinterested in sustainability investments, and positioned Ange as a distraction that had to be given a high degree of support.

Ange realised Silverwood's problematic financial situation; having financially unviable financiers posed considerable impediments to Silverwood's stability and longevity. That this theme was at the heart of Ange's comments suggested an awareness of the positioning effect of financial imperatives – a sort of Foucauldian gaze of the financial industry. However, Ange did not accept that positioning.

*They want an immediate payback on that money. Our focus is all long term, so I am forever having to strike a balance, convincing them that the long-term work is of use.*

Not satisfied with the first order positioning, Ange engaged in second-order deliberate positioning through education and selling to change the way Ange and Silverwood were perceived. While it initially appeared to be imposing Ange's power, on closer examination Ange hinted at collaboration. Ange said clearly, 'strike a balance' and 'convincing them'. These two phrases suggested that Ange and partners were each giving ground in a collaborative way, leading towards consensus. Hence, Ange's self-positioning was an invitation to the others to engage in a collaborative approach. In other words, Ange was selling the sustainability paradigm.

On one hand, Ange was critical of partner chief executives. Yet on the other hand, Ange was sensitive to how the CEOs of business partners had themselves accepted the institutional positioning of the situations they faced.

*At first they were bound by legislation. So, I have a period of some months to convince them that they should stay to support this organization.*

While Ange realised partner chief executives were victims of their 'roles', there was also the realisation that they would eventually attempt to take matters into their own hands and attempt to engage their ability to impose their power to alter or exit the relationship with Silverwood. Ange explained how this did occur.

*One of the industry partners was very reluctant; almost to the extent that I was certain that we would not survive. There was a change of the chief executive in Australia. He knew nothing about us. So, I was faced with the real dilemma there of trying to convince him. His arguments were largely that they have to regain their costs – substantial costs to them – approaching \$400,000 per year for seven years. So, we are talking about a lot of money. His remit was to reduce costs in Australia. He was brought in to do something about the Australian business and we were a substantial cash cost – you know straight*

*off the bottom line. So, he was looking at cutting that. I had to point out to him that it was a big sum of money, but it was only about a tiny per cent of their turnover. Moreover it cannot be seen to be walking away from this sort of responsibility.*

Achieving collaboration occurred through an exchange of discourse whereby the partner chief executive first presented his perception of issues in a demonstration of power to assume his position and a display of outward force to position Ange. This occurred despite the agreement that had been in place. Hence, complex positioning had occurred where the partner chief executive was engaged in forced positioning (by virtue of his role). Yet Ange had a deliberate intent.

Ange followed this by demonstrating the distortion in the partner chief executive's understanding of the situation facing his business. In doing so, Ange engaged in second-order positioning to move towards a collaborative situation, but not before Ange made a display of power to show the need to follow the wisdom of Silverwood and comply with the requirements to fund it. Ange demonstrated that the cost of Silverwood's services was a tiny proportion of that amount by which the partner chief executive was required to reduce overall costs. Furthermore, Ange reminded the partner chief executive that Silverwood was providing an essential service; education and selling in this instance. In doing so, Ange relied on requirements founded on institutionally defined rules, achieved through broader stakeholder demands.

*I have gone to a great deal of trouble to ensure that they understand the potential impacts of not continuing to support us. Basically they have got to be seen to be doing something about their environmental contribution to greenhouse gases. So, that is certainly a lever that I use both with the industry and with government, to continue to get government support for what we are doing.*

The pressure to do something provided the impetus for Ange to be able to rely on first order self-positioning. To help the partner chief executive realize his obligation to continue supporting Silverwood, Ange reminded them of the institutional rules with which they must comply. In a similar way, Ange also engaged the governmental and broader community expectations directed towards the chief executive.

*They have not got just me saying these things. They have got government as well. In fact, if you read the Victorian Greenhouse Strategy you will find it uses such terms as partnership between government and industry.*

Here Ange introduced a document from which Ange drew on the gaze of governmental authority. In referring to this Foucauldian device, it was demonstrated that the government is behind Silverwood, and that enabled Ange to engage in forced positioning of the potentially recalcitrant chief executive. However, in some situations, Ange needed to draw on another source of authority; the alliance chairman carried considerable influence. The chairman's contribution of a few words – even just his presence – enabled Ange to impose self-derived authority, which may have been just a step towards achieving collaboration. This was not because it was a natural step, but because Ange needed to engage in ongoing selling and education of the partner chief executive of his obligations to support Silverwood.

*One partner chief executive was prepared to walk away from it, and that would have been disastrous, not just because we would be losing him. We would have lost everybody, because we could not have delivered on what we had said to the government that we were going to do. If we could not deliver on that the government might say we are not going to be involved in that either, so the whole thing collapses – very very serious consequences. So, the alliance chairman and I met with this person on three occasions to convince him of the need to stay in the alliance. I made a detailed – prepared a detailed – document on all the positives and negatives, but at the end of the day that convinced him to sign up.*

In being prepared to walk away, the partner chief executive had adopted a position through second-order positioning. In other words, the partner chief executive challenged Ange's first-order positioning. Ange realised it would be a disaster for any of the partner chief executives to sustain such a position, because it undermined the survival of Silverwood as well as the long-term stability of that business partner. However, Ange realized an inability to confront the recalcitrant alone. So, Ange strengthens themselves with the chairman of the alliance and, with the assistance of that institutional authority, was able to engage in a further round of positioning. The image of constant parry and riposte in fencing came to mind. However, Ange did not use a foil, épée or sabre; their weapon was a sagacious conscience. That is, Ange demonstrated the way things had to be for Ange and the partner chief executives to continue towards their respective ends.

To this point, Ange channelled initial discussions towards a situation that Ange perceived was relevant to the research. Of interest to this research, was not Ange's particular situation, but the observations of chief executives in their businesses. It was clear that Ange had taken steps to be perceived as a reliable commentator; in this sense Ange assumed a particular position with respect to the author. What is more, Ange sensed the financial power imposed on the decision-making affecting the operational businesses.

*They are under enormous pressure to make a short-term profit. Then also, because of the size of the investment, they are under great pressure to sustain that. If they are not seen to be doing something to improve their environmental impact, their long-term businesses are under threat.*

It is this threat that created the need for Silverwood. However, Ange remained unsure about what outcome partner chief executives really wanted from Silverwood's research activities.

*We are trying to understand – and I had yet to determine a definitive answer on – what they really want from us. There is an uneasy feeling about the relationship.*

We explored the nature of the uncertainty caused by economic realities and resulting government policy. I asked Ange how this uncertainty made them feel.

*I feel quite relaxed about it, because I am convinced that what we are doing is absolutely essential. OK, if they do not introduce it they do not introduce it, and I cannot do a heck of a lot about that; but unless we actually do the work, they will not have an opportunity to introduce it and I believe our society does need it.*

With this ideological confidence and self-assurance, Ange, in being chief executive of Silverwood assumed the position of a font of critical knowledge for the partner chief executives. In this way Ange had assumed a position as a wise adviser or sage. In a subsequent interview, Ange thought '*sage (was) a bit presumptuous*'.

*I am actually one of those putting to government that someone has to start doing some planning here, and the problem is that government has largely abdicated its responsibility – people would not say that, I am sure – they are really starting to deal with the matter. I guess the frustrations are because the system – the way the industry has developed in the past five years – is very very immature. Who is going to invest (such a large amount) when you are losing*

*money? I am personally very comfortable, but I think they have got bigger dilemmas: to become profitable, to have appropriate management structures in place. I have heard of examples when – for instance – they are forced to use their own work force for certain things where the costs have blown a way out and where they have not got any recourse. If the cost does blow out against your own work force you cannot sue them, but if you had an outside organization and they did not deliver then you can sue them.*

With purposeful action and a personal motive, Ange made it clear that Silverwood was a provider of an essential service. In accepting that the partner chief executives can undermine Silverwood's stability, Ange was positioning them – in their absence – through this purposeful action. Ange also did this with government, but rather than being in need of Silverwood's services, showed them as having '*largely abdicated their responsibility*'. Again, a similar form of positioning occurred with respect to the work-force, who were able to refuse to accept more flexible arrangements.

*Some time ago, agreements abdicated some management responsibility and left this to the work-force. Now the business is trying to claw back to operate as a real business and that is leading to industrial action.*

In this case, Ange engaged in third-order positioning of both the partner organizations and their work-force. Ange demonstrated that the capabilities of the management teams of the partner organizations were originally shown to be weak and that of their work-force were shown to be strong. In positioning these parties, Ange was observing third-order positioning, as Ange has nothing to do with the relationship that resulted in the positioning. Ange noted the result of the previous jousting that occurred between management and work-force of the partner organization, as well as the more recent difficulty in attempting to arrive at collaboration. Ange was clearly commenting as an uninvolved third party.

*I know that those decisions are not made or are made to go a certain route, but it does not impact directly on this organization.*

Ange focused on areas where it was known that Silverwood would have an impact. This was purely to do with the service Silverwood performed for the partner businesses. However, Ange realized that there was a great deal of misunderstanding.



*I think that I have gone to a lot of trouble to ensure that they do understand where we are coming from and what we are trying to achieve on their behalf. So, it is not a matter of me going to them once every two or three years. I will meet with board members and chief executives of (this alliance) many times a year, simply to keep the lines of communication. Keep them up to date with what we are doing and to keep forward in their eyes that they need to support what we are doing.*

By educating the partner chief executives and their teams, Ange was enabling them to understand and engage in open discussions. Ange's intention was to 'keep forward in their eyes that they need to support' Silverwood's activities. With this, partner chief executives were able to engage with Ange collaboratively – albeit superficially – and work towards a consensus that benefited both their organizations and Silverwood. However, consensus only occurred within the terms that Ange regulated and, as mentioned previously, the financial gaze was always in the background

Ange appreciated the operational pressures that managers were under, and noted the different perspectives. Even the chief executives, who understood the longer term, remained under pressure from their boards 'to do something about the business straight off the bottom line'.

*The chief executives are about the only ones who are thinking longer term, but they remain unconvinced at this stage. We have to do our jobs better in terms of convincing them that this technology will in fact be viable for them.*

We discussed the tendency for chief executives to achieve what they were rewarded to do. In relating a specific discussion regarding benefits of working with Silverwood, Ange related how partner chief executives could obstruct opportunities for resolving issues. Through a display of rebellious blind self-invoked supremacy, the partner chief executive refused to acknowledge the benefits of Silverwood's services and denied Ange the opportunity to understand his mission

*I say to him 'you will save \$100,000,000. So, the potential payback is enormous.' But he wasn't fully open with the instructions he had from overseas or where he was coming from with all this. So, I did not really know. He was brought in to do something and he was going to be gone in three years time. No matter what. He is going to get a bonus for some 8 or 9,000,000 if the share price goes above a certain level. The first thing he did was decimate his R&D function, because that saved him money. I would argue that he has stuffed parts of (his company) for the next chief executive. The problem for*

*(Silverwood) is that chief executives of (partner) businesses come in, where they are meant to get the share price up, do everything in the short term, with very little long term thinking. So, the dilemma I am faced with quite often is of convincing these people that they have to plan out ten or fifteen years; and that often goes against the chief executive's personal remunerative advantage.*

This presented a situation that prevented a truly collaborative working relationship. Ange realized there was an inability to achieve parity, due to the partner chief executive's terms of employment. The partner chief executive was inclined to accept the fiscal reality in his remuneration package particularly as it corresponded directly to self interests and that positioned him to manipulate situations in his favour. In this regard, Ange went beyond simple education and suggested – in a far wider context than the Silverwood business model – that chief executives should be told to do certain things.

*I think the answer is that all of us have to be more assertive and say to the chief executive 'one of your five key result areas is that you will need to ensure that you return something to the capability of the organization'. The board has to say that, to the chief executive. All the evidence is that boards do not do that, and the reason that they don't do that is that boards are very much dominated by people with short-term thinking. You know it is all a matter of making a profit this year.*

In discussing this, it became clear that Ange engaged in third-order positioning of the board and self-located outside their moral order. Ange engaged in self-positioning in another moral order in which boards should not continue conducting *short-term thinking* and should instead support long-term focused advice to chief executives. Ange commented on the influence of financial pressures – here referred to as financial gaze – that was observed. That is, stakeholder pressure resulted in strategic interests being focused in a particular area and disregarding all others; they only funded Silverwood because they perceive they have to.

*They are forced into it. Given their imperative to make a profit now, they would not spend the money on long-term research if they did not feel they had to.*

Ange was aware that this need to spend money on Silverwood's long-term research was driven by legislation, and that it could come to an end. This contributed to the uncertainty faced by Ange and Silverwood, and reinforced the need to educate partner chief executives.

*It really was a case of making them understand that they really are under enormous threat from current concerns about the environment, and that we were the only avenue for them to have the opportunity to do anything about it.*

Conveying the unique capabilities of Silverwood, Ange reinforced how Silverwood would help the partner chief executives, Ange was using the situation to force position him/herself. A similar governmental and organizational authority enabled Ange to engage in third-order forced positioning of the partner chief executives. Ange said financiers '*are under enormous threat*' and '*we were the only avenue*' to make his point. Ange also relied on possible legislation to strengthen the imposition of positioning on the partner chief executives and other financiers. At the same time, Ange observed how the government was affected by reaction to such legislation.

*If Australia introduces an emissions trading regime ... in the absence of the rest of the world doing it ... (some industries) would go off shore.*

Such threats could be perceived as an imposition of situations that could be favourable for the manufacturers Ange referred to. Ange said '*we can stop your freedom to govern*'. The government could equally have been perceived as not engaging in second-order positioning and accepting that positioning in that they were not introducing an emissions trading regime. That a region where these factories were located '*is one of the highest unemployment areas in the country*' resulted in further forced positioning of the government. The government became the force that enabled or obstructed employment in this region as well as impacted the gross domestic product of the nation.

Continuing third-order positioning, Ange observed that among the chief executives appeared to be a conflict caused by the financial power and their personal values; '*I see a lot of personal commitment on the part of these people to do something about the environment*'. On the other hand, partner chief executives engaged in self and other positioning that allowed the financial structure to dominate their organization and position them.

*They understand, but I think they prefer that they did not have to invest in it, and if they were operating in isolation they would not invest in long term developments. The chief executive there would say, 'Well I have got to*

*maximize my profits. I mean my board is saying to me – very clearly – I have to maximize my profit this year, so the board is giving me clear instructions’. You know that chief executive will be saying to himself, ‘Cut costs now, and I am not therefore concerned about the long term’. I think in our particular case, the environmental imperative is what is more or less forcing them to be involved, otherwise they would just save the costs. It is interesting if you talk to these people on a personal level, they are committed to having a minimum impact on the environment. We all are (committed) but then as the chief executive officer there is this imperative to earn a profit ... what they want to do is find – I guess on a personal level – a way of doing something about the environment that does not impact too much on their business. In fact, we are an ideal way of doing that; we are a joint venture, where they get benefit from other people who are going through it as well.*

Ange, being faced with uncertainty and agendas biased against Silverwood, had developed a sensitivity to the various types of positioning that occurred in the sphere that influenced the company. Not only did Ange relate situations in which they engaged in a well thought-out mix of forced, deliberate and deliberative positioning, but also provided insight into the chief executives of partner organizations and the positioning they accepted and assigned to others.

Ange realized the need to forcefully persevere against situations that led to various modes of positioning that engendered hostility towards Silverwood. They engaged in repositioning to wisely counter these unreceptive positions through persistent education and negotiate with board members and partner chief executives. Although Ange did not react well to the author’s view that their negotiation was sagacious, Ange’s communications with partner chief executives appeared to provide them with wise guidance. Ange was indeed a mentor, educating through repositioning the partner chief executives. Without Ange’s sagacious contribution, the sustainable approach might have deteriorated in favour of short-term solutions.

While Ange insisted on compliance and urged partner chief executives to assume collaborative positions, Ange appeared reluctant to offer any reciprocal collaboration. Ange did not assume a collaborative self-position. Any effort to prime the collaborative process was veiled in a siege-like regulation to preserve the situation that enabled Silverwood to exist and fulfil its mandate. At best, Ange assumed a limited deliberate position that would result in partner chief-executives collaborating. Motivation for this collaboration was to maintain the situation that would see partner organization’s stability sustained.

Indeed Ange was faced with frequent paradoxes. Sagacity enabled Ange to read situations accurately, react appropriately, and persevere until the next disruption. Ange sustained the business in a stable situation through Ange's practical knowledge and ability to make use of it.

Ange is loyal to the objective of providing a solution to the environmental problems encountered by the financiers of Silverwood. While Ange's position was not necessarily de-legitimized, there was a constant challenge to legitimize the mission of Silverwood. As such, Ange is primarily engaged in self-positioning in opposition to attempts at repositioning Ange.

## **5.6 Leslie Schmidt – First Among Equals**

Leslie Schmidt was identified as a highly suitable participant for this research. Leslie had recently been appointed as Chief Executive of Stanwick. A very strong and very public commitment was made during Leslie's inaugural address to pursue a sustainable future.

When welcomed into the corporate headquarters by Leslie Schmidt, the author was confronted in a formal manner that typified Leslie's style and approach to dealing with others. While being led to Leslie's office, it was particularly impressive to pass what appeared to be a problem-solving group engaged in dealing with an issue and writing ideas on a flip chart.

While the tape recorder was being set up, Leslie took the opportunity to straighten papers. The first instance of the predominant theme of the interview occurred after the author's first few words were challenged. For a moment, the author was left wondering why he had included Leslie as a participant after asking '*Can you think of a particularly memorable experience regarding TBL?*'

*Not particularly. I think probably the easiest way to begin the conversation is to talk about why I am interested in talking about TBL for (Stanwick) and the origins of that as opposed to assuming that I have been in an organization that has already been in the process.*

At this stage the author wondered whose interview this was and who was writing the thesis. Leslie appeared to be engaging in forced positioning as the Chief Executive of an institution. This was understandable as the author was a student, but at a later interview Leslie introduced an interesting personal metaphor – ‘*first among equals*’ – that contrasted with this first impression. Leslie went on to talk about being recently appointed as Chief Executive and the vision developed for Stanwick. Leslie explained an iterative process of formal strategic planning coupled with ‘*discussion amongst the community*’.

*What I have talked about is the entrepreneurial institution on to the innovative institution that has some distinct characteristics that are different from the two and, in the context of that, I have suggested that this should be symbolized in part by changing performance measurement regimes to one that moved quite formally away from the financial bottom-line approach. So, the context is that it is one of an introduction of a set of new ideas for discussion amongst the community. What I have indicated is that we have a time line on that discussion; either acceptance or rejection of it. I have also indicated that one of the major areas of impact, should those ideas be picked up and endorsed by the community, is that the annual report of Stanwick would need to reflect a TBL accounting approach, and people have been asked to do some thinking about what that format might start to look like.*

In asking people to think ‘*about what the format might start to look like*’, Leslie engaged in deliberate positioning, empowering staff to be involved; letting them know their ideas were valued and their input required. Leslie was keen to pull people into the planning process, but realized that there was a limitation. Leslie developed an interactive review process and invited groups of managers and staff from across the institution to take part. Some groups resisted the initiative, while others had difficulty in accepting the freedom of the review process.

*Interestingly some of the key resistance to that comes from the HR department – not just within faculties or academic groups, who see this as a bureaucratic intrusion. Because the work-place has been going on at the same time, it is seen as a bureaucratic check-up on people. This is in order to develop new programs and interventions that will actually improve the quality of life at Stanwick for the staff and the students. That connection is not well established.*

In providing a commentary of what people might be thinking, Leslie imposed a third-order position on them. An impression was held that people were resisting, due to their reaction to change. Leslie explained how this resistance transpired.

*Part of the way in which the so-called sabotage or undermining of it happens is that you do have managers or middle managers who participate in the data collection process, but who will not actually use the data themselves or will deny the understanding of how it is used.*

Being determined, Leslie confronted the situation and challenged individual managers. That decision led Leslie to ‘*show people how it is used*’ and how it ‘*will actually improve the quality of life*’. Leslie engaged in third-order positioning of this group of staff by saying ‘*that connection is not well established*’. While that group had been positioned as not understanding, another group had been positioned as being incapable of thinking outside its disciplinary paradigm.

*I happened to be dealing with a disciplined group whose training is basically critique rather than one of constructive form. They were totally unable to deal with the freedom I gave them, and it created huge anxiety and confusion. The organizational script that they believed, not just from their history of Stanwick, but their reading of the world, was that people who were in positions of authority really imposed a particular order and that there would be other people, whose ritualized position is to criticise that, to resist that’.*

Leslie had initially adopted a demanding position and harnessed groups of people to go out and do things that appeared clear to Leslie, but not to those being harnessed. This deliberate positioning was intended to make people accept a sustainable approach. In doing so, Leslie had imposed positions on those in the group that were assumed appropriate, but those positioned were unable to live up to expectations. On reflection, Leslie realized the oversight.

*When I reflect on that experience, what I would do differently is actually frame it for them; put it in terms of identification of what I thought some of the key issues were, but at that point get them to actually critique the issue. And through that process I would change the issues, or amend the issues, or supplement the issues, or require the allocation of the issues. I would then take them into a scripted process (explaining to) them ‘these are the issues’. What are the options? I would put something on the table to start the discussion to give them some place to exercise their skills – which is of critique – and from that process create a dialogue in which they could then construct.*

The author asked Leslie if every different group required a different approach. Reflecting on recent research, Leslie agreed, and went on to describe a phenomenon that appeared to be similar to deliberate positioning. It was how Leslie learned from earlier experiences and then considered the deliberate self-positioning that people have assumed.

*Disciplinary training influences the way that people conceive or conceptualize an idea of problems and solutions. It pre-empts a whole series of options and the ways that they do it. It is a way of framing a debate. Is it resonating? Is it not resonating? I will continue to listen and to take feedback on that stock. What I am hearing in response to this is 'these questions are too big' for what people feel comfortable to deal with. They like what they hear, they emotionally connect with what they are hearing, they hear their own little bit of feedback to me from the previous conversations that we have had. A person in the audience (said) 'that was me' 'that is me'. There was a connection and there is a capacity to connect with it and that what they will do is emotionally endorse the overarching idea and to trust me in terms of putting it into a framework.*

Through engaging with people and seeking their response to the requirement for Stanwick to adopt sustainability, Leslie was assuming deliberative positioning and inviting others to be positioned deliberatively. With this, consensus was to begin. The difficulty some people had with solving problems and constructing solutions came as a surprise to Leslie. They were unable to cope with new possibilities.

*There would be other people, whose ritualized position is to criticise that and to resist that. I threw that ritual and that style clean out the window and said 'No it is all yours to define'. They were bereft of a script. They were bereft of the skills in which to construct, as opposed to critique, and it caused huge anxieties such that they came to me in quite demonstrable distress in the middle of a six-month process and said 'Would you please just tell us what to do'?*

Leslie viewed these tensions as organizational as opposed to being personal issues to be resolved. It appeared that the obstructions had to do with knowledge models. Perhaps these models were influenced by forced positioning of a disciplinary Foucauldian gaze that varies from discipline to discipline.

*I have gone back to understanding more about the knowledge models that they are working with – the training models that they are working with – in order to be able to frame and debate the morals. That is my job as a leader. Without actually giving them the answer; it is the framing; it is managing the distress.*

While individual and collective education was perceived as being needed, Leslie felt that these issues would be resolved through persistence, implying that resistance was not perceived as a personal issue. Rather, it was an organizational issue that required organizational solutions.



*They are not necessarily personal tensions, people understand why they are doing things from a particular perspective of their role and organizational imperative. Clearly people resent the work-load imposition and the issue is one of persistence. Persistence in continuing to make the logic; continuing to show how the information will be used.*

Showing how information would be used implied education and exchange. The idea of deliberative positioning became apparent. This struck the researcher as being important, which prompted the question, 'How do you get down to the next level'? This led to an explanation of how the discussion is 'framed' by creating a consolidation of ideas into an agreed format.

*So, the issue is how do I then conduct the conversations during the next twelve months. I am doing that on a departmental basis. I am talking to a range of individuals informally across Stanwick. I am very assiduous at picking the influence leaders, who are conducting debates in their own right or are involved in sub-debates or subsets going on in Stanwick. So (I) am working with multiple levels, multiple conversations; both formally and informally right across the community. It is all talk-based work. Every now and again there will be a paper to reshape some of that stuff to say where we have got up to – where I think the debate has reached. To put a specific proposition on the table – such as TBL – that people can respond to, say what I think is negotiable and what is not negotiable, based on my reading of the external environment.*

Leslie adopted an educational position and harnessed a Foucauldian dossier device to derive the gaze of the institution. By doing so, Leslie clearly summarized what had been discussed during previous discussions with staff and adopted an authoritarian forced position to state what could and could not be negotiated. This was similar to that done by Kim Warren and Ange Dunn, but where they had been more removed from the process, Leslie was *in the thick of it with sleeves rolled up*. Leslie invited collaboration in decision-making, but placed controls to guide participants toward an outcome that was acceptable to the broader strategic intent of Stanwick. This was accomplished through presenting a convincing explanation of what effects the changes would bring.

*My experience of moving around Stanwick is that if somebody like me gets up in front of a group of people at department level or at a very base level of the organization, and opens it up by saying 'This is what I am all about, and I am basically here to listen to you and to help you to respond to me around this stuff', a couple of things happen. One is that they say, 'Yes, but what does it actually mean to me to do tomorrow'. And so I have to do a translation job; I am the chief interpreter / translator for the organization.*

Again, Leslie adopted a position as an educator. However, Leslie went beyond this, and coached people to enable them to understand. Furthermore, with apparent fluency, Leslie seemed to adopt a number of personae: Educator, Coach, Patience and Sagacious Conscience. In this sense, *First Among Equals* is an appropriate metaphor, as Leslie sought to bring knowledge and ability to people, and to inspire collaborative effort through wisdom and leadership.

*In terms of doing anything across the organization, having some very general concepts and to be able to translate those into a language and conceptual framework for (people in each area) and say 'This is what it means to you', 'This is what it might start to look like for you', because clearly they cannot see it.*

Leslie explained that this was to 'give them enough of a start'. This presented an image of priming a pump to get water flowing. Once flowing, the action was intended to draw out more action.

*I have to give them enough of a start so that they can actually take the conversation on and explore for themselves, and then they can determine whether or not they like it or do not like it. I find they are generally very empowering conversations and that people get very excited about it. I talked to a group the other day who are very concerned about whether or not it will continue to exist as an organization.*

Providing a foundation to start was only part of the intent. Leslie also recognized that anxieties needed to be dealt with. This was done through repositioning those who felt they were helpless victims to be empowered, and envisioning planners.

*I said 'Why do not start in a different place, instead of me telling that 80 per cent of you will become redundant, why do we not start with another place'. Which is 'what will students look like in ten years time – in five years time – what are their needs going to be; to which of those needs are we currently catering, and how are those needs different in different ways'? 'Why don't we do some dreaming'? I talk to them in that language, I do not use organization speak.*

This led the author to ask Leslie to describe one of those instances, and to explain what happened.

*They are stunned. They sit there and they look at me and their faces change. As they go from 'I have heard all this crap before' and 'I do not believe anything' to starting to get optimistic about the future; to see that there is a*

*future; that they will be able to create their future. And from that it builds their security reliance – what is necessary to get from one another is that they have got to have a level of trust. So, issues around trust, consistency, integrity are key to that process.*

Leslie explained that every leader needed to be authorized or to have a source of authority. There was a ceding of authority to act. Leslie perceived that such a transformation from being ‘stunned’ to ‘seeing a future’ is symbolic of that authority. Leslie adopted a guiding position, to lead people out of despair and enjoined them to take part in building their security into the future themselves. Leslie went on to clarify that people will accept that position depending on the outcome of the situation.

*People have got to go through an incident like that, and then they have to check what the reality looks like six months later. ‘Did I get my redundancy note’ or ‘Did something else happen’ or ‘Did we say something that we subsequently found out to be a lie?’ ‘If I emailed them when I found the discrepancy between what was said and what it appears that now that they said, did I get a response; were they defensive? Did they admit they made a mistake?’ One of the early learnings that I had at Stanwick was actually the power of getting in front of a group of people – 200 people it must have been – and saying ‘We got it wrong and what I am doing here today is to find out how to get it right’.*

Leslie cautioned that it was vital to follow through.

*And then you don’t roll over and play dead on the whole thing. That happened to me in consultation (about a particular) strategy. The first question out of the box was from someone who was highly cynical and highly antagonistic and critical. That question – the way that I handled that question – was going to determine where the other 1999 people in the room went. And the fact that I said ‘You are right, that was wrong and this is what we will do about it’; this sent a signal to other people in the room about how they could then intervene. The process continued; I think someone came in with a positive one after that. Then there was a reversion back to a more cynical one. And you go on and you go on, until by the end of an hour – when you are on their time on this, not yours – you have actually concluded that set of interventions. Then you go back three months later and they will have been making assessments about whether you have delivered on what you have said. I always deliver, because I understand the power of not following through.*

The author positioned Leslie by asking about a sensitive political issue that had arisen in Stanwick. Leslie replied about being careful not to become embroiled in issues that had no connection with the role of Chief Executive.

*I answer every e-mail that comes to me personally, unless I am the subject of an e-mail campaign, which I do not believe to be meeting my requests or offer to deal with people with the internet. It is just stylized politics. I mean, one of the things that is implicit in this process of building trust and dealing with people as individuals with real needs and issues, is that you must actually take the politics out of it. Now that is not to say that we do not have what is or what could be categorized as a political campaign running along side of it, which is the stuff about the identification of the influence leaders, engaging them in, ensuring their issues are dealt with, that their perspectives have been taken into account. If you meet a political strategy with a personal one you will be undone, and at the end of the day your success as a change agent is whether you survived. So, clearly survival is the key to actually having the capacity to employ the persistence that I talked about. If you are not in the job, then it really does not matter how persistent you are.*

Leslie adopted a strong and stoical position, from which others could expect to be scrutinized and held accountable for their actions and comments. Leslie's determination to find the truth of situations took Leslie to the people involved in the process. Leslie was understanding and fair, but confronting in demanding that objectives be achieved. In a follow-up discussion, Leslie preferred to use 'challenging' in place of 'confronting'. 'Letting me do it' was the authority from staff that Leslie works toward. With this, Leslie had a self-perception of being *First Among Equals*.

Leslie engaged in complex positioning across the continuum from forced to deliberative. Management objectives were always at the core of positioning, while they provided governance for deliberative positioning. Any consensus outcome complied with the objectives of management and deliberate positioning occurred to reposition any deliberation that may have breached those boundaries.

## **5.7 Hillary Black – Master's Apprentice**

Having demonstrated success in dealing with sustainability activities issues, the Author asked Hillary Black, CEO of Glenwood, to participate in this research. Hillary was eager to be involved and to discuss what had happened during the introduction of sustainability into the organization's business plan.

On entering the executive offices of Glenwood, it was clear that much was happening regarding sustainability. Brochures were presented in racks describing the organization's commitment to sustainability and certificates of achievement displayed on walls. This was somewhat in contrast with the austere formality symbolized by the décor of the municipal buildings.

Being proud of Glenwood's achievements, Hillary was quick to point out the awards that had been conferred on Glenwood. These recognised the organization's achievements on sustainability issues.

*I received this plaque. I am very proud of our achievement.*

With this plaque Hillary assumed forced positioning through a Foucauldian dossier that was empowered by the gaze of the awarding authority. Hillary also engaged in third-order positioning of all the people in the organization, through referring to 'our achievement'. This 'achievement' had become part of the Foucauldian library that gave meaning to the successful dealings with sustainability issues. In explaining how the organization arrived at the point of being awarded the plaque, Hillary went on to explain.

*We established a team headed up by an expert in this area and we have two or three other people supporting her. Their task now is to build a plan around sustainability.*

Hillary built the foundation of the sustainability movement within Glenwood on another item from the Foucauldian library, in this case one non-written. In this case it was the authority of various experts – Hillary's advisers – who had a positioning authority on Hillary. These experts were generally councillors, who had been elected by the constituency of the organization. Rather than adopting positions with respect to sustainability personally, Hillary relied on these experts repeatedly here. Within their roles, the expert councillors advocated sustainability to other councillors. Hillary realised that the CEO of Glenwood was positioned outside that democratic process.

*They were able to pick up ideas that we did not have on a global perspective and give us some ideas at a council level and then get votes. So, the council*

*supported policies supporting sustainability. So, the councillors were very good at gaining support of council and we were able to get the TBL concept approved as a policy. We were able to get an increase in funds for environmental activities, we were able to get better linkages together with our staff, through a sister institution, and we have been linked in now to a whole range of networks on an environmental sustainability platform.*

Councillors were aware of this forced positioning. Constitutional limitations on the chief executive role limited Hillary's 'role'. Yet, at times Hillary was required to deal directly with councillors, who may not share the views of the rest of the councillors.

*One of the councillors was seeing this as just an environmental thing, at the expense of everyone else. I spent a lot of time with her explaining that there are trade and offsets, and we can work different things out to get the outcome we want.*

Education was key in Hillary's explanation of how councillors were led to work together towards a common aim. To that end, Hillary engaged in deliberative positioning. In contrast to Hillary's managerial position as a master's apprentice, Hillary assumed a position as a facilitator to deal with passionate and emotional preferences. Similar to Ling's (1988, p. 97-100) interpretation, this facilitating process is indicative of deliberative positioning. Having observed and listened to various points of view of the councillors and developed an understanding, Hillary repositioned those whose perceptions were at variance with the prevailing attitude.

*We had a number of councillors that took a very strong view that parkland is parkland and you don't touch it. Therefore (they say) 'We will oppose this development which we know is in the best interest of (the community), but we will oppose the development'. So, we had to do a lot of work with those councillors who were very passionate and emotional about preserving parkland. To say, 'Well we will get a better outcome for parkland; we will get a brand new park; we will give up this little bit of park and get a brand new park'.*

Clearly some found Hillary's plans to conflict significantly with their ideals. Realizing this, the author asked if those in opposition were forceful. Hillary confirmed they were 'very forceful and very political'. To resolve the confrontation, Hillary adopted deliberative positioning such that others viewed Hillary as seeking their collaboration.

*You have to work very hard to convince people of the strengths of your argument. I think in those cases you just have to persist in your arguments. And the beauty of it – once again – is we have two councillors who understand how to balance things between various elements. They can see a more lateral way of dealing with things than ‘We just do not want parkland ruined’. We were able to run that particular line with those councillors, and the other councillors would pick up the debate and they would do the debating for you. By the time that gets to the council meeting – we do not participate in the debate – the councillors debate amongst themselves.*

Having said that, it was clear that Hillary did not leave the outcome to chance. Hillary took steps to achieve an open discussion, in which everyone was heard, and their concerns incorporated into the outcome. There was ongoing self and other positioning prior to the council debate, but that investment did result in a collaborative acceptance of sustainability as a ‘cultural thing’.

*It is important that we spend a lot of time getting them to understand the philosophies. The momentum has swung, so it is easier for us now to go to the councillors and talk about sustainability issues. It is easier, because it is now a more cultural thing, as opposed to the start when it was a novelty. So, by the weight of our efforts and the weight of our vision with some of our councillors and our staff, we have been able to move it to the point where it is. It is just a crucial element of the organization’s performance and the organization’s perception of itself.*

In reflecting on how the organization’s vision contributed to dealing with sustainability, Hillary explained this involved gaining commitment to programs by helping people and offering suggestions, but not forcing them in any particular direction. With the objective of harnessing the knowledge, wisdom and authority of others, Hillary supported deliberative positioning that permitted people to contribute and collaborate with others.

*I have an absolute responsibility as the leader – as the chief adviser to council – to make sure that my advice is provided to them. Whether they like it or not they get my advice. But I have to temper my advice to make sure that if I want to achieve an outcome I have got to be careful about how I present my advice. There will always be a few councillors that will have a strong argument to support you and you, can allow them to carry the day.*

Hillary demonstrated that they retained control, but – rather than imposing authority – Hillary did so by adopting a position of a facilitator of a collaborative process. An indication that collaboration had become inbuilt throughout the organization can be found in the name of a sustainability suggestion program. As explained by

Hillary, this implies that ideas put forth will be accepted and implemented.

*We have just launched an internal program called 'Agreement', which is a process where staff can provide innovative ideas and those – for an environmentally sustainable workplace – and those would then be built into what is called 'Agreement'. And there are. This process is happening all around the organization at the moment.*

This led to a discussion about developers and commercial suppliers to the council. The author asked if there were any opposition to sustainability from commercial organizations involved in supplying goods and services to Glenwood. Hillary noticed an interesting evolution.

*People now seem to be recognizing that this environmental sustainability is something that should be supported by the corporate sector; particularly the big players. They seem to be recognizing that it is a positive thing to be involved in; and that it is. It gives them a good way of balancing what they need and in particular, one of the elements that I can see TBL being applied to.*

In some cases, financial opposition to sustainability was no longer confronting the organization. However, there were still instances where the council could have lost considerable revenue.

In cases where the organization was disenfranchised or disadvantaged by commercial developments, Hillary adopted a more confrontational stance through deliberate positioning. Private enterprise had positioned Hillary as an easy target, but Hillary was not prepared to accept that positioning. Rather than accepting initial proposals, Hillary refused to accept conditions without requiring a balance of social and economic benefits. Hillary reinforced or regulated the rights of the organization and modified the proposed arrangement to achieve a better balance.

*What we would be doing as a council would be directly subsidising (a) private business, (which) is subsidizing a state government service. So, what we are saying (is) we need to be compensated for the money we have lost. We agree with your environmental objectives, but economically you have got to give us a return; we are not that stupid that we are going to feed your profit for a private company with bits of our own.*

Here Hillary had monitored a development and reiterated the balance of social services to economic return that is implied by sustainability. Hillary modified the



situation to ensure that, while the social improvements were implemented, the private company that will profit from the delivery of services would also direct a degree of financial return to the organization.

Beyond Glenwood, Hillary also sought to impose the sustainability initiative on other councils through a collective forum of public service organization chief executives. Where there had previous been opposition to include sustainability on meeting agendas of the collective meeting attended by the participating public service organization chief executives, Hillary was able to change this.

*I have tried and persevered and it is on this year's for the first time, but there was a resistance from every CEO to put it on the agenda. So, it gives you an idea that there is a lot of resistance. A lot of people feel it is – like electronics – too hard to understand.*

The author was interested to know how this perception was reversed. Hillary explained that it was first a process of understanding what was causing the resistance that Hillary had to go through. Then, with that understanding, Hillary was able to put forth a convincing argument that eventually won them over.

*I just assumed that they would accept this being put on an agenda as a local government national issue. I did not realize that most of them really do not understand anything and they are not following it. And they do not have it as a priority that we have. So, the next time I came back, I was much better prepared, and had more information and was able to talk with much more substance. It is also saying we have put our money where our mouth is. We are not just talking about this. We are doing it and here is what we are doing and here is how you get involved.*

Hillary assumed a position of educator and advocate, perhaps a mentor. Through helping people to understand the seriousness of dealing with sustainability, Hillary was able to help them realize the need to deal with the sustainability issue. Hillary continued to explain how this occurred.

*It was just saying that 'we are in this path and we think that all councils should be travelling down this path and we have done a lot of work; if you need to get a kick-start, ring us. We will help you'.*

In a different way, Hillary assumed a position of educator for the fellow council chief executives. Hillary drew on the Glenwood plan to support the educational

process.

*This is our new organizational plan. We are getting there. For the first time we have TBL incorporated now.*

Hillary maintained that the font of knowledge was with the expert staff members and councillors who had a detailed understanding of sustainability. In 'learning through them', Hillary assumed a position of apprentice and, as shown previously in this case, Hillary applied what had been learned in practice and had been guided by these expert employees and councillors, as well as external people.

*I have a good solid understanding of (sustainability), but I would not consider my understanding anywhere near as detailed as my staff or as some of the councillors. I mean they are very progressive. (I learn) through them. Plus I am involved in a few forums where you learn and listen and that is part of it. But mainly through my staff and the councillors I talk to. That is where I have learned a lot. But it is the same in any new initiative in a sense, in that you need to pick up the issues that are most important to you as an organization and as a leader or an organization.*

Following on from this, Hillary explained that once they had passed the mutual learning stage there had been a shift from observing through to advocacy that leads to trust and friendship.

*My support for those councillors has meant that there is a fairly good friendship between myself and those councillors, because I have got a common interest.*

With friendship, Hillary explained that it was possible to continue learning and moving towards a more collaborative relationship. Hillary did not encounter opposition to the proposals, except when there was a degree of misunderstanding.

*One of the things that came out of that from our point of view was that (our council) was clearly working to a framework. We were clearly working to an easily followed set of processes and steps to improve our systems. So, we knew what we were doing and where we were going.*

Through getting to know people and helping them to learn, Hillary enabled change to occur. With understanding, sustainability became not just an accomplishment, but also a useful tool to achieve collaboration.

*We persevered over a period of six or eight months and it is on the agenda now. It can be explained in the context of the TBL as a way of balancing up. So, you are not always talking about environmental, there are also social and economic items. That is what makes the TBL such a useful tool.*

Hillary attributed personal understanding of sustainability and similar issues to other people and '*learning through them*'. Hillary is involved in a number of forums and assembles knowledgeable associates. In describing one mentor, Hillary said '*You can learn a lot just by listening to him and the passion he speaks with and I can generally take a lot of the things that he says and put them into a more pragmatic and package-able type process, which might make it more acceptable to people*'. It is that co-operativeness and friendship that summarizes Hillary's position in one short phrase. The author's impression was that Hillary was looking to learn from him as much as he was hoping to learn from Hillary; the author felt that degree of friendliness and co-operation.

Deliberative positioning on sustainability had apparently become standard practice within Glenwood as a result of Hillary's commitment. So much was this the case that even contractors realized that it is the way to deal with the council. Furthermore, when confronted by stakeholders who chose to impose alternative positions, Hillary confronted these people and expected them to conform to the deliberative positioning that was the norm.

## Chapter VI

### DATA ANALYSIS: VIGNETTES OF POSITIONING

#### 6.1 Introduction

As explained in Chapter 3, people engage in various types of positioning when they communicate with one another. It has been shown in Chapter 5 that senior managers also engage in the positioning of themselves and others when they deliberate about sustainability issues. Of the six participants in this research, most people positioned by the senior managers were subordinates, but in some cases participants related situations where other stakeholders, such as superiors, customers and suppliers were involved in discursive action. This Chapter will further refine the narratives of each participant in the form of vignettes.

Representational metaphors were assigned to each participant based on initial analysis. These metaphors are representative of the senior managers' commitments and purposes within the context of their respective institutions. These commitments and purposes – how they deal with sustainability – were related to the author in conversation. With sensitivity to the positioning resulting from discursive action, these conversations enabled the author to perceive and articulate the distinctive and constant personal identity and selfhood of each participant. These symbols of commitments and purposes are used to represent the discursive actions observed of each senior manager that led to positioning.

Senior managers have been observed positioning themselves and others, as well as reacting to the positioning of others, with varying degrees of harmony and disharmony. Themes of parity and power have emerged. Various scenarios of positioning could be expected and are outlined in the subsequent Sub-Sections.

#### 6.1.1 Forced Positioning – Enforcing The Status Quo with Power

Drawing on Foucault's concepts of discourse and power, Hollway (1984) shows that traditional or normative roles could be caused by the way the dominant discourse of society positions people. It is here assumed that, what Davies and Harré (1990) refer to as forced positioning occurs as a matter of course through an amorphous societal (or institutional) power that may or may not be purely residual. However, if that societal forced positioning has been invoked to sustain order by a powerful individual it would be an indication of a power disparity. For the purposes of this research, forced positioning is indicative of an institutional solution to dealing with issues.

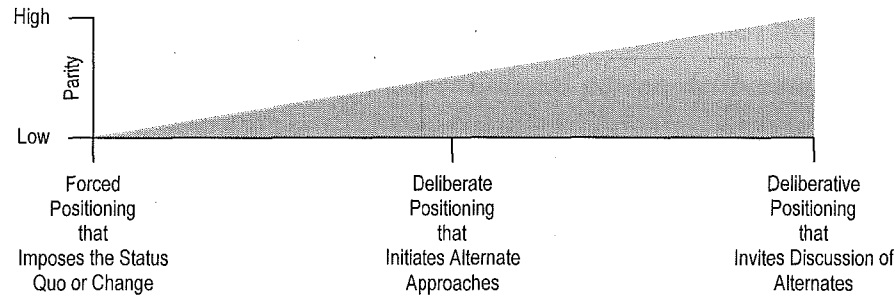
#### 6.1.2 Deliberate Positioning – Departing the Status Quo with Power

Hollway (1984) put forth the idea that people could break out of the forced positioning and explore their potential through exercising their personal agency. Davies and Harre (1990) referred to this as deliberate positioning, which could be interpreted as being a deliberate break with the norm. Deliberate positioning is defined here as a one-sided imposition of deliberate power to alter the position of oneself or another (Figure 3-2) in relation to the traditional or normative role. In this research, there is a departure from the single deliberate positioning proposed by Davies and Harré and expand the field of analysis with Ling's (1998) deliberative positioning.

#### 6.1.3 Deliberative Positioning – Departing the Status Quo with Parity

Deliberative positioning results from a parity incorporation of all stakeholder's preferences. It is concerned with replacing power as a currency of positioning with parity. Schwab's 'collaborative deliberation' and Gadamar's 'fusing of horizons'

influenced Ling. In Ling's research, he replaced deliberate positioning with deliberative positioning. Alternatively, the author views both these as being necessary components to describe the continuum (Figure 6-1) that ranges *from* imposing the status quo (or change) *to* inviting discussion of alternates.



**Range of Positioning with respect to Parity**

Figure 6-1

#### 6.1.4 Stratification of Data

Data have been stratified into two key actions. First the senior manager identifies and confronts opposition, and second the senior manager achieves and reinforces accomplishments. The former – achieving parity – involves gradually and knowingly moving from forced, through deliberate, to deliberative positioning, while the latter maintains the parity situation (if it has been achieved at all). The research question – *How do senior managers deal with sustainability issues?* – can be answered in this way.

	Berti	Robyn	Kim	Ange	Leslie	Hillary
<b>Identifies &amp; confronts opposition</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Observe / realise / listen	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Dossier	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Educate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
• External authority	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Advocate (Sell)	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×
• Regulate	×	✓	×	✓	×	✓
• Harness others to Advocate (Sell)	✓	✓	×	✓	×	✓
<b>Achieves &amp; reinforces accomplishments</b>	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Offers self collaboratively	×	✓	✓	×	✓	✓
• Achieves collaboration	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Monitor	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Reiterate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Modify	×	✓	✓	×	✓	✓

✓ - Exhibits    × - Does not exhibit    ? - Uncertain

**Deliberation Regarding Sustainability Issues by Participants**

Table 6-1

Table 6-1 shows how participants have behaved when dealing with sustainability. The table summarizes how participants have either exhibited these behaviours (✓) or not (×), and in cases where there is uncertainty (?).

These several behaviours displayed by senior managers have been achieved through engaging in the various forms of positioning that were defined in the framework in Sub-Section 3.2.3. *Forced intent, institutional power, deliberate intent, personal power, deliberative intent*, and *parity* will be drawn on here to understand the positioning that has occurred in each situation. Vignettes have been provided to demonstrate how senior managers deal with sustainability issues by:

- Identifying and confronting opposition
- Achieving and reinforcing accomplishments

## **6.2 The Senior Manager Identifies and Confronts Opposition**

Vignettes are presented in this Section that provide images of the positioning that takes place when senior managers identify and confront opposition relating to the sustainability issues they are dealing with. One vignette corresponds to each case study in Chapter 5. The vignettes show how these senior managers construct their institutional roles as they live through the stories that have been presented in the cases of Chapter 5. In doing so, these senior managers defined the various components of the social order.

### **6.2.1 Berti Fender - Educator**

Berti Fender is happy to be employed in a business that is committed to sustainability and to have a role in that business that is empowering to promote the sustainability message. Berti takes this role on with enthusiasm, but realizes there is opposition to the idea from both within the business and outside it. The chairman's epiphany has led to the change in direction and is the basis of forced intent, but people remain unclear about what the new way means to them. Berti

realizes the task is education, and takes steps to impose the sustainability message on all stakeholders.

*The only way you can become sustainable and really get the rate of improvement that you need is getting the people at the working levels right across the business connected to what it is you are trying to do and committed to it.*

In imposing this message through personal power, Berti is sensitive to the challenges people face in accepting the changes that come with the chairman's epiphany. Steps taken by Berti involve dialogue and exchange to enable people to explore the meaning of the new way, but, at the same time, the meaning implied by the chairman's epiphany is imposed. In doing so Berti harnesses written work that represents the social order regarding sustainability in Trendply, thereby defining the components of the social order for stakeholders. There is an element of institutional power in Berti's undertaking.

*It happens to a fair degree. One of our documents (lists) all the different bodies and groups that we are involved in. The vision also talks about being restorative, we are not just looking at being sustainable ourselves, but through that education process with like-minded people.*

Berti is positioned by both the list of 'bodies' Trendply is involved in and the vision of the company. As Foucauldian dossiers, these provide published statements that make clear where Trendply stands on involvement in sustainability and the steps that they are prepared to take to achieve sustainability. These dossiers could be seen as the forced intent enabling Berti and others to adopt positions that imply they embrace sustainability. As such, Berti is able to influence customers as well as employees and suppliers through discourse.

*It was more of a dialogue process, that was not saying 'Hey this is sustainability, learn it', but they had this dialogue 'What is sustainability?' 'What does it mean to you?' etc, etc. So, that process was filtered right the way down through the organization. That is all about raising people's consciousness and getting that sustainability ethic embedded in the business and really getting that connection.*

There is a specific objective of 'getting that sustainability ethic embedded'. Berti accepts that objective, as it has been imposed on him through forced positioning by



the chairman. The chairman defines the institutional values and Berti accepts these. Regardless of his enthusiasm for sustainability, Berti accepts the institutional values that are caused by forced positioning. These values have been defined by the chairman's epiphany and documented in various publications and reports. These form a Foucauldian library, which are the basis for forced positioning regarding sustainability. In deploying these values, Berti harnesses the institutional values and imposes forced positioning, but there is also an element of Berti's own message. This implies that deliberate positioning takes place; Berti appears to enjoy presenting the sustainability message of Trendply.

*I will be doing a talk in a couple of weeks' time to the Australian property council group, where a number of facility managers will be in the room, and will be talking about our sustainability. That is what we have been asked to talk about. We are always out, doing the networking.*

Berti imposes a very determined sustainability approach that has influenced how Trendply deals with all stakeholders. As such the confrontation of opposition to sustainability issues is dealt with primarily with forced positioning. Expectations regarding sustainability have been defined by people's rights, duties, acts and the local moral order (Figure 3-4C) with which everyone comes together. The deliberate positioning that takes place is an enhancement rather than alteration of institutional values; Berti's values, while not congruent with Trendply's, are an enhancement of what the chairman intends in his epiphany. Regardless, Berti is an educator and the social order is made clear. Employees of Trendply are educated, customers and suppliers are educated, shareholders are educated, and even the industry analysts are educated. Berti is grateful for the opportunity to be employed in such a role and enthusiastic about implementing the objectives of the role. That gratefulness and enthusiasm contribute to Berti's role being enhanced beyond that of a manager of the status quo. Berti inspires enthusiasm in others to let down their opposition. In that enthusiasm are elements of deliberate positioning, but there is no evidence of the parity that would indicate deliberative positioning.

### 6.2.2 Robyn Floyd - Coach

Various associations and transferral of knowledge from consultants conferred Robyn Floyd with a gaze-like authority enabling the harnessing of the wisdom of

the various professional communities. This forced intent enabled Robyn to adopt a position of authority, which contributes to an ability to train staff in appropriate approaches to dealing with issues that needed to be dealt with.

*We are paying a premium for expertise, which I am happy to pay, because now I am dealing with specialists.*

Armed with expertise, Robyn harnesses personal power to educate staff to confer them with confidence in difficult or unfamiliar situations. With that, the members of Robyn's staff assume a position of being empowered to do their jobs without fear of interference or that they might do something incorrectly. Beyond initial training, Robyn is aware of the need to support staff during challenging times.

*The planning has gone in beforehand, now it is all about execution. It is the execution of contingency – I cannot do that, so therefore I need to do this. Staff welfare was just part of it. There were lots of visits from senior management to ensure that there were familiar faces (for staff to see).*

Robyn acts as a coach in repetitive contact with staff. There is an ongoing building of awareness and skills. People are prepared and reassured throughout challenging times. Through such confrontation of uncertainty, opposition is overcome. Robyn realizes that a manager has an obligation to lead and inspire staff.

*Because you are management, you have got to rise above that one level. They expect more from you. You have the exact same reactions, but I guess it is a higher degree of self-control you have to exercise, because they are looking for leadership and for reassurance.*

Such coaching is not only reserved for employees. Robyn also extends training and development to subcontractors. However, when they are perceived to be incapable, Robyn does not hesitate to renegotiate commercial arrangements to achieve objectives. Robyn retains the option to use personal power over parity.

*My argument is why can I not take my service (and) push the boundaries of my service to the point where, if it is something that I can solve and that I can take responsibility for and deliver them a service that frees them of that obligation, and it is costly to me, then all I do is impute that into a rent over time. Then I am in complete control. They can focus on the business of making money.*

Robyn realizes that subcontractors and tenants associated with Convenco are small businesses that are focused on cost minimization. Through removing tasks that cost them money, Robyn removes opposition to compliance with requirements. While this may appear to be avoiding dealing with recalcitrants, Robyn has identified the cause of the problem and eliminated it from the duties of those who are unable to deliver. Robyn realizes the futility of making people responsible for doing things they are not inclined to do well, if at all. Quite the opposite of avoiding dealing with issues, it could be said that Robyn focuses clearly on issues by exerting deliberate intent and deals with them most effectively through personal power, and that power is encompassed in the social order.

### 6.2.3 Kim Warren - Patience

The issues that Kim Warren chose to present had become public through actions of people not part of Alto Chemicals (Alto). They were obligatory and externally imposed.

When issues present themselves, Kim harnesses institutional power through the internal procedures of the corporation to investigate problems. Findings of these investigations are then published in a report that becomes part of the archives of the company and, as such, these take on the properties of a Foucauldian dossier. Kim realizes that the forced intent implies there is a need to implement whatever the corrective actions findings specify.

In those cases presented for discussion, Kim noted that both dealt with poor communications. To deal with the sustainability issues, Kim is required to resolve poor communications. While these are in themselves obstructions to dealing with sustainability, there is opposition relating to improving the communications.

*The climate of communications between the award workers and the management was poisonous at that stage; communication was not taking place. So, it showed us all of those things as well as when you actually look into an issue of that type and get deeper and deeper into it, you discover things about the organization that you did not know.*

As Kim learns more about the organization it becomes clear that opposition can only be dealt with by improving understanding and communications and assumes deliberate intent to do so. Kim looks to subordinate managers getting out and communicating with people in the deployment of personal power.

*Ultimately I believe that if you are going to put your finger on it anywhere you put it on the management. Most of these problems are resolvable if a manager is the kind of person who gets out and around and talks to people and listens to people and demonstrates he is prepared to react. Then the atmosphere gets changed. So it is really an indictment of the kind of managers that you have got, if it is not working properly.*

While acknowledging that there is urgency to deal with opposition to sustainability issues, Kim displays patience. The stoicism of forced intent exuded by Alto is apparent. Some managers are not prepared to deal with these issues with the same sense of resolve as Kim. While Kim has a self perception of being impatient, it appears this may not always be the case.

*It is that in any large organization at this time, most people are under immense pressure. They are travelling a great deal, you know they are just working very long hours, they have great pressures, and so on to find the time therefore to interest themselves in areas, which are not directly relevant to the job that they have got to achieve.*

Kim is prepared to extend a degree of leniency to some managers, while harnessing the enthusiasm of others. It is apparent to Kim that younger people at Alto are more inclined to be sympathetic to dealing with sustainability issues. As such, Kim harnesses their enthusiasm in favour of demanding that more senior people assume additional responsibilities. The social order of Alto confers a great deal of rights on those who are prepared to contribute, while limiting the duties of those who are unable to spare capacity. A moral order that respects compassion has been achieved. Rather than exert personal power, Kim permits a degree of parity, aware that staff ethics are affected by forced intent.

*Often you will find that this is led particularly by young people, and we have a number of processes that enable young people to be very active.*

#### 6.2.4 Ange Dunn – Sagacious Conscience

Ange experiences confrontation primarily from partner chief executives who fund Silverwood. Prior to having taken action, Ange has taken time to understand their situation and reason for opposition.

*The issue that they have to deal with is A) not being profitable ... they want an immediate payback on that money.*

Forced intent driven by the financial objectives of their corporations causes the partner chief executives to strive to minimize or eliminate their expense funding Silverwood. Ange also realizes that institutional power has imposed a position on Ange whereby the partner chief executives have forced the acceptance of a position that benefits their institutional situations. Ange knows that even if one partner organization were to pull out, that Silverwood would cease to exist. To prevent this from occurring and bring the partner chief executives closer to Ange's point of view, Ange takes time to educate and inform through written and spoken presentations.

*I have gone to a great deal of trouble to ensure that they understand the potential impacts of not continuing to support us. Basically they have got to be seen to be doing something about their environmental contribution to greenhouse gases.*

Ange too is driven by forced intent, but in reacting to self-positioning of the partner chief executives, Ange is using personal power to engage in second order positioning. To augment Ange's personal power, Ange harnesses two levers. First, Ange makes use of two Foucauldian dossiers, the former engages institutional power and the latter personal power.

*If you read the Victorian Greenhouse Strategy you will find it uses such terms as partnerships between government and industry.*

And

*I made a detailed – prepared a detailed – document on all the positives and negatives, but at the end of the day that convinced him to sign up.*

The second lever is the authority of the chairman of the alliance. By including the chairman in meetings with recalcitrant partner chief executives, Ange can deploy the chairman's personal power.

*So, the alliance chairman and I met with this person on three occasions to convince him of the need to stay in the alliance.*

It is only after Ange has been successfully positioned through deliberate intent and the partner chief executives through personal power, that they can consider entering into a parity position. Ange must be seen as being correct about the need for Silverwood to be funded and partner chief executives must accept that their positions must be complementary to Ange's in regards to the Silverwood contribution to their businesses. However, that is and, as will be seen in Section 6.3, it is possible to reinforce that deliberative positioning.

#### 6.2.5 Leslie Schmidt – First Among Equals

Leslie acknowledges that some people exploit opportunities to '*sabotage or undermine*' and thereby 'resist the impact of strategic planning' (Knights 1992). In dealing with these situations, Leslie is persistent at making connections and reminding people that they may have mistaken their right to resist and not heard their duty to deal with issues.

*It is usually behind your back, so it is difficult to confront. And that is why the persistence issue is so much the key and why it is important to keep making connections with people at every level and in every conversation that you have.*

Leslie appears to realize that people are constrained in how they go about dealing with new issues. While the 'framing' that Leslie refers to relates to the way problems are defined and solved, this could be considered personal power. In doing so, Leslie implies to staff that they are approaching problems in an inappropriate way and that there is a better way to do so. The inappropriate way could be perceived to be the positioning from which the problem is initially approached, whereas the better way could be perceived as the positioning that Leslie suggests they adopt. In doing so, Leslie confronts the opposition that obstructs dealing with the sustainability issues.

*When I reflect on that experience, what I would do differently is actually frame it for them; put it in terms of identification of what I thought some of the key issues were, but at that point get them to actually critique the issue.*

Through this personal power, Leslie achieves the authority to get OEI issues resolved. Leslie has defined a social order that enables people to build their own roles that both harness individuals' skills and deliver goal-related performance. In Leslie's words, at a higher level, staff are 'letting me do it'.

#### 6.2.6 Hillary Black – Master's Apprentice

Being an apprentice to the sustainability movement, Hillary enlists the authority of experts when dealing with the sustainability movement. Hillary perceives a need to be informed and backed up by facts. In doing so, Hillary harnesses deliberate intent to be perceived as knowledgeable about sustainability.

*They were able to pick up ideas that we did not have on a global perspective and give us some ideas at a council level and then get votes.*

In general situations that do not involve direct opposition, this approach works well for Hillary. However, when confronted by individuals who do not share the views of other councillors and could disrupt the harmony of the democratic process, Hillary takes time to deal directly with individuals.

*I spent a lot of time with her explaining that there are trade and offsets and we can work different things out to get the outcome we want.*

Yet, this was only possible after Hillary had taken time to learn personally from the expertise of the authorities enlisted. These councillors and employees of the public service organization had conferred upon Hillary knowledge, confidence and capability to deal with the sustainability issue.

*Mainly through my staff and the councillors I talk to. That is where I have learned a lot.*

While Hillary positions herself as an apprentice with respect to the sustainability issue, Hillary does so while retaining their authority and capacity as chief executive. The social order of an elected council is recognized as a system of

highly defined rights and obligations that oblige members to conduct themselves according to choreographed acts within a clearly defined moral order. Then Hillary tempers their approach with the understanding that the democratic nature of the public service organization requires those elected to retain control. The position as apprentice serves Hillary and the councillors well. Hillary relies on forced intent derived from the council structure and lets councillors know that, as long as they respect the institutional power, no deliberate intent will be involved.

*I have an absolute responsibility as the leader – as the chief adviser to council – to make sure that my advice is provided to them. Whether they like it or not they get my advice. But I have to temper my advice to make sure that if I want to achieve an outcome, I have got to be careful about how I present my advice.*

### **6.3 The Senior Manager Achieves and Reinforces Accomplishment**

With an understanding that order tends to revert to disorder, once they have been achieved, accomplishments must be reinforced. The case studies suggest that senior managers carefully exchange appropriate degrees of power to achieve and reinforce their accomplishments. The repositories of their accomplishments could be the social order of their organizations. Positioning theory describes the degree of power exchanged by the power and parity continuum, itself a dimension of the various components of the social order. Ling (1998, p. 137) explains ‘the nature of positioning is frequently determined by the length and continuity of the working relationship’. Participants in this research have held their roles for at least two years. While Leslie Schmidt had recently been appointed as Chief Executive, Leslie had held senior appointments in the institution for a number of years.

#### **6.3.1 Berti Fender – Educator**

In keeping with the educator metaphor, Berti Fender approaches achieving and reinforcing accomplishments through continual communication of the sustainability message. Berti does not appear to let down the defensive guard, which implies that there is always an imposition of personal power and a reluctance to introduce the uncertainty of parity. However, Berti does invite people to explore what



sustainability means, but does so only under controlled circumstances, where an outcome that conforms to the chairman's epiphany can be assured.

The nature of this epiphany is such that parity, where people had the potential to introduce simplifications or prevarication could undermine achievements. Logic could suggest to those who are concerned about loss of employment that adopting the sustainability ideals of the chairman would possibly weaken the financial viability of the business and thereby lead to their unemployment. An open consensus approach might well lead employees to limit their risk by adopting a scaled down version of sustainability. While the chairman is prepared to risk his organization in the interest of achieving a truly sustainable operation, all employees may not share the degree of his commitment. Furthermore, the extent to which he is prepared to risk the business cannot be known to people half-way around the world. Hence, Berni is faced with telling people the news that sustainability will happen within Trendply and that the chairman will protect employees from financial reaction to his epiphany.

Berti does not appear to be confident enough in people's reaction to sustainability intentions of Trendply to engage in deliberative positioning. Parity in the determination of what sustainability means and the degree to which it can be implemented is not negotiable. Yet, the sustainability cascading process provides evidence that deliberate and perhaps some deliberative positioning gives way to some consensus, if only within defined boundaries.

*It was more of a dialogue process, that was not saying 'This is sustainability, learn it'. But, they had this dialogue. 'What is sustainability'? 'What does it mean to you'?*

A degree of consensus is apparent in this dialogue, but it appears that any discussions are controlled and contrived to lead towards the chairman's epiphany.

*The Chairman initiated a process at the beginning of 2000 that was called our sustainability cascading process. Ray sent a letter around summarizing the results from all of those meetings. There is another process that we are about to go through that is sustainability cascading round 2 throughout 2000 to be completed by December 2001. And that is all about raising people's consciousness and getting that sustainability ethic embedded in the business and really getting that connection.*

It could be suggested that people would feel involved in the decisions that appeared to be made by the company. Perhaps that element of the social order in itself is parity; people realize they have a right to contribute and feel obliged to do so. Indeed there is open discussion about the sustainability issue, but it appears to be education and reiteration of the chairman's intention. This brings stakeholders into the sustainability activities, but neither the chairman nor Berti offer themselves collaboratively. Parity is not necessarily achieved in this corporate moral order.

### 6.3.2 Robyn Floyd - Coach

When Robyn Floyd realizes there is a problem, Robyn prepares by understanding the situation and formulates a plan to resolve the problem. Prior to confronting the individual or group responsible for the problem, Robyn already has an optimum solution from Convenco's perspective. Personal power rarely gives way to parity.

*I spend a lot of my time thinking about – in this complex – ‘Why do people do things the way they do?’ We have external tenants (who) have to comply with all our policies and procedures. For whatever reasons, certain things do not happen as they should. (Rather than) slap the tenants and say that is bad, my argument is why do people not do what they are supposed to do? Is it convenience? Cost? Because human nature is to try to find a short cut.*

When the individual or group responsible for problems is identified, they are confronted with the objective of working out a solution that will benefit everyone. In this regard, Robyn engages in consensus and moves toward achieving parity, but it is a choreographed parity and Robyn is the person calling the dance steps.

*We had to identify what the issue was and who the perpetrators were. We approached them and said ‘We have a non compliance issue here which is a serious concern to us’. Unless we are prepared to enforce breach, we do not have anything other than saying ‘Hey guys, please comply’. You do not get a lot of leverage. What I would rather do is spin it around and say here is what I would like to do for you; there is a cost attached, but we can take away all the pain associated with that activity. We are offering a ready-made solution.*

With a solution presented to them, perpetrators are given the option to accept or reject Robyn's ready-made solution. While the situation might be somewhat contrived by Robyn, a degree of negotiation takes place and a consensus solution could be seen to arise.

*How I approach it is, I go to them and say 'I do not want to talk about this and have a meeting – because I spend my life in meetings, right? I want to meet with you and I have something to sell'. It is almost like the job of a salesman – but we use all our smarts ahead of time. There is the perpetrator, that is the issue, this is why they are doing it, what is the solution that we can offer, what are the costs, what are the benefits on balance, 'That is what we recommend you do'. It is a value proposition.*

Robyn retains control through limiting the duties of those who are unable to perform and the rights of those who may prefer to resist. Having previously dealt with opposition to dealing with sustainability issues, Robyn achieves and reinforces accomplishments by being a coach in a moral order that acknowledges Robyn as one capable of defining and enacting limitations. Robyn identifies strengths and weaknesses, and builds on the strengths in a way that a sports coach would build on skills. Focusing individuals and groups away from those areas and letting them specialize in the areas in which they excel resolves the problem.

Perhaps it is the industry that Robyn is in or perhaps it is the natural coach coming out, clearly Robyn is 'welcoming them on arrival, making them feel good'. Not only customers are made to feel good, but also staff and subcontractors.

### 6.3.3. Kim Warren – Patience

When confronted with sustainability issues, Kim is determined to achieve resolution and to see that whatever has been accomplished has been effective and soundly implemented. Parity is encouraged. Kim assumes personal responsibility for issues when they arise and takes a personal interest to see that appropriate steps are taken, but the parity that Kim encourages presents hazards.

*I was the line directly responsible for that (sustainability incident). It is difficult not to be, when you are the chief executive.*

When problems occur in cases where no sustainability issues are expected to arise Kim is determined to understand the cause. Yet, Kim remains patient to the extent that there is value in ensuring that a thorough resolution of the issue takes place. Parity is retained, but people are reminded of their duty to Alto.

*An extreme disappointment it would be, plus an element of self-reproach. Disappointment that such a thing could exist without our being aware of it, and self reproach for the reason that evidently the message that we had put through about improving our financial performance had not been sufficiently accompanied by a message that says there is one thing that is more important than financial performance, and that is the safety and environmental performance.*

Kim tempers a sense of urgency for sustainability issues with understanding of a need to operate a viable business. However, this does not imply that Kim devalues the need for environmental and social responsibility; there is an element of personal power. Yet, at the core there is an understanding that all voices need to be heard in consensus and a parity relationship achieved.

*If you do not create shareholder value then you cannot do the other things. So there are those who say lets concentrate on where the real value is and the other stuff is all peripheral. There are others who say, particularly if you are a large and global company, that your place in society or your licence to operate is determined by your performance in all these things.*

It is in the pursuit and retention of achievements that there appears to be a parity relationship. Kim appears to be prepared to offer personal collaboration and invites collaboration of others. The extent to which people are obliged to perform duties or conferred with rights to act depends on a moral order that has not been clearly defined by this research. This achieves a situation where accomplishments can be attained and retained; it is through patience that Kim harnesses parity to achieve and reinforces accomplishments.

#### 6.3.4 Ange Dunn – Sagacious Conscience

Once Ange has achieved an understanding with each partner chief executive, Ange shifts from deliberate to deliberative positioning. However, despite imposing personal power to alter successfully partner chief executives positioning, Ange realizes there is much more to do.

*The chief executives are about the only ones who are thinking longer term, but they remain unconvinced at this stage. We have to do our jobs better in terms of convincing them that this technology will in fact be viable for them.*

Ange offers a global suggestion to resolve this situation.

*I think the answer is that all of us have to be more assertive and say to the chief executive 'One of your five key result areas is that you will need to ensure that'. The board has to say that to the chief executive.*

Perhaps because of Ange's absolute dependency, Ange does want to be seen acting with deliberative intent. Instead, Ange reserves the right to position themselves and others. Ange engages in parity when the situation permits, but quickly reverts to personal power to realign any recalcitrance that might jeopardize Silverwood's stability and continuity. For this reason Ange is unable to modify the situation that requires Silverwood to be funded. Any ground lost in this area would lead to a sudden end of Silverwood operations.

*He was prepared to walk away from it, and that would have been disastrous. We would have lost everybody, because we could not have delivered on what we had said to the government that we were going to do. So the whole thing collapses – very, very serious consequences.*

However, in their situation at Silverwood, Ange does engage in parity deliberation and collaborate with partner chief executives. As shown here, it must be a series of delicate deflections on 'knife edge' negotiation.

*They want an immediate payback on that money. Our focus is all long term, so I am forever having to strike a balance, convincing them that the long term work is of use.*

For Ange to succeed and retain funding for Silverwood requires the wisdom, prudence and timing to deal with the opposition. There is a sensitive social order that imposes duties on Ange and confers partner chief executives with self-perceptions that they have rights to disrupt the stability of Ange's business. Ange and partner chief executives engage in a charade of negotiation that has the potential to undermine the long-term viability of Silverwood.

### 6.3.5 Leslie Schmidt – First Among Equals

Leslie is confronted with a diverse organization that requires accomplishments to be achieved and reinforced differently in a number of areas. Being first among

equals, Leslie has engaged in a deliberative intent to understand each area, to determine what differs and the appropriate approach to take to achieve accomplishments.

*Disciplinary training influences the way that people conceive or conceptualize an idea of problems and solutions. It pre-empts a whole series of options and the ways that they achieve results. I have actually gone back to understand more about the knowledge models that they are working with – the training models that they are working with – in order to be able to frame and debate the morals. That is my job as a leader. Without actually giving them the answer – it is the framing. It is managing the distress. It is a way of framing a debate.*

Appropriate framing is the key to how Leslie deals with different areas. Having achieved this understanding, Leslie works with each area to exchange ideas and share a vision about how issues should be dealt with.

*Through that process I would get them to actually critique the issue. Through that process I would change the issues, or amend the issues, or supplement the issues, or require the allocation of the issues. I would then take them into a scripted process to show them that these are the issues. What are the options; I would put something on the table to start the discussion, to give them some place to exercise their skills – which is of critique – and from that process create a dialogue in which they could then construct.*

Once accomplishments are in place, Leslie continues to encourage parity, but realizes that reinforcement might require personal power. However, even in the use of personal power there is a degree of consensus implied in saying ‘*continuing to make the logic*’ and ‘*continuing to show how*’.

*Clearly people resent the work-load imposition and the issue is one of persistence: persistence in continuing to make the logic; continuing to show how the information will be used.*

Parity is achieved more by Leslie than other participants perhaps because of the desire to delve into the organization and the ability to fluently negotiate changes that occur from area to area. There is a significant degree of trust sought.

*They are stunned. They sit there and they look at me and their faces change. As they go from ‘I have heard all this crap before’ and ‘I do not believe anything’ to starting to get optimistic about the future; to see that there is a future; that they will be able to create their future. And from that it builds their security reliance – what is necessary to get from one another is that they have got to have a level of trust. So, issues around trust, consistency, and integrity are key to that process.*

The Calvinistic interpretation of eucharistia being *gracious speech* might define this ability. Not that there is a religious overtone to Leslie's approach, but there is indeed a sense of 'replacement of "corrupt speech"' (Foulkes 1989, p. 149); corrupt in the sense that it does not contribute to the new processes. Leslie has assumed a duty to delve into the institution where no other Chief Executive has gone before. As such, staff are expected to take advantage of the rights conferred upon them by Leslie's acts and engage in processes that contribute to the betterment of the institution. Leslie does indeed proclaim the good news in a kind sort of way that is sensitive to people's differences and feelings.

### 6.3.6 Hillary Black – Master's Apprentice

Parity comes naturally in the democratic forum of a public service organization. In a way, this organization results in forced positioning that could be perceived as being parity. However, democratic processes are not necessarily consensus or collaboration. Hillary must work to achieve parity through harnessing those who support issues.

*There will always be a few councillors that will have a strong argument to support you, and you can allow them to carry the day.*

Hillary depends on those with strong arguments to influence the democratic processes in favour of the needs of the public service organization. Through the various discussions, debates and votes, the council achieves a process that is close to being collaboration. Various points of view are indeed put forth and considered and, while the decision relies on a vote, a degree of consensus is achieved.

*The councillors were very good at gaining support of council and we were able to get the TBL concept approved as a policy.*

Especially in cases where council votes unanimously in favour of issues, the resulting consensus is parity. However, Hillary orchestrates this through determining who needs to be convinced and working with those people prior to council meetings. However, Hillary continues to rely on various experts to guide how best to work with these people.

*You have to work very hard to convince people of the strengths of your argument. I think in those cases you just have to persist in your arguments. And the beauty of it – once again – is that we have two councillors who understand how to balance things between various elements. They can see a more lateral way of dealing with things than 'We just do not want to have parkland ruined'. We were able to run that particular line with those councillors, and the other councillors would pick up the debate and they would do the debating for you.*

Hillary has demonstrated a commitment to accept duties and impose duties on others. Certain councillors acknowledge their rights to take the lead in driving key issues through the council and winning support. Achieving and reinforcing progress of sustainability accomplishments is facilitated by a moral order that has been determined by connection with the community by way of the elected councillors. Hillary accepts a place in this system and has learned to harness the democratic mechanisms that might otherwise constrain outcomes.



## Chapter VII

### **CONCLUSION: CHALLENGING OLD MYTHS AND CREATING NEW MYTHS**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

In this Chapter, the positioning of each participant is represented by a metaphor (summarized in Figure 7-3) that describes how that person deals with sustainability issues. The metaphor is derived from the further reduction of data to that which has been described in Chapters 5 and 6. In the overall process of data reduction, the Foucauldian insight introduced in Chapter 3 has led to the development of the construct of social flux (Figures 7-5A and 7-5B) as an expansion of positioning theory. As such, this Chapter draws on these advances to understand how senior managers deal with sustainability issues.

In this research, conversations with senior managers have revealed that they engage in positioning themselves and others when they deal with sustainability issues. This corresponds to similar research of curriculum co-ordinators in independent schools, in which Ling (1998, p. 150) learned about how educational professionals did their work 'through persons attributing "meaning" through their lived experience'. In his research he based an analytical framework for narrative data of educational professionals on positioning theory. In this current research, the author has applied similar analysis to senior business managers.

Positioning results in the discursive production of selves as defined along several dimensions. Whereas Ling (1998) concerned himself with five binary dimensions, this research focuses primarily on the parity / power continuum. Prompted by Diamond (1998), the author has drawn on Foucauldian insight to enable the power / parity continuum to be explored in more detail as summarized in Figure 7-4.

With regard to how they position themselves and others, it was shown in Table 3-2 that senior managers appear to behave along this power / parity continuum fluctuating between forced, deliberate, and deliberative positioning. Figure 6-1 shows that as they move away from forced positioning, there is an exchange of power for parity. In a Foucauldian sense, power is not possessed by anyone but rather deployed by people in certain situations and it causes reaction or resistance in other people (Foucault 1972). From this perspective, managers can be seen to be varying between exerting *controlling power* and *enabling parity* to achieve their objectives. Where there is uncertainty or a need to alter the status quo, senior managers retain prerogative to deny *enabling parity* and direct the full force of *controlling power* that their role has conferred on them. When changes have been achieved and stabilized, senior managers appear to be more likely to adopt a more deliberative approach to position themselves and position others. This progressive loosening of control may be true where outcomes can be negotiable, but senior managers appear to be reluctant to permit non-negotiable outcomes to be exposed to deliberative positioning.

Stability appears to be a prerequisite for senior managers to consider moving towards deliberative positioning. As this Chapter unfolds, it is intended to make clear how the findings of this study show the critical aspects of senior manager's discursive role in dealing with sustainability issues. As explained earlier, sustainability is here perceived to include a range of obligatory and externally imposed (OEI) issues concerning a balance between the environmental, social and economic. Sustainability is something that chief executives and other senior managers might choose to avoid if it were not made obligatory through external imposition. Even if sustainability has been externally imposed, the dealing with it remains to be promulgated to managers and staff.

To deal with something that is not already on the agenda, senior managers need to invoke a degree of power. Lewin (1952) refers to episodic change in which situations are unfrozen (de-stabilized), changed and re-frozen (re-stabilized). In this light, situations that have been unfrozen call for deployment of power until a time when they are re-frozen, when a state of parity can be returned to.

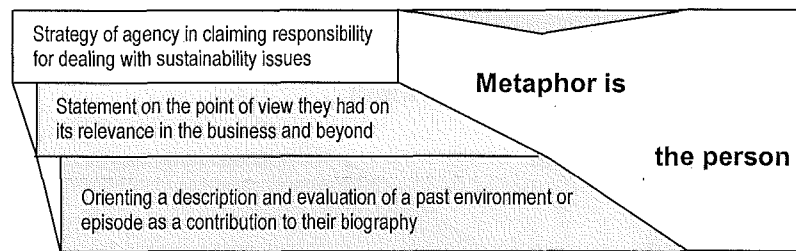
## **7.2 Defining Instances of Power / Parity**

Recalling from Chapter 4, six senior managers have provided discursive data regarding how they have dealt with sustainability issues. Each of these participants and the researcher were located in a moral and personal space by conversation (or discursive action) as was shown in Figure 3-6A. Sets of data were collected during conversations with the researcher, in which each participant explained their personal involvement and that of others in dealing with a sustainability issue of their choosing. In identifying, describing and interpreting forced, deliberate and deliberative positioning, these data provided insight into how a balance between power and parity was socially constructed.

With interview data as a foundation, case studies (Yin 1994) have been prepared to demonstrate the personal positioning practice of each senior manager. In preparing the case studies, interview data was augmented by observations from a distance via various media available. In some cases, reactions to how participants dealt with issues were observed and, in others, public media provided insight. At the core of each case study was a metaphor that was selected to represent the way the senior manager positioned themselves and others. Following Ling's (1998, p. 151) approach, the author then discussed with each participant the case study and the appropriateness of metaphor that emerged. With prospects of learning, participants appeared to engage in deliberative positioning, drawing understanding out of the researcher.

Parallel to Ling's (1998, p. 152) approach, metaphors in this research are a consequence of the individual worlds – this world being composed of the six senior managers as they deal with sustainability issues – that participants spoke about in

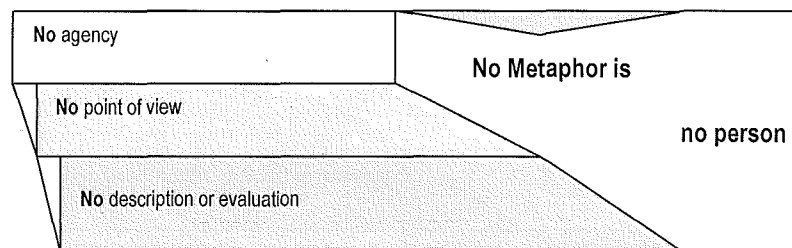
interviews. As shown in Figure 7-1, personal identity, or self, can be defined by three components interacting. Ling goes on to explain that these three components are a person's agency, their statement of a point of view (that depends on agency), and their engaging in discursive action (that depends on both agency and point of view). The discourses from which these metaphors were drawn represent the personal identity and selfhoods of each participant through three components as indicated in Figure 7-1, which demonstrates the dependent, three-tier nature of participant's agency, point of view and discursive action.



**Components of Discourse**

Figure 7-1

Participants provided their recollections of memorable experiences dealing with sustainability or OEI issues from a time and space of their choosing. In each case, public pressure for some aspect of sustainability was at the core of the reasons for pursuing these issues. Hence, recollections or rhetorical redescrptions as Harré describes them were specific to participant's situations and reflected their social processes. In doing so, participants revealed an aspect of themselves, enabling the researcher to select a descriptive metaphor of each person.

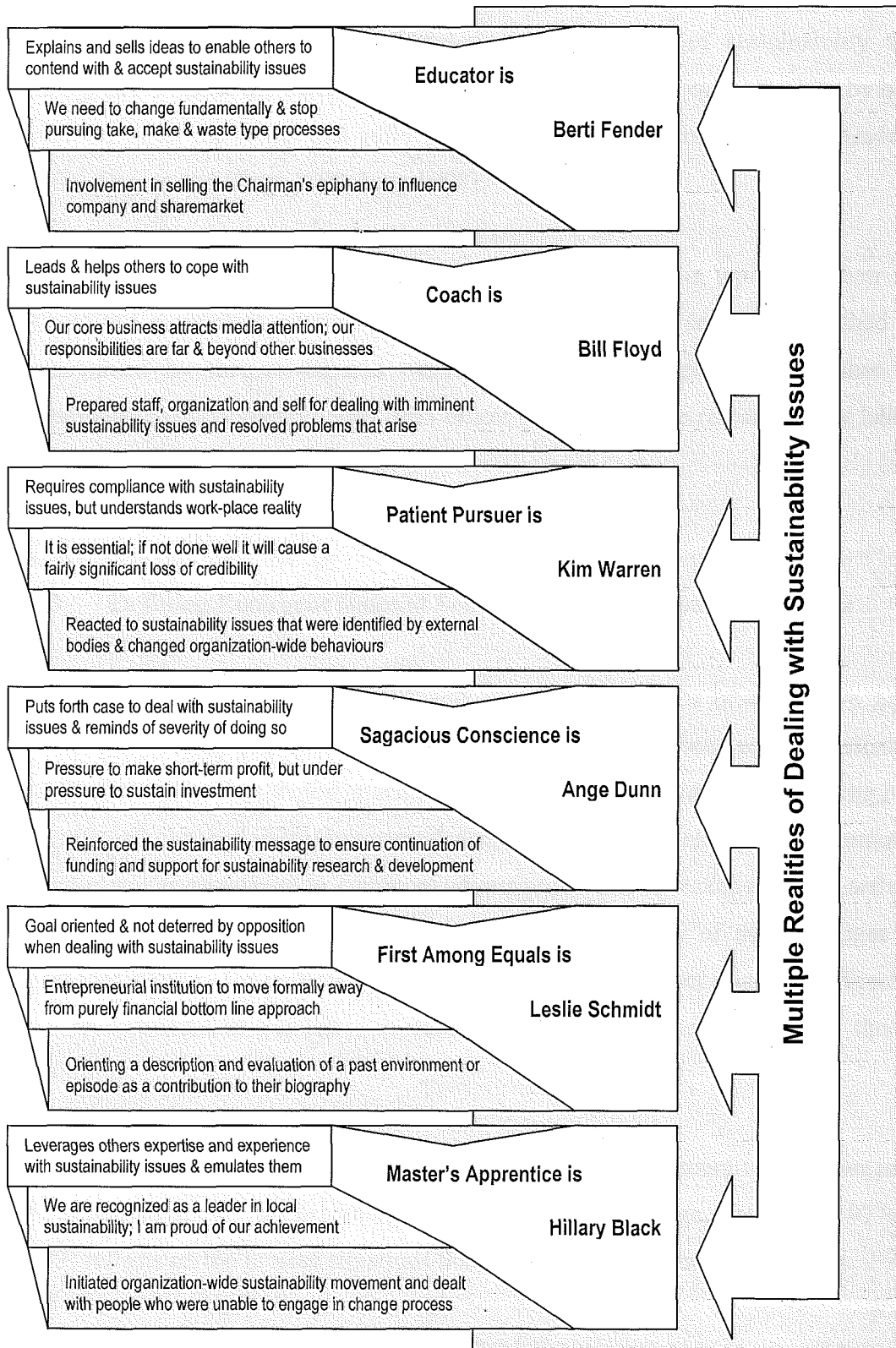


**Without Agency and a Point of View, a Person is Undefined**

Figure 7-2

In contrast to Figure 7-1, Figure 7-2 shows how a person's self is dependent on their agency and point of view; without these components there is no person making a contribution to the situation. In other words, without force of action, statement of relevance, and involvement, a person has no effect on circumstances.

It is these attributes that become apparent through positioning theory. Each participant is represented by a metaphor in Figure 7-3 with this model. In this way, their self-constructed personal identity is related to the other participants.



**How Participants Dealt with Sustainability Issues**

Figure 7-3

As Ling (1998, p. 153) suggests, these metaphors of personal knowledge are not perceived to be restricted to the events from which the data was collected. Rather, the senior managers are here represented by metaphors that emerged from their personal explanations of events that are assumed to be influenced by their personal knowledge. In this account of styles of management of sustainability these metaphors become the person through the person engaging with others or by being referred to in the terms that influenced the selection of the metaphor (Gadamer 1976, Davies and Harré 1990, Ling 1998).

When people encounter others they do so in a way that is typical of their self. Thus, the more they interact with others, the more that self is established and recognized by themselves and others. Hence, in selecting a metaphor that represents the way they interact with others – including the researcher – a label is applied to that person's self.

### **7.3 Defining Emergent Roles of Senior Managers through Discourse**

Recalling from Chapter 4, participants provided examples of discursive action relating to dealing with sustainability issues. This data has been used to understand how their roles as senior managers emerged in the course of dealing with significant changes in environmental and social expectations of the community. Senior managers engage in communications with various stakeholders to arrive at and deal with a new foundation that reflects the severity of these changes and provides stability for collective progress – of all stakeholders – in a new direction. As recapitulated in Section 7-1, collective progress cannot occur until there is stability.

What has been observed in the data can be referred to as discursive practices in the Foucauldian sense. In describing the origins of knowledge, Foucault (1977c, p. 142) reflects on the inverse situations that are necessary to deal with change.

'What is found at the beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity'.

With change in place and stability resumed, parity can be permitted, safe in the knowledge that dissent is less likely to confound organizational intentions to pursue what must be done.

The train of discursive data left by senior managers has been used to describe the power that occurs in dealing with sustainability issues. Either change or dissent occurs and, when the new order is achieved, parity is resumed. In some cases it has been seen that parity has not resumed, indicating that the change has not yet been fully achieved. Those senior managers who deal with change well appear to remain effectively in disparity until appropriate foundations have been put in place.

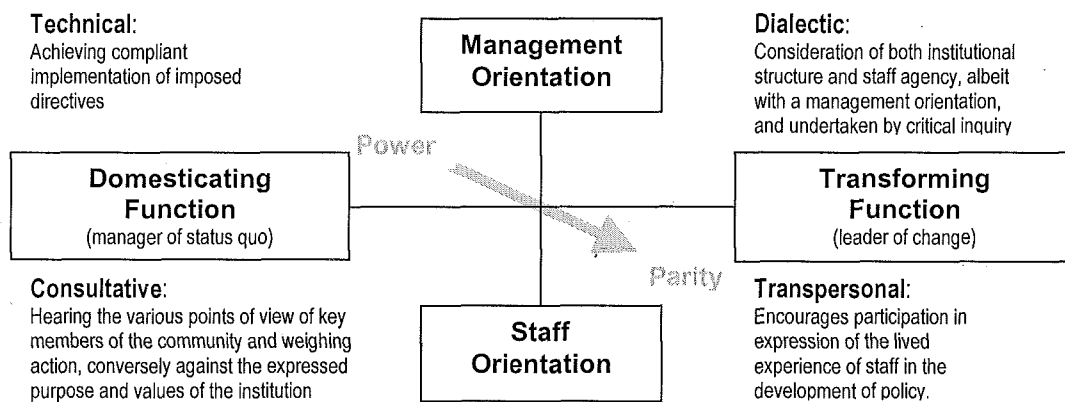
Discursive data has also provided evidence of the positioning and repositioning that has taken place to achieve conditions to deal with sustainability issues. In this discursive action, senior managers provide evidence of themselves being positioned and when they positioned others. They have perceived that they engage in and are affected by this positioning. In this way it has been revealed that senior managers have educated subordinates, superiors and other stakeholders as well as themselves. They have secured support from those whom they perceive as controlling factors that need to be changed. They delegated to those whom they have won as allies. Through framing or formatting discussions they enable people to arrive at conclusions that are congruent with organizational intentions through a seeming consensus approach. In short, they are seen to be taking control of the situation through vigilantly applying parity and power to persuade others to deal with issues.

#### **7.4 Sustainability Requires Confrontation and Reinforcement**

When recounting how they dealt with sustainability issues, senior managers have referred to instances in which they have challenged obstacles and reinforced achievements. In commenting on these two sorts of activities, a common theme has been their interactions with people. People have been shown to present obstacles to dealing with sustainability issues as well as needing to have the sustainability message reinforced. In dealing with those who present obstacles and require reinforcement of the sustainability message – which reasonably could include most

people – senior managers engage in a variety of discursive actions. It appears that those senior managers who are able to deal with sustainability well do so because they have determined what obstacles are presented and who is presenting them.

The six senior managers do not appear to be differentiated by management versus staff orientation as shown in Ling's study. Nor would they be expected to be. Senior managers, by virtue of their appointment, would be expected to have a general perspective and, in doing so, they each might be expected to traverse the range of technical, consultative, dialectic and transpersonal characteristics that Ling (1998, pp. 156-8) used to categorize his participants – see Figure 7-4. Instead, the senior managers demonstrated behaviour on a different plane – one of diversity that is enabled by the ability to traverse a power/parity dimension. As shown by the faint line in Figure 7-4, power can be seen to give way to parity when moving from a technical to transpersonal orientation. This relationship uncovers a sensitivity of Ling's approach in that it appears to distinguish between lower and senior level managers.



### Representations of Leadership Positioning

(modified from Ling, 1998, p. 158)

Figure 7-4

One of the participating senior managers – assigned the metaphor of Coach – was not a chief executive, but a middle manager, albeit one with substantial responsibilities. The Coach could be perceived as tending strongly toward a strong management orientation and a domesticating function, that corresponded to the consultative positioning observed in some of Ling's participants. (Ling did acknowledge that his participants assumed several if not all of these functions, but



it was implied that their tendency was to remain predominantly in the mode of one function). Having said that, the Coach is not quite as one dimensional as the curriculum co-ordinators of that study. The Coach displayed a propensity for all four functions defined by Ling. Yet, the other five senior managers participating in this study – all chief executives – perhaps demonstrated considerably more fluency in each function and appear to have employed them appropriately. This suggests that senior managers who are effective at dealing with sustainability issues have a sort of gracefulness and fluidity in their discursive practices. These characteristics of ‘gracious talk’ as discussed in Sub-Section 6.3.5 appear to have enabled them to achieve co-operation amongst diverse people through focusing on ‘thanksgiving’ or appreciation.

### **7.5 Gracefulness and Fluidity as a Characteristics of Senior Managers**

Each chief executive was concerned with transforming and then domesticating activities, but none was limited to these functions. People’s rights and duties were aligned with the moral order and then supported by speech acts congruent with sustainability objectives. For example, the Educator engaged in helping people understand the need to change to, and where they would be when the change had been completed. With the objective of the change achieved, the Educator helped people to realize the need to uphold what they had achieved. Similarly, the Coach realized people’s weaknesses and enabled them to cope with difficulties. When they had overcome obstacles, the Coach worked with people to keep them on track. In a similar way, the Patient Pursuer created opportunities for people to realize for themselves that sustainability issues needed to be dealt with appropriately. When they had achieved a level of enlightenment and adopted the required behaviour, the Patient Pursuer provided structures to keep sustainability issues in the forefront of everyone’s minds. In this way, senior managers appear to have been appreciative (Foulkes 1989, p. 149) of efforts of others and built on what they had done well, with the expectation that they would persevere and exceed their own achievements.

Perhaps the best example of fluency and aptitude for correct selection of the appropriate social functions is the Sagacious Conscience, who dealt with financiers

who constantly questioned the value in supporting the Silverwood research and development team. The Sagacious Conscience always had statistics at hand to reinforce financiers' intention to continue supporting Silverwood. When situations arose that required uptake of the sustainability cause, the Sagacious Conscience was able to put a convincing argument together and harness strong allies to sell the message. While these may be perceived as being the same processes, there are subtle differences. In reinforcing current behaviour of financiers, the Sagacious Conscience would perform a Technical function that focused on continuing progress towards previously agreed sustainability objectives. However, when it was necessary to change the opinion of a new person in a decision-making role, the Sagacious Conscience would perform a Consultative function. In these cases, the Silverwood chairman was enlisted to engage in a session where the new decision-maker would be enabled to come to the conclusion that ongoing financing of Silverwood was incontestable. In dealing with government bodies, the Sagacious Conscience would perform a Dialectic function that involved consideration of institutional / governmental structure and bureaucratic agency through critical inquiry and discussion. In discussions with the researcher, the Sagacious Conscience performed a Transpersonal function that created an opportunity for the researcher to draw out findings for himself. These shifts appeared seamless in conversation.

First Among Equals entered into the community to invite participation and drew out their ideas. These ideas would then be incorporated into broader plans to enable people to see their input become components in the larger structure. Having achieved consensus, reassurance was provided by First Among Equals to reiterate the need to adopt and retain the sustainability approach. The Master's Apprentice similarly solicited knowledge from stakeholders. However, while First Among Equals appeared to be incorporating others ideas to create a sense of ownership, the Master's Apprentice was building personal knowledge to enable a better decision. Having established an appropriate level of knowledge, the Master's Apprentice appointed appropriate people to implement changes in the community. When changes had been realized, the Master's Apprentice endeavoured to incorporate changes into policy and legislation through the institutional process.

Rather than being alternate social functions as seen with Ling's participants, the senior managers involved in this research appear to have treated these functions – perhaps holistically – as progressing linearly. That is, both domesticating and transforming functions were harnessed when the situation called for them. It may be that the ability to treat these two processes holistically is an indication of competence for the most senior positions. Furthermore, in the pursuit of dealing with sustainability and OEI issues, the senior managers all appear to have aligned the needs of their organization with the needs of the various stakeholders they encountered. This aligning process would see various iterations of domesticating and transforming functions, perhaps with several concurrent paths occurring to deal with different issues. If this were the case, it would imply that competent senior managers have a perception that enables them to perceive the social order that influences the discursive action taking place in their organizations. In doing so, they deal with the various components of the social order.

## **7.6 Creating a Complementary Social Order Through Social Flux**

Recalling the social constructionist model introduced in Chapter 3, it is apparent that positioning is an outcome of discursive action that occurs when people act within a social order. Discursive action – or conversation – is influenced by positions when the conversation commences, the story line and the speech acts that occur. All of these things happen at the intersection of the four components of social order (Figure 3-5C). To deal with sustainability issues it is necessary to have a social order that is complementary to the sort of issues being confronted. The senior managers appeared to alter the social order in such a way that enabled sustainability and OEI issues to be dealt with appropriately. How this occurs can be understood through the social constructionist model, if a link is included between the place the positioning occurs and discursive action.

In Chapter 3 a gaze-like social force was alluded to. That force appears to affect how ideas are accepted and used. In a way, this reflects Foucault's gaze, but it is the residual effect of such a force that is of interest here. As will be shown in this Section, social flux is an effective term to describe this social influence.

Gaze is part of what prevents people from doing what Michael (1973) refers to as 'learning to learn'. As was shown in Section 3-5-1, gaze can impose predispositions that blind people to appropriate decisions or behaviour. In dealing with sustainability issues, people need to look beyond gaze to question concepts, perspectives, old categories and standards of judgment that may limit thought. First Among Equals facilitated this process by '*framing*' and helping subordinates by '*managing the distress*' as they would '*critique the issue*'. These sorts of changes enhance one's capacity to approach situations in new ways and create a datum for development of fundamentally new skills (Senge 1990, Schein 1997). Before these changes can occur, the residual of gaze needs to be neutralized.

As implied by discussions in Chapter 3, gaze is insufficient to explain residual effects, but something like gaze contributes to understanding why people differ and need to resolve differences of opinion through negotiation. Gaze serves as a foundation for a construct that explains residual or predisposed preference; the construct of social flux (not to be confused with the symbolic act of flux defined by Johnson (1990)). The author draws on electromagnetic theory to introduce flux.

#### 7.6.1 Broadening of Gaze to a Construct of Social Flux

There appear to be limitations to Foucault's gaze especially when attempting to understand how managers' behaviour can enable or obstruct appropriate deliberation of sensitive issues. Murray (1990) provides a construct that takes a step toward resolving this limitation. Interested in how persons are 'understood not simply as products of structures, but as actively involved in the reproduction of those structures', Murray (1990) merges Foucault's gaze with ideas of other philosophers. The perspective offered by Murray has been engaged in this research to construct a wider gaze-like phenomenon with a potential for the conceptualization of some sort of residual social phenomenon; a residue depicted by the social constructionist model (Figure 3-5C). Such a force could enable or oppose as well as legitimize or de-legitimize.

Dawkins (1976) introduced the idea of cultural genes that he referred to as memes. Memes are those social characteristics that define one society from another. In the

same way that genes are passed through biological chains, Dawkins suggested that his memes would replicate through social relationships. Similar to genes, only worthy memes would be accepted and passed on. Something like a management *gaze* could be seen to be inclined to replicating itself and obstructing competing memes.

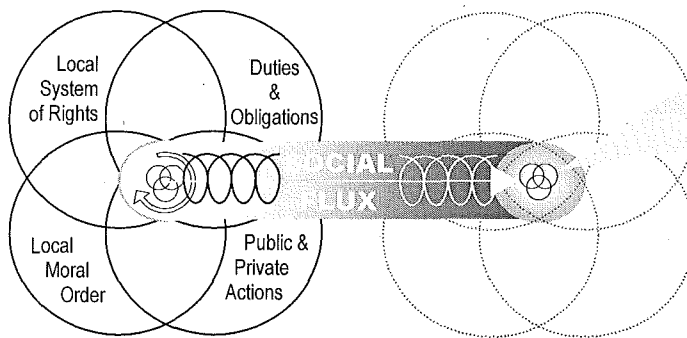
A manager's influence is like an electric current. It occurs when the manager takes action and it stops when the manager's action stops. However, some residual influence remains after the manager's action stops. For example, when a person turns their conversation from one issue to another, the memory of their message continues to influence those they had just dealt with. Others remember what is important, and they gauge their behaviour to conform to managers' preferences. Direct management action results in direct influence, but how might residual influence occur? An explanation could be found in electromagnetic theory as introduced in Appendix B.

#### 7.6.2 Extrapolation to a Social Context

When people talk about being 'charged up' by a situation, their comments could be analogous to a residual charge that exists in an object after an electrical current has been passed through or in proximity to the object. Here, that residue is referred to as flux; Harré and Slocum (in press) identify the need 'to study the flux of social life' if the complexities of 'stretches of social life' are to be understood. With that in mind, the analogy of electromagnetic flux discussed in Appendix B has sensitized the author to realize the possibility that a social flux affects social order.

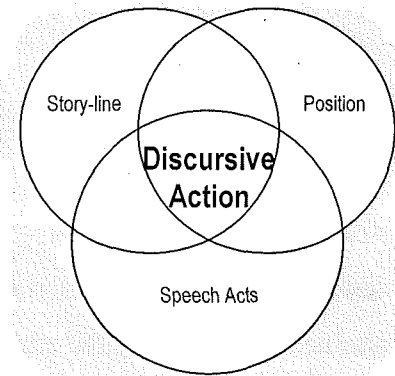
As shown in Figure 7-5A, a social flux could be used to explain the residual social forces that exist in any society. This social flux could be considered a type of mask that alters perception. Both Foucault (1977a, 1977b, 1978, 1986 and 1988) and Goffman (1959 and 1963) spoke about masks and masking; Foucault (1978, p. 130) suggested that unmasking results in identifying the truth and motive; 'the challenging of taboos'. Goffman spoke about taking down masks in terms of 'dis-identifiers'. Austin (1997) suggests that change initiators can 'mask the tradition-challenging intent of the social change by advocating for the change within the

current goal structure of the organization'. Similarly, Neimark (1990, p. 104) suggests that ideology is masked in common sense. Consider how the widely accepted quality management tool, Failure Mode Effects and Analysis explores and prioritizes design and process issues that could go wrong. Should there be a parallel process – to understand disruptive *social* forces – that should be taken prior to negotiation about sensitive or unfamiliar issues? If so, should the components of the social constructionist model provide categories for such an inquiry?



**Social Constructionist Model**

Figure 7-5 A



**Tri-polar Discursive Action**

Figure 7-5 B

With a construct of social flux it is possible to envisage how sub-categories of effects can be derived – organizational flux, to denote the flux imposed by an organization; financial flux, to denote the flux imposed by the financial community. For example, the financial community has approached the sustainability movement with a residual that causes sustainability to have become an accounting exercise. Rather than dealing with social and environmental issues, as discussed in Sub-Section 2.3.3, these are reduced to financial terms. All of these sorts of flux describe the subsets of force that affect the set of solutions to issues to be dealt with. Figures 7-5A and 7-5B demonstrate the creation of social flux and the channelling of a social force. Dynamics of the social constructionist model cause residual social flux. This flux can alter discursive action and resulting positioning. Foucault (1986, p. 151) alluded to the residual nature of this flux.

‘True discourse, liberated by the nature of its form from desire and power, is incapable of recognizing the will to truth which pervades it; and the will to truth, having imposed itself upon us for so long, is such that the truth it seeks to reveal cannot fail to mask it’.

Schein (1997) argues that, in order to develop the capacities needed to deal with contemporary issues, one must undergo a learning process that is functionally equivalent to coercive persuasion. This implies that there are residual forces affecting individuals and perhaps organizations. In this research, positioning theory will enable the identification of actions taken by senior managers to deal with residual social flux. That is, we can show how they develop the right set of capacities to enable themselves and others to accept the challenge of dealing with sustainability issues.

### **7.7 How Senior Managers Deal with Sustainability Issues**

Participants in this research were selected because they were known to have dealt with sustainability issues (or other OEI issues) successfully. Furthermore, their achievements have concerned long-term changes to the way their organizations have approached sustainability (or other OEI issues). It has been determined here that their success can be explained by their ability to alter what has been described in this thesis as the social flux.

Senior managers participating in this research appear to have realized the need to alter the social order described in Figure 7-5A and their ability to do so through discursive action as shown in Figure 7-5B. It is put forth that their actions – to vary story-lines, positions and speech acts – have altered the social flux, which is a reverse to the implications of the conjoined situation implied in Figures 7-5A and 7-5B.

Assuming a position that enabled them to change the way people view sustainability issues, and positioning others as being aware of the need to deal with sustainability issues and willing to do so, senior managers appear to have entered into discursive action. They appear to have adopted a story-line regarding the need to deal with sustainability issues and made use of speech acts. This process affects them and others such that the new way of approaching sustainability issues results in repositioning. However, this behaviour does not deal with the long-term change.

For this to occur, the components of the social constructionist model need to be altered.

As shown in Figure 7-6 (fold-out), the participants in this study have taken action to alter the moral order, local system of rights, duties and obligations, and public and private actions. These changes led to an altered social order that is conducive to dealing with sustainability issues. As such, the social flux has been altered and consequently the discursive action has been altered. With these fundamental changes to the way people conduct themselves, new positions can be assumed without constant reinforcement.

### 7.8 Aligning the Social Order through Freedom of Speech

That senior managers take steps to confront the social order when dealing with sustainability issues could suggest that they are sensitive to the components of the social order. They assume a duty to engage in a freedom of speech about what needs to be dealt with. Namely, the perceived rights of people, the duties people should undertake to perform, the underlying moral order, and their own actions as senior managers are all dealt with by senior managers who do deal with sustainability issues. This suggests that the answer of dealing with issues lies in aligning the social order to best support resolution of issues. As will be suggested in Chapter 8, such a freedom of speech could be explained by Foucault's ideas, such as those expressed in parrhesia (Foucault 1985b).

The four components of the social order could be perceived to alter the social order in a similar way as levelling control knobs on a physical platform. In other words, four adjustments need to take place. First, the rights that people perceive they have must to be confirmed and corrected. Second, with an appropriate system of rights in place, people need to understand the duties that they are required to perform. Third, there needs to be an appropriate moral order in place that supports rights and duties. Fourth, senior managers need to ensure that their own actions and the actions of others are congruent with what is expected from their subordinates. These four components interact to place the social order in an appropriate plane of reference for sustainability issues to be dealt within.



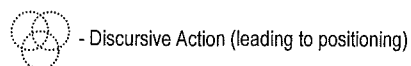
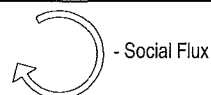
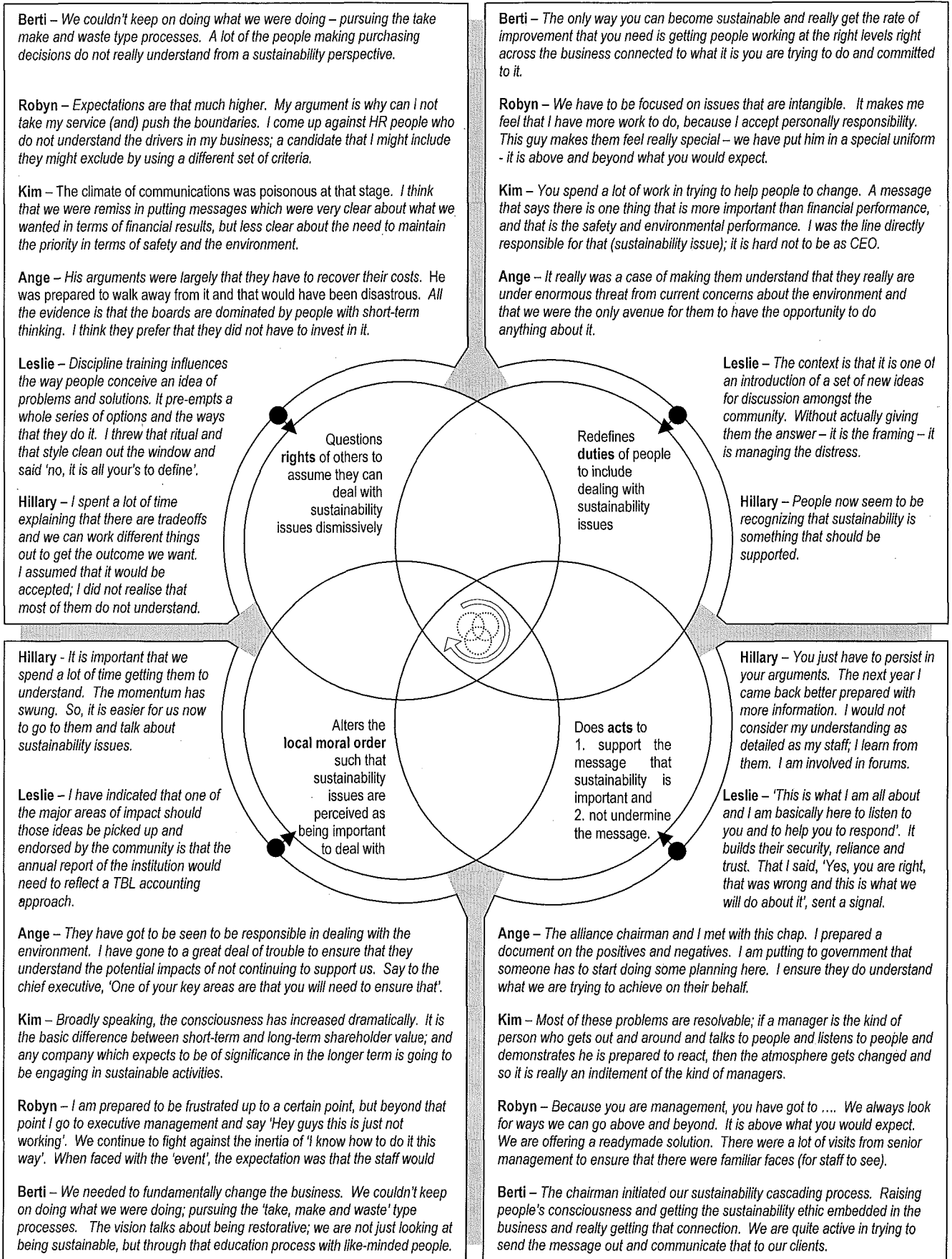
## 7.9 Implications of Conclusions for Practising Leaders

In reflecting the findings of this research on various organizations that have had difficulty with dealing with sustainability and other OEI issues, the author perceives that some senior managers may overlook their obligation to lead. While Deming (Deming 1986, p. 248, Walton 1989, pp. 69-70, Gabor 1990, p. 22-3) explains that leaders should not regulate *people*, he could be interpreted as suggesting that leaders should regulate the *social order*, to direct people towards effectively dealing with issues. In not dealing with the social order in this way, managers may be undermining their intentions to deal with sustainability and other OEI issues.

This research has powerful implications for practising managers who want to effectively enable the resolution of dealing with sustainability and other OEI issues. It has been shown that six senior managers alter rights, duties, morals and actions to align the social order of their organizations to the issues that need to be dealt with.

For successful resolution of sustainability and other OEI issues, business leaders could emulate the way that participants in this research have dealt with the social order. It may well be that those organizations that do not deal with sustainability and other OEI issues simply overlook the social order and fail to align it appropriately. The insight gained from this current research provides a basis for ongoing investigation into the duties of senior managers to establish appropriate social order. For example, further exploration could be conducted of companies that are perceived to deal well with OEI issues. This could be compared to companies that are perceived to not deal well with OEI issues. Foucault's unique and penetrating ideas may well craft further building blocks in the structure of a theory to explain how senior managers deal with sustainability and other OEI issues. As discussed in Section 7.6.2, perhaps the ideas developed in this thesis provide the basis for a cultural failure mode and effects analysis.

Reflection in Chapter 8 will explore these conclusions presented in this Chapter further.



Altering the Social Flux to Enable Sustainability to be Dealt With

Figure 7-6

## Chapter VIII

### REFLECTIONS ON RESEARCH

#### 8.1 Introduction

This research has been conducted to inquire how senior managers deal with sustainability issues. It has been put forth that these are just one category of obligatory and externally imposed (OEI) issues and that they confront institutions with urgency and interruption. This topic was selected because of a concern held by the author that some organizations dealt with OEI issues better than others, in that some organizations appeared to start and complete programs of dealing with OEI issues and others started but never completed them (Sub-Section 1.2.2). The author was interested in what might set apart those organizations that were successful at dealing with OEI issues.

Findings of this research suggest that, to deal with sustainability issues, senior managers deal with the social order. Through the concept of a social flux – developed in Chapter 7 to represent the outcome of social order – an understanding has been developed of how senior managers deal with sustainability issues. Specifically, the four components of the social order, as depicted in Figure 3-5, have enabled findings to be expressed concisely.

## 8.2 Limitations

Having conducted this research, the author realizes there are limitations on his findings. These are reflected on in the following Sub-Sections and provide part of the basis for extensions to the research.

### 8.2.1 Sensitivity of Sustainability Issue

As seen in Sub-Section 2.3.1, the sustainability debated over qualitative factors can become embroiled in emotions. This can lead to people being reluctant to discuss some aspects openly. While participants in this research were willing to contribute to this research and were generally highly co-operative and open, they occasionally would not expand on comments or answer certain questions. To a degree, this limited the extent to which the research could proceed. For example, Gellerman's (1986) rationalization for making bad ethical choices prompted the author to consider asking participants if, in dealing with sustainability issues, they dealt with people who made those sorts of rationalization. This line of questioning was not pursued, as it was perceived to be possibly too confrontational. This limitation is perceived to have been caused by the relatively public availability of a submitted thesis.

The sensitivity of the sustainability issue limited some 360 degree verification. Where some self-reports have been found to conflict with reality perceived by the author, they were omitted or overlooked. In a more private and confidential report, such conflicts would be presented to the participants for further clarification and perhaps adjustment.

### 8.2.2 Uncertainty of Researcher

At times, the author was subject to limitations of his own creating. The learning process especially confounded his common sense from time to time. Working in the shadows of great academics can be daunting. This and the constant pressure of conforming to protocols of academic regularity led the author to experience periods of awkwardness. As this apprenticeship evolved, the author realized some early

steps had been performed without the insight of full fluency of a seasoned academic. What might have occurred with more fluidity was at times reduced to dysfunctional thinking. As a result some stupid decisions were made during early stages and reflection has inspired the researcher to achieve a high standard of planning and conducting research activities. This is not to say that this research is flawed.

As Harré (2002c) wants to take out the Chapter that states 'rules explain everything' from Harré and Secord (1972), the author hopes that one day he will have achieved developments that lead him to want to take out parts of this thesis. It is understood that the work presented here presents many doors to be opened and many paths for this researcher or others to follow.

### 8.2.3 Positioning of Researcher

During each interaction, in addition to observing participant's positioning of self and others, the author was sensitive to how he was positioned by his experience dealing with the senior managers in conducting interviews. He could not help feel that he was imposing himself on the senior managers who agreed to spend their time participating in the research, and because of this he displayed a degree of deference to their office and appreciation for their participation. In retrospect, the researcher felt this had a subordinating impact on him and, at times, struggled to sustain a parity relationship. This did not happen in all situations and – to a degree – matched with the way participants spoke about positioning themselves and others. The author was cautious not to let his reaction influence his interpretation of the data by focusing on the phenomena observed in the data itself (Outhwaite, 1985).

## 8.3 Extensions

Limitations arising out of the author's learning process, the nature of the research, and the participants have led to the extensions discussed in this Section. If the research were to be done again, steps would be taken to prevent the limitations raised in the previous Section as noted in the following Sub-Sections.

### 8.3.1 Due Process

Hindsight has convinced the author that there is significant benefit to be gained from following due academic process. While the author benefited from various workshops offered by his faculty, they often occurred after the author had broached the issues. In the future, the author will spend considerably more time laying out a foundation on which to build research and do so in a more efficient sequence.

### 8.3.2 Gellerman's Rationalization

If a suitably trusting relationship could be developed with a CEO, it would be interesting to determine if that CEO dealt with instances that could be explained by Gellerman's (1986) rationalization, as referred to in Section 2.5 and Sub-Section 8.2.1. This could be done in single or multiple case studies focusing on that specific issue. In light of recent alleged unethical behaviour of key officers of major corporate collapses, such understanding may be most timely.

### 8.3.3 Assessing Social Order

Having developed the social constructionist model, the author views this as a potentially effective instrument for inquiring into business effectiveness. It is suggested that social flux can be used to explain how obstructions to change such as paradigms are caused. Furthermore, it is suggested that an altered social flux can lead the way to the introduction of new paradigms (or reinforcement of existing paradigms). This instrument could also be harnessed as an audit tool to judge the effectiveness of social order. To be a usable business effectiveness instrument, the four components of the social constructionist model would need further development to enable clear articulation of current and proposed states. Perhaps variables could be identified to enable a quantitative measurement.

### 8.3.4 Comparison with Other Assessment Models

It may be possible to integrate the social constructionist model with other assessment models, such as various quality standards and award systems. In order

to do so, it would be necessary to determine the differences and similarities between each of these. Likewise, the fusion of Schein's (1997) generative learning ideas may complement the concept of social flux. It may be that to be able to undo coercive persuasion – for one to be able to question their basic assumptions – there needs to be a sufficient change of the social flux.

### 8.3.5 Parrhesia as a Framework for Analysis

Foucault's concept of parrhesia (Foucault 1985b) may provide insight into how senior managers deal with issues by speaking the truth. It could be said that senior managers who effectively deal with sustainability issues identify the truth that needs to be dealt with and then get on with dealing with that truth. Foucault's parrhesia provides a framework for understanding the frankness and the difficulties faced by those who deal with issues by speaking the truth. Coupled with Foucault's (1989) gracious talk, parrhesia could provide useful insight.

## 8.4 Final Words

It is put forth here that the author has uncovered a new direction for dealing with sustainability and other OEI issues. Understanding the social order of an organization might well be valuable to augment existing management assessment tools such as quality audits, environmental audits, safety audits and even financial audits. There is much to be researched by specialists in social psychology especially. For example, how can discursive psychology technologies be integrated with management practices?

Early on during this research, the author selected positioning theory as a framework to conduct this research. His inquiries led him to take a step backwards in the genealogy of influence; rather than feminism being the font that led to the development of positioning theory (Davies and Harré 1990), it is suggested that Foucault's ideas are at the core of positioning theory. Furthermore, Foucault has provided codes and order to enable articulation of the unsayable with empirical assiduousness. With this foundation, positioning theory has been augmented to

enable the author to gain fresh insight. As suggested previously in this Chapter, there are applications of the ideas developed here that have not yet been pursued or perhaps even identified.

Another outcome of this research has been to demonstrate that Ling's approach as applied in an education context has been used effectively in a management context. This presents opportunity for other disciplines to extend the application of this approach more widely and perhaps legitimize the approach as an accepted assessment methodology for use by organizational analysts.

Positioning theory has been a helpful way to articulate how senior managers deal with sustainability issues and other OEI issues (Boxer inpress). Furthermore, it has enabled the author to answer the question that led to the research question driving this research. Positioning theory can be used to show how senior managers can enable or obstruct change. Conversely, positioning can be seen as a skill that enables senior managers to deal with sustainability. This is an area of personal interest that the researcher is keen to pursue and further develop.



## Appendix A

### **NASSER EMAIL**

Forwarding note from JNASSER --DRBN006 11/19/99 13:39

To: Ford employees and others  
Subject: (I) Let's Chat About the Business

Yesterday, Bill Ford and I spent much of the day with a group of our senior leadership discussing one of our five key areas of competitive advantage -- corporate citizenship. Joining in the conversation were two guests, Sir John Browne, the CEO of BP Amoco, and John Elkington, the CEO of London-based SustainAbility, a firm that has helped a number of leading companies develop their corporate responsibility strategies.

Like Ford Motor Company, BP Amoco is committed to superior business performance and is transforming itself by fundamentally rethinking what it means to be in the energy industry. Also like Ford, BP Amoco appreciates that corporate citizenship is an essential element of strong competitive performance and has done a lot of work in striving to understand what it means to be a socially responsible company.

Traditionally, many of us have considered corporate citizenship as philanthropy and volunteer programs. Let me assure you, it is much more than that. It's about who we are, what we offer in the marketplace and how we conduct our business. It's our reputation. We will be a leader in corporate citizenship if we are a well-respected, admired and trusted company that people believe contributes positively to society and uses its resources to create a more sustainable world.

Expectations for performance by large, global companies are much greater than ever. It is no longer enough for us to just produce good products and employ and treat people fairly. We are expected to help find solutions to the environmental, social and economic problems facing the world. We are expected to take the perspectives of the broad range of people and groups who are affected by our

operations into account when we make decisions. This doesn't mean we always agree with them -- but they do expect to be heard and responded to. We are expected to operate in a more open and transparent way, including setting social and environmental performance targets and reporting our progress.

I believe that these expectations will increase significantly during the next decade. The number and influence of activists demanding greater corporate accountability are growing rapidly. The Internet gives everyone access to all sorts of information and makes virtual boycotts a reality. Perhaps one of the most important drivers for increased corporate accountability is the increasing cynicism that business, especially big business, isn't trustworthy. It's no longer good enough to say, "Trust us, we know what's best." Instead, consumers are urging companies to show what they're doing and the principles that guide their business operations.

The automotive industry is likely to be a target of increased scrutiny in the coming decade. Global climate change, urban congestion and sprawl, human rights and globalization are just a few of the issues that will increase public discussion about our role, our products, our impact in the world and our responsibilities.

All these considerations highlight the importance of corporate citizenship to our overall business transformation. Although we've received favorable reaction to some of the actions we've taken recently -- particularly on the environmental front - - our overall reputation as a responsible corporate citizen is mixed. Bolder commitments and actions will be needed to distinguish us as a leader. Consequently, with Bill Ford's whole-hearted support, I have appointed a group of our senior executives to a Corporate Citizenship Council and charged them with the design and execution of an integrated corporate citizenship strategy. Marty Zimmerman, vice president, Governmental Affairs, and Deborah Zemke, director, Corporate Governance, will support their efforts. During the next year, you will be hearing more about the council's work.

Much of the initial emphasis for the council will be on building relationships with a broader group of stakeholders to discuss issues that include the future of our industry in the world and the expectations for leadership in corporate citizenship. Responsible action will accelerate our transition to a leading consumer company and one of the most highly regarded companies in the world.

An inspired global team -- consumer-focused and shareholder-driven,

Jac

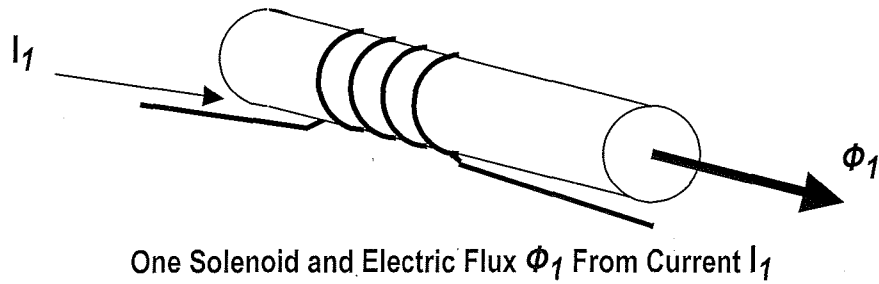
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## Appendix B

### **ELECTROMAGNETIC FLUX ANALOGY**

Strauss and Corbin (1990, pp. 41-47) urge that professional and personal experience be drawn upon to enhance sensitivity and to make comparisons (pp. 62-3). Blaikie (1993, p. 176) would approve of taking electromagnetic flux from physics, as a metaphor to be used in qualitative research. A residual electromagnetic force offers a number of parallels to the social construct we are endeavouring to achieve.

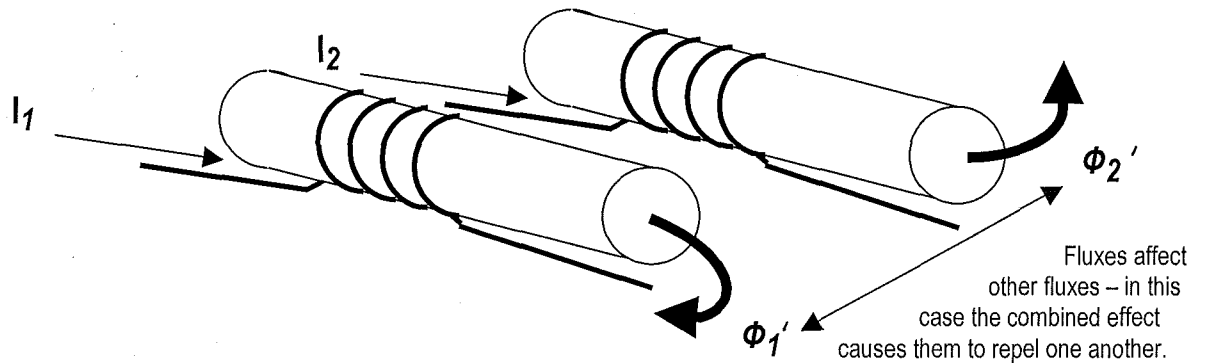
When machinery operates, it is common for electromagnetic forces to be created. In many cases these can be benign, but in others these by-products affect the integrity of the machine in unexpected and disastrous ways (Nippes 1994). Magnetic flux can cause these stray or residual forces. These forces are generated from various parts as they move in relation to one another. For the purpose of this discussion, flux is the measure of magnetic flow that causes an electric field (Orear 1979). It is this flux that can be residual; remaining long after the cause of the electric current has stopped. Figure B-1 depicts flux from a solenoid.



One Solenoid and Electric Flux  $\Phi_1$  From Current  $I_1$

Figure B-1

Figure B-2 depicts two solenoids in close proximity and the flux that emanates from them both as affected by one another. Both the current in the solenoid and the flux from the other solenoid influences each flux.

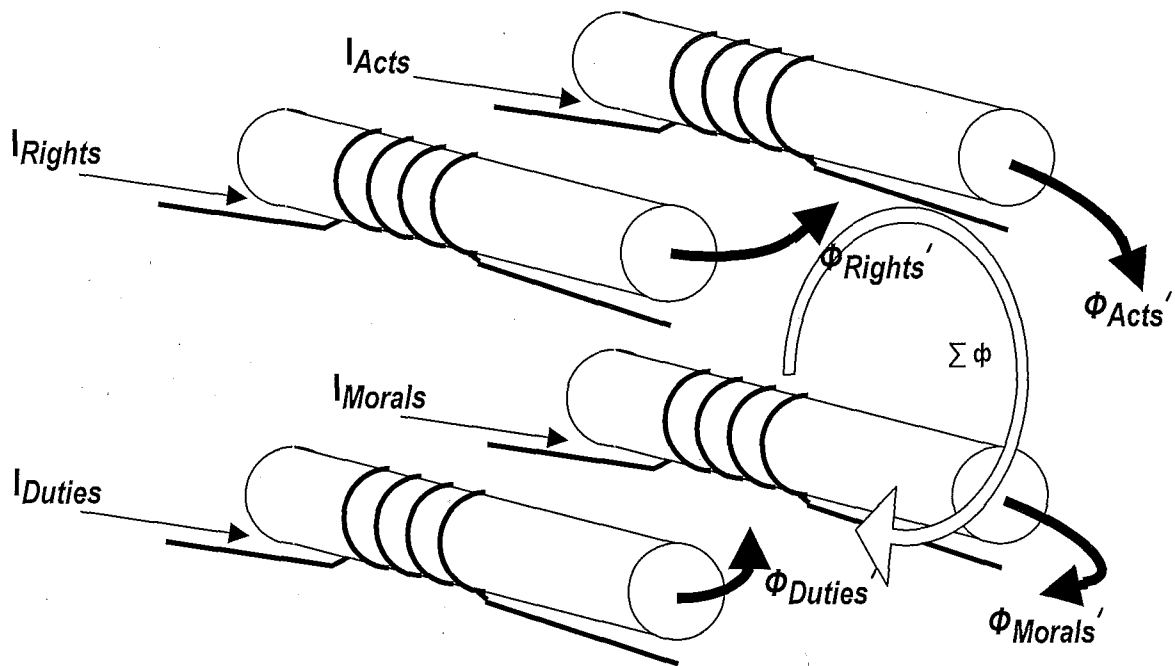


Two Solenoids and Electric Fluxes  $\Phi_1$  and  $\Phi_2$  From Currents  $I_1$  and  $I_2$

Figure B-2

With the mutual effect of two solenoids in mind, consider what would happen if there were multiple solenoids configured so that their combined fluxes reinforced one another to produce a compound flux. Furthermore, to bring this analogy back to sociological parameters, consider if current represents the social effort of an individual and flux represents the effect of that social effort. It is suggested here that something like a circular motion could be produced by an interdependence of the *social fluxes* of the four components of the social constructionist model.

Four solenoids in close proximity may react as shown in Figure B-3. The individual fluxes that occur may produce a cyclical or oscillating effect. For the purpose of this analogy the specific outcome is not important. Rather, the notion that these fluxes consolidate into an aggregate flux is of interest. The arc shown in Figure B-3 represents this effect.



Four Solenoids and Electric Flux  $\Sigma \Phi$  From Current  $\Sigma I$

Figure B-3

Residual flux can inhibit other objects. It establishes partition of space to conform to and sustain itself. Flux networks with other forces, enable and obstruct, and establish conditions for other phenomena to occur. In the physical world, residual magnetic flux can be a problem. With this in mind, an analogous residual flux could occur in the social world that is caused by social components in motion. Such a force could be referred to as social flux. Figure B-3 has labelled the four fluxes with the components of the social constructionist model and the arc  $\Sigma \Phi$  represents the sum impact of these fluxes.

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