

**CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTALISM AND TOP MANAGEMENT IDENTITY
NEGOTIATION**

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Abstract

Purpose

The aim of the research was to examine the narratives of acceptance and resistance to the introduction of corporate environmentalism. By considering how top management teams reflect on corporate environmentalism we aimed to examine potential identity management conflicts that arise during the implementation of environmentally sustainable initiatives within organizations.

Design/methodology/approach

A qualitative approach was adopted to address our research aims. By taking this approach we aimed to examine the lived experience of our participants as they internalized corporate environmentalism as part of their identity and as part of the organizational identity. Data collection involved 15 semi-structured interviews with senior executives and board members of a large Australian hospital.

Findings

Based on an in-depth thematic analysis of interview transcripts, we found individuals attributed a dominant discourse to corporate environmentalism based on their lived experience of organizational change for sustainability. Each dominant discourse was supportive of or in conflict with the implementation of corporate environmentalism into practice. We identified six dominant discourses: the pragmatist, the traditionalist, and the observer who resisted corporate environmentalism; and the technocentrist, holist, and ecopreneur who were supportive of corporate environmentalism.

Originality/value

Our findings demonstrate that although top management operated in and experienced the same organizational context, the narratives and identities they constructed in relation to sustainability varied widely. These findings emphasize the challenges inherent in developing an organizational identity that incorporates sustainability principles and the need for change management strategies to appeal to the diverse values and priorities of organizational managers and executives.

Keywords: corporate environmentalism, identity, top management, sustainability

Introduction

In business studies, sustainable development is usually conceptualized as corporate environmentalism (Banerjee *et al.*, 2003; Dixon and Clifford, 2007; Menon and Menon, 1997). Corporate environmentalism represents “processes by which firms integrate environmental concerns into their decisions” (Banerjee, 2002, p. 117) and is defined as “the organization-wide recognition of the legitimacy and importance of the biophysical environment in the formulation of organization strategy, and the integration of environmental issues into the strategic planning process” (Banerjee, 2002, p. 181). According to Banerjee (2002), integrating environmental concerns into managerial decisions—that is, corporate environmentalism—requires managers to simultaneously consider three perspectives: the environment, the stakeholders, and the organization’s competitive advantage. Under this frame, integrating corporate environmentalism into an organization represents: (1) a paradigm shift calling for a change in managerial mindset toward environmental concerns (see also: Gladwin *et al.*, 1995); (2) a stakeholder issue by which managers should respond to the diverse needs of employees, customers, shareholders, public interests, and the natural environment (see also: Epstein and Widener, 2011); and (3) a strategic issue where integrating environmental consideration in business decisions provides competitive advantages to the firm (Banerjee, 2002). Accordingly, attempting to establish corporate environmentalism requires managers and senior executives to fuse concerns for economic growth, environmental stewardship, and social welfare when making business decisions.

Much research indicates that navigating the path to corporate environmentalism requires top management commitment (Banerjee, 2002; Banerjee *et al.*, 2003; Ghanbarpour and Hipel 2009; Hipel, 2001). Despite recognition that managers and senior executive play a primary role in corporate environmentalism, relatively few researchers have examined how top management supports, accepts, negotiates, disregards, or rejects the implementation of

corporate environmentalism within their organization. Furthermore, although the literature notes the crucial role of organizational members' shared belief in, and identification with, the organization's distinctive attributes (DeConinck, 2011; Elsbach and Kramer, 1996; Goldern-Biddle and Rao, 1997), research is yet to link the notions of corporate environmentalism, organizational identity, and identification with the organization.

In an attempt to redress these shortcomings, this study considers how top management teams reflect on corporate environmentalism as it affects "who we are" as an organization. We begin by delineating the concept of organizational identity and organizational identification. We then address the potential costs associated with merging the "holy trinity of social, environmental and economic values" (Dixon and Clifford, 2007, p. 327) under the concept of corporate environmentalism (Banerjee, 2002). Drawing upon in-depth interviews performed with top managers and senior executives from a large hospital, we examine the narratives of acceptance and resistance to corporate environmentalism and analyze the potential identity management responses that arise during the implementation of environmentally sustainable initiatives. Our findings map the range of potential identity management responses to corporate environmentalism, which we name pragmatist, traditionalist, observer, technocentrist, holist, and ecopreneur identities. These identities reflect individuals' values and experiences and their search for coherence; they also reflect the extent to which corporate environmentalism is embraced or resisted by the individual and the organization.

Organization, Identity, and Identification

Inquiries on identity have become a popular frame through which to investigate how organizational members negotiate issues surrounding the self and the workplace (Albert *et al.*, 2000; Albert and Whetten, 1985; Corley *et al.*, 2006; DeConinck, 2011; Goldberg, 2003;

Goldern-Biddle and Rao, 1997). Identity reflects questions of “who am I?” as an employee/owner and “who are we?” as a group or organization. Understanding identity within business studies is important as it helps to illuminate the experiences of organizational members– including issues of joining or leaving the organization, working and behaving as an employee, and interacting with other organizational stakeholders (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008).

An abundance of research shows that identity is not independent of structural, political, and cultural context (Ashforth, 2001; Ashforth *et al.*, 2008; Corley *et al.*, 2006; Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Goldern-Biddle and Rao, 1997; Weick, 1995). Indeed, several studies suggest that identity is socially constructed and that organizational identity influences how members define themselves, interpret their roles, respond to problems, and express their feelings about the organizational performance (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008; Goldern-Biddle and Rao, 1997; Ravasi and Schultz, 2006). This social constructivist perspective approaches identity as a source of meanings emerging through the process of identification (Castells, 1997); where ‘meanings’ acknowledge the individuals’ inherent intention, inspiration, and anticipation of his/her action. As identities are “people’s sources of meaning and experiences” (Castells, 1997, p. 6), identities are not fixed but rather they are always under construction (Cherrier, 2006). The creation of identity is a process of construction that takes place along the available discourses individuals experience and negotiate throughout their temporal activities; including stories of past, present, and anticipated future (Hall, 1990). To the extent that identity navigates across multiple available discourses, it tends to be conflicting and complex. An identity is complex as it requires a search for coherence in an increasingly plural social world and it is conflicting as people strive for self-recognition and belonging in a system entrenched in power and domination (Hall, 1990). The complexity of identity is even more prominent when we consider the blurring of political boundaries, the mutating of organizational forms, and the increasing diversity of backgrounds, values, and

expectations of organizational members. For example, Frankwick *et al.* (1994) argue that business decision-makers, with different roles, responsibilities, objectives, and intentions, often advocate different visions of the path to organizational success. Organizational members differ in the way they make sense of the organizational discourses made available in the workplace (DeConinck, 2011; Frankwick *et al.*, 1994). These different views have the potential to generate competing alternative solutions as well as intra-organizational conflicts (Dougherty, 1992).

In order to minimize identity conflicts within an organization, researchers have suggested that organizations should promote a unique, distinctive, and enduring organizational identity (Albert and Whetten 1985; Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Elsbach and Kramer, 1996; Goldern-Biddle and Rao, 1997). Organizational identity represents “the shared beliefs of members about the central, enduring and distinctive characteristics of the organization” (Goldern-Biddle and Rao, 1997, p. 594). The members’ shared belief in the organization’s distinctive attributes can be viewed as a cognitive schema that helps makes sense of what the organization is about and facilitates in explaining the organization to external constituents (Elsbach and Kramer, 1996). A well-defined organizational identity provides organizational members with a frame, which helps them to both interpret and to take action; that is, to make sense of the world (Goldern-Biddle and Rao, 1997; Weick, 1995). According to Albert *et al.* (2000), internalizing organizational identity as a partial definition of the self helps individuals to gain a sense of how they fit within the organizational context.

Just as a unique, distinctive, and enduring organizational identity favors processes of organizational identification, studies note that the construction of a hybrid organizational identity – “an identity in which members incorporate two or more different and potential conflicting dimensions that are not normally expected to go together” (Golden-Biddle and Rao, 1997, p. 594) – can generate significant intra-organizational conflicts (Albert and

Whetten, 1985; Elsbach and Kramer, 1996; Pratt and Rafaeli, 1997; Ravasi and Schultz, 2006). For example, Glynn's (2000) study of the contest between the artistic and economic identities of a symphonic orchestra and Pratt and Rafaeli's (1997) research in health care organizations provides evidence of the identity conflict that can emerge when hybrid identities are negotiated in organizations. Similarly, Goldern-Biddle and Rao's (1997) study shows that external events that destabilize organization identity can lead to intra-organizational conflicts.

In this study, we argue that integrating corporate environmentalism as a multi-layered concept fusing concerns for economic growth, environmental stewardship, and social welfare has the potential to disrupt organizational identification and thus create diverse, perhaps conflicting, identity management responses.

The Current Study

This article draws on fifteen in-depth interviews with a hospital's senior executive team and members of the board of directors. The hospital is involved in an attempt to select and integrate green practices within the organization. The method of implementing corporate environmentalism into the organization's practice has not been in response to government regulation (although there is a potential future threat of legislative requirements) nor has it followed a hierarchical top-down approach. Rather, at the time of data collection, discussions were openly taking place amongst employees, managers, and executives to negotiate integrating corporate environmentalism into the day-to-day operations of the organization. The particular site of study allows us to address the lived experiences of individuals in the process of internalizing corporate environmentalism into the organizational identity. As members of the organization, individuals offer diverse ways of integrating, negotiating, or rejecting corporate environmentalism. Situated within an organizational context, the study

offers insights on the interplay between corporate environmentalism, organizational identity, and managerial identity.

One-on-one interviews were conducted with senior executives and board members of the hospital that formed the research site. Each interview focused on organizational facilitators and barriers for the adoption of environmentally friendly practices at the hospital. Interviews lasted between 25 and 75 minutes. An audio-recording was made of each interview and these were transcribed verbatim to aid analysis. To ensure confidentiality, the reporting of findings from board members and senior executives are combined.

The transcribed interviews resulted in 155 single-pages of text which were subjected to a thematic analysis using NVivo9. The analysis resulted in a list of key identities: the pragmatist, traditionalist, observer, technocentrist, holist, and ecopreneur identity. The names of participants have been changed to preserve anonymity.

Findings

As in many health care organizations, the hospital's participants displayed a utilitarian identity, which is "governed by values of economic rationality, the maximization of profit, and the minimization of cost" (Albert and Whetten, 1985, pp. 281-282) and an organizational identity, which emphasizes patient care, service and servitude. The complex nature of the organizational identity is further elaborated and reinforced in the context of corporate environmentalism. In the narratives, informants discussed corporate environmentalism in terms of business strategy, stakeholders' issues, and/or as an environmental orientation. However, rather than reflecting on the fusion between each element, most informants discussed corporate environmentalism based on one prominent discourse (economic, social, or environmental) whilst overlooking the others. Based on our analysis, informants subjectively attributed a dominant discourse to corporate environmentalism based on their

past behaviors and practices. Interestingly, each dominant discourse led to supporting, resisting, or being neutral in response to integrating corporate environmentalism into the organization's practice (see Table 1). Whilst the practical pragmatist, the traditionalist, and the observer identities do not embrace corporate environmentalism, the rational technocentrist, the holist, and the ecopreneur identities support corporate environmentalism. In the following discussion, each identity is described using excerpts from the narratives.

The Pragmatist

The pragmatist has doubts about the corporate environmentalism discourse. Their doubts were mostly expressed in terms of whether corporate environmentalism can produce meaningful outcomes. For example, the excerpt below shows a good deal of skepticism about the end result of sustainable practices.

To me that is a really difficult question because the environment is so long term whereas funding an Aboriginal health clinic could be really short term. We can see benefits in short term and more a direct benefit and go out in the community and tell the people the good work we are doing with Aboriginal health. But that may be harder to put forward a message what we are doing with the environment.

The pragmatist values the end result rather than the path toward an aim. For the managers in the study, sustainability demands effort and commitment and should therefore provide rewards and “*direct benefits*.” The rewards of sustainable practices need to be “*short term*.” As expressed below, the benefits need to be palpable and measurable in term of financial return.

I guess there are some initiatives that we put in place. There is no return other than a social return and if it is a significant investment it obviously puts that initiative at risk. Where we get some financial benefit and it is obviously a lot more attractive than spending money on social responsibility.

As the pragmatist is focused on measurable outcomes, integrating new sustainable practices is perceived as a risky investment. Understanding sustainability as a “*significant investment*” resonates with current sustainable public policy discourses that position

sustainable consumption as an investment for the future. Based on the ethical view that the needs for the future generation should be respected, public discourses communicate and promote more efficient and more sufficient lifestyles as an investment in the future. A clear example is the Brundtland Commission definition of sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland Commission, 1987, p. 1). In this view, sustainability is about caring for our future, for our children. Similarly, many public policy discourses promote sustainable actions at the individual level using a future-orientated perspective. Citizens are asked to not “jeopardize the needs of future generations” (Ministry of Environment Norway, 1994) and adopt sustainable practices “in the interest of our future welfare and that of our descendants” (United Nations Millennium Declaration, 2000).

Whilst the pragmatist positively responds to sustainable discourses oriented toward securing the future, issues arise as to how to calculate the incalculable in terms of economic risks and palpable benefits. As Tom notes, when implementing “*sustainability as part of your decision tree, you don’t have a calculator that you can run over it.*” The impossibility of calculating a short term and concrete return on investment and the “*difficulty in putting a value on a benefit*” transpires as a real problem. For example, Andrew explains the problem of cost-benefit and economic risk analysis.

If you look at economic research there is a lot of difficulty in putting a value on a benefit. So if you are financially minded, your decision is largely going to be based around cost benefit. So, the cost side is very clear and the benefit side isn’t.

“*Financially minded,*” the pragmatist is a rational decision maker who needs to carefully balance the pros and cons before integrating changes. For the informants in this study, a hospital is “*a key polluter and user of resources,*” where “*we print somewhere in the order of 2 million plus pages a month*” and use “*inefficient*” and “*old technologies.*” The particular hospital environment and the unknown benefits to sustainability give the

informants a right of resistance. For example, Michael informs that some nurses continue showering the patients every day even if the practice is not sustainable.

Someone will say, "Oh my goodness, that patient has not had a shower this morning," and that reflects badly on the nurse that was looking after the patient. There might be some sort of mentality around that they haven't been well cared for.

The excerpt above shows that some nurses resist implementing sustainability into their daily chores. For them, limiting the number of showers provided to the patient reflects negatively on their professional identity and their dedication to "looking after the patient." Other informants mention printing on single-sided paper or keeping the lights on as forms of practical resistance to sustainability. In their narratives, the change toward sustainability is not practical. For example, sustainability is discussed below as impractical and "wasted time".

There was some resistance interestingly because it is slower to print in duplex mode and clinicians in particular are very time poor, so every second you add to a process it is more wasted time.

Some of the things that have been done have not been practical in terms of we did try and put lower voltage light bulbs and that sort of thing, but of course people can't see in the middle of night when they are doing things.

Clear to these narratives is that resistance to sustainability is articulated as a practical resistance.

Our analysis shows that the pragmatists are not against the notion of corporate environmentalism but they resist implementing sustainability within the organization when (1) it does not provide concrete short-term financial benefit; (2) it interferes with current practices, and (3) it is in perceived conflict with the organization's objective to care for individuals "24 hour a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year." In essence the pragmatist's resistance is underpinned by pragmatic considerations about the tangible outcomes and benefits of corporate environmentalism and the practicality of implementation in the current context.

The Traditionalist

In contrast to the pragmatist who criticizes corporate environmentalism at a strategic level, the traditionalist resists sustainability based on ideological considerations. The traditionalist thinks in categories and discusses disparities between entities. For example, Michael explains the disparities between the organization's objective and the environmental objective.

We as an organization, as part of our mission, have to meet the unmet community need and that means we do a lot with socio-economic groups or people who are isolated from society and we need to find ways to engage with them. That necessarily requires that we will have to do things that are not sustainable practices.

In the excerpt above, Michael questions the congruence between corporate environmentalism and the organization's mission. For the traditionalist there is a particularly sharp distinction between the organization and sustainability and the focus should be on the organization's mission "*to meet the unmet community need*".

In order to maintain the mutual exclusivity of the hospital ideology and the ideology of sustainability, the traditionalist identity polarizes both ideologies making sustainability and the hospital more distinct from each other. For the traditionalist, sustainability represents a category of reasoning drastically different from the hospital. For example, Mark explains the priority to provide "*individual care*" over environmental care.

Personally, I don't think there is a strong alignment [between organizational aims and corporate environmentalism], simply because the focus is around that individual care – not thinking about the impact might be on the broader community. I don't think that is a bad thing, and I think if you were a patient and your doctors were deliberating around the therapeutic care of the life saving drugs, or the life saving intervention, you would say, "I don't care about the environment, just keep me alive."

Mark clearly separates the hospital's mission, which ultimately aims at providing individual care, from environmental preservation. Similarly, Michael notes that "*the most important thing we do is save lives.*" For Michael, saving lives is a priority and "*being environmentally sustainable for a hospital is kind of way down the list [of priorities].*"

Strongly supportive of this distinction, Michael mentions during his interview that whilst “*saving lives in theatre, you are probably not thinking about ‘Oh this is the most environmentally sustainable way to do this.’*” Here, sustainability is the antithesis to the organization’s aim to the point “*that saving a life is not environmentally sustainable at all, the fewer people the better.*” The informants expressed resisting sustainability in response to their ideological commitment to the hospital’s aims.

If I have got a priority about whether I am going to check someone has put the right thing in the waste bins, and I have got a situation where I have to have the clinical standards met... then that priority [clinical standards] is going to have a lot higher significance than the other.

As the organization and sustainability are two separate notions, the traditionalist identity questions the aims and values of sustainability and thus deconstructs the organization’s arguments for corporate environmentalism. For example, Michael discusses cynicism toward sustainability and toward the organization.

Everybody likes to think that they are doing the right thing or that it somehow helps, but that there is a certain amount of cynicism about whether recycling works. There is cynicism whether global warming is actually an issue or whether it is human influence or whether we can actually make a difference at all. So that cynicism applies equally to our organization.

The boundaries between the organization and sustainability are based on the contradictions between environmental discourses aimed at meeting “the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland Commission, 1987, p. 1) and the organization’s discourses oriented toward meeting “*the unmet community need.*” This disjunction gives our informants right of resistance. For the traditionalist, it is the particularities of the hospital’s mission “*to meet the unmet community need,*” to “*save lives,*” and to “*provide care to individuals*” that legitimizes their resistance to corporate environmentalism.

Our analysis demonstrates that the traditionalist focuses on the boundaries between the organization's mission and objectives and the mission and objectives of sustainability. The clear demarcation between each ideology is evidence that the traditionalist relies heavily on the traditional notions of the hospital's mission which they see as incompatible with a commitment to sustainability. In our study, ideological resistance is directed against sustainability and thus supports the ideology of the organization over environmental preservation.

The Observer

The observer sees corporate environmentalism as a process of relational change within the organization. The change and the risks attached to implementing sustainability drive a dynamic process of social interactions, which disturbs the normality of everyday social experiences. For the observer, discussions of sustainability within the organization ultimately lead to social conflicts and the creation of oppositional groups or clans. Some clans are pro-sustainable and others resist the change. In the face of multiple antagonists, this identity is the observer of new dynamics and conflicting social interactions. For example, Andrew describes oppositional parties.

I guess it is difficult because we do have people like [The Sustainability Manager] who want us to invest in environmental initiatives and that is his interest, and part of his job and he will push those and push them hard. Then you have other people with their interests that they are equally going to push to try and convince you that those should be taken up and funded. It is quite difficult.

The observer watches the 'sustainability' story as it unfolds within the organization and points to conflicting social interactions and tensions between oppositional groups. For Andrew, the unequal "*interest*" to promote sustainability within the organization makes the transition "*difficult*." As with other stories, this difficulty is due to oppositional parties. By unfolding sustainability as a story experienced by social actors with conflicting interests, the

observer tries to identify the main characters of the story. In his sustainability story, Tom identifies some possible villains.

It is amazing how many bottled water bottles get thrown out which still have water in them. In many cases when they are half and three quarters full, someone has a couple mouthfuls and leaves it.

In contrast to the pragmatic identity, which values the end result, the observer identity considers the path toward sustainability. For Tom above, the path to sustainability is thorny because it depends on social beings and their vested interests. In the excerpt, the villains are the ones leaving half full bottles of water. Whilst some informants identify specific villains such as the ones who waste water or the cleaners who “*would come through but not turn the lights off,*” others describe “*most people*” as the villains. For example, Melissa notes that “*people not only lose interest they are so busy and wrapped up in their work.*” Interestingly, the descriptions are passive and do not offer any possible restructuring of wasteful behaviors and cognitive patterns. Similar to most stories, the villains and the heroes have clear characteristics that remain untouched throughout the story. The excerpt below describes the “*good champions*” within the organization.

We had a couple of good champions who decided it was their cause and one of the wards men, particularly when the hospital brought in bottled water, he used to collect all the bottles that had a little bit in them and water the pot plants and then put them away.

Melissa valorizes the “*good champions.*” However, whilst admiration for the “*couple of good champions*” is evident in the excerpt, Melissa does not provide any indication that these heroes provide an inspiring example to other individuals within the organization. Here, the villains and the heroes appear as distinct characters that do not interact. It is this distinction between the villains and the heroes that make the story interesting and worth discussing. The existence of antagonists claiming support or resistance to implementing sustainability within the organization makes the sustainability story interesting. As one informant mentioned, the path to sustainability requires “*keeping in mind, who would be*

supportive of that sort of thing, or who might be resistant to some ideas.” The support and the resistance can be situated at the micro level but also at the macro organizational level. As Emily explains, the disturbing villain can be the organization itself.

Basic [behaviors] like we do at home like turning the lights off and stuff... I am sure people around here would do that as they leave their office potentially, but then I suspect when they see whole buildings lit up, for example the original [building], you go by at night and there will be lots and lots of lights on and stuff and you know no-one is in there. So it is those things that will be sending a lot of mixed messages to people and they will give up I think on doing the little things if they see the organization is not doing the big things.

In this excerpt, the villain is the organization and the wasteful practices that it allows. At the macro level, the organization can disturb the path to corporate environmentalism by “*sending a lot of mixed messages to people.*” Here, the message about sustainability sent at the micro level is the antithesis to the organization’s message. Consequently, the antagonists in the story are the organization on one side and the employees on another.

Whilst the observer witnesses the changes within the organization, this identity does not engage in corporate environmentalism. The observed conflict provides a basis for inaction and resistance. By discussing intra-organization conflicts as they relate to corporate environmentalism, the observer tends to consolidate social disputes and infuse resistance rather than harmony. Indeed, without conflict, the observer does not have a story to tell.

The Technocentrist

The technocentric identity integrates the technocentric paradigm and its key assumptions that technology and science can solve environmental problems (Gladwin *et al.*, 1995). Based on rational evaluation criteria, the technocentrist approaches corporate environmentalism in terms of practical gains such as saving “*packaging,*” “*reducing wastage,*” and minimizing “*cost.*” For example, Andrew describes corporate environmentalism as an opportunity for the organization to “*reduce wastage*” and become a “*socially responsible organization*” in the eyes of its stakeholders.

Well certainly where there is a cost benefit that its really clear that we get a benefit because it is good for the environment and we are seen as a socially responsible organization, but also there might be a situation where we can reduce our cost. Such as things like duplicate sided printing, I think in some of the procurement areas we can actually make some savings by reducing packaging, but also reducing wastage.

For Andrew, implementing sustainability within the organization offers valuable financial benefits and enables the organization to integrate social responsibility as part of their public image. The benefits are “*really clear*” and diverse. The benefits range from financial saving to improving the organizational public image through minimizing health problems. For example, Jenny understands sustainability as a way to promote health.

If you extrapolate that out in terms of environmentally for promoting health and all those sorts of things, well in fact that should be number one priority because we should be doing that so we do have sustainability and people are living in an appropriate climates and we don't have people being exposed to sun damage etc. I think in a real life time, it is probably not as prominent as ensuring there's good clinical care.

For the technocentrist, sustainability is not the antithesis of the hospital's mission but rather an opportunity to improve the organization's performance. Indeed, moving toward corporate environmentalism can offer new ways of promoting health. Later in the interview, Jenny discusses sustainability as an opportunity to save lives, which is also the “*number one priority*” of a hospital. With a practical approach to sustainability, the technocentrist evaluates the current hospital environment for opportunities for sustainable implementation and the diverse benefits that sustainability can provide to the organization. For example, Mark discussed the “virtual desktops,” which he argues provide a “significant cost saving” by reducing energy usage.

We are moving towards an area of technology called Virtual Desktops which means that, a typical desktop computer would have 400 watt power supply which if you think about [it as equivalent to] people moving from 60 watt light bulbs to low energy light bulbs... So this Virtual Desktop environment allows us to move most of the processing into the data centre because you get economies of scale. Whereas one 400-watt power supply here is one device, in the data centre we can get forty devices on what might be an 800-watt power supply. So we are getting much better utilization. What we end up

with is a device that consumes much less power, so maybe 20-watts or something like that on the desktop, still have the monitors which we can't do much about, but it's certainly a significant cost saving.

In taking this practical approach, the technocentrist is similar to the pragmatist—both are focused on whether sustainability can benefit the organization. Critically though, they diverge in their assessment of the potential benefits that can emanate from corporate environmentalism. Whereas pragmatists resisted notions of corporate environmentalism technocentrists embrace it for the perceived benefits it could confer.

The Holist

The holist endorses the equality of species. For the holist identity, sustainability is not solely the concern of science and business. Informants discussed sustainability outside of the modern axiom that calculation, control and rationality are key features to business strategies. The experience of our informants reveals that sustainability is part of a “*respect for the Earth and world and our universe,*” the holist identity approaches sustainability at the holistic level. For the holist, the ideology pertaining to sustainability is about “*respect and humanity,*” which is similar to the hospital’s espoused values of “*care, commitment, dignity, quality, mercy.*”

So, I think the fact that people use our organizational values as the barometer by which to make judgments to do or not to do something, I think is good. But in there, I just think comes the whole – if you look at an organization that sort of focuses on care, commitment, dignity, quality, mercy and in there all those sort of associated allied things of respect and humanity, and not necessarily religiosity. [...] I think with that goes I guess awareness for the values of the environment.

For Tom, sustainability is inclusive. It does not represent a separate or new ideology but is inclusive of predominant humanitarian notions of solidarity and interconnectivity. Such an approach to corporate environmentalism lies in the intersection of the three major areas of human concerns: environmental protection, provision of basic human needs, and advancing economic welfare (Barrett and Grizzle, 1999). By invoking the interconnectivity between

nature, human, and economy, the holist perceives a “*direct*” and a “*relevant connection*” between the hospital’s mission and sustainability.

I think there is a direct connection there. I think it is a relevant connection. It is like anything, if you have got somebody whose mindset centers around caring for things other than themselves, be that people, be that animals, there is that general awareness that if you care for things other than yourself, it tends to be a broader caring for things other than yourself, and that extends to the environment.

For Tom, working in a hospital represents “*caring for things other than yourself.*” As Jenny notes, “*if we are caring for the people we are caring for the climate.*” This holist perspective positions sustainability as a mutually desirable and essential objective, both within and outside of the organization. Perceived from within, implementing sustainability will benefit any big organizations “*to set an example or to be a model of that kind of behavior in the community*” (Emily). Additionally, internal sustainable practices provide efficiency in term of waste management and communicate “*the kind of organization that we ought to be*” (Emily). Sustainability is also understood as a “*part of the spirituality*” of the organization. Sustainability is about caring for the environment where “*the sick, the poor, the needy*” actually live. Sustainability is therefore integral to respecting “*the Earth and the world and our universe [...] part of that is caring for everything around us as well. I think it fits in beautifully with our values*” (Melissa).

The holist identity positions sustainability as a phenomenon of planetary interdependence, which creates new frontiers of organizational identity and actions. The organization is located physically in the Earth’s ecosystem. As part of the land and our natural environment, organizations necessarily integrate ecological respect, reciprocity and caretaking. Such an approach shifts linear causality and end-directed reasoning (i.e., one having an effect on the other) to a system where actions in one part of the system affect the organization as a whole. Mainly, it abandons the common distinctions between anthropocentrism, biocentrism, and ecocentrism to integrate each core element into one

holistic approach (Barrett and Grizzle, 1999). This holistic approach to sustainability has been discussed by Barrett and Grizzle (1999) under the concept of pluralistic stewardship. Similar to the holistic approach to sustainability, the concept of pluralistic stewardship integrates core elements of anthropocentrism, biocentrism, and ecocentrism to discuss interdependent and multiple paths to sustainability. Sustainability is therefore not about creating “*a new thing around care of the environment or stewardship of the environment*” but about fitting “*it into commitment and quality*” (Emily) that already exists as business values.

The Ecopreneur

The ecopreneur combines entrepreneurialism and environmentalism into their identity (Dixon and Clifford, 2007). They perceive taking care of the planet as their personal and managerial responsibility. The ecopreneurs see themselves as custodians of the natural environment, with concomitant responsibilities to protect against waste and degradation and cultivate our heritage with care. As such, the ecopreneur identity takes on responsibility for future generations. Mark explains below how caring for the environment is “*stronger with younger people*” and that the “*baby boomer age group*” need to start caring and integrate the notion into their personal and public lives.

Public awareness is a key thing. I think generational attitude and change towards the environment. We are seeing it much stronger with younger people, like yourself, who see it as a key issue. I am on the verge of the Gen-X, baby boomer age group and I think there would be a valid perception by Gen-Y that the Gen-X and particularly the baby boomers have really screwed the environment in terms of the ways they consume resources. So, it is the awareness and social accountability that organizations have to accept that they can't disenfranchise themselves from the need to be environmentally sustainable.

The organization's discussion around “*awareness and social accountability*” is enlightening to the ecopreneur identity. It offers a means to construct a new self-orientation toward caring about the environment. For Mark, implementing sustainability practices fuses work into the social sphere. By integrating sustainability, the organization connects the

“younger people” to the “baby boomer group.” It provides a bridge and an understanding across two distinct generations. By merging environmental preservation with organizational goals, it bridges different generations and, as Tom explains below, it also connects stakeholders such as the executive team, the Environmental Committee, and the staff.

I think that is certainly one of the areas that will help. I think the fact that we have a commitment to do something on the campus... that we have a group of people looking and evaluating it and reporting it back and we can share it with staff in terms of what we are doing. The guys that are on this Environmental Committee give addresses to the [executive team] each month in terms of where we are at and what's happening and if there have been material changes that friendlier, I think it is heightening everybody's awareness of things, and it certainly it has heightened my own. As I say, I am a baby boomer – we don't care – and I have started caring.

Creating a relationship between consumption and ethical/green reflection essentially distributes our informants along the spectrum of reflexivity so they “started caring”. From internal discussions on sustainability to prescribed sustainable implementation within the workplace, ecopreneur individuals are able to orient their lifestyles around environmental and ethical claims. Giddens (1991) refers to these lifestyles as “life politics” constructed Where the private is politicized through process of politicization of everyday life. By building a working environment around ethical and environmental concerns, the ecopreneur identity designs and constructs a “reflexive biography” (Giddens, 1991). For example, Jenny describes sustainable implementation as an ongoing process.

The whole clinical waste, general waste [issue] hasn't been managed very well over time. There [are] some very key things which we are working on now.

By accepting the plurality and the vagueness of sustainable objectives, the ecopreneur identity shapes the process of sustainable implementation rather than blocking or following a pre-determined implementation process. For example, Melissa is “really happy to change a bin if I need to” and many informants participate in car pooling to work as part of the organization's sustainable culture. There is a clear relational aspect to participating and discussing sustainability. The ecopreneur identity offers potential new arenas for sustainable

actions and promotes personal involvement mostly at the communal level. For example, Joe emphasizes the communal aspects of car pooling where volunteers “*have formed such close relationships, especially those who have been here for 10 years or plus.*” The ecopreneur identity physically engages with the social environment and volunteers to car pool, “*to change a bin*” and “*to collect all the bottles that had a little bit in them and water the pot plants.*” These engagements are not unified and centrally organized but rather rest upon a diversity of actors who perceive different environmental issues, diverse social interests and consequently prioritize heterogeneous practices. As Tom notes during the interview, sustainability is about “*challenging, questioning, asking, and looking.*” In accepting multiple, conflicting and vague approaches to sustainability, the ecopreneur identity personalizes the choices and actions because “*there are so many different ways that we could become environmentally sustainable*” (Andrew). As such, the ecopreneur identity shapes a post-Marxist, decentralized strategy for social transformation. This takes the form of “life politics” constructed through process of “politicization of the private” (Berkens, 1996).

Discussion and Conclusion

Within business practices there is increasing attention being given to developing sustainable and ecologically sound organizations. Despite the financial and reputational benefits to organizations ‘greening’ their business practices (e.g., Hart and Ahuja, 1996; King and Lenox, 2001), the move toward sustainability can potentially disrupt organizational identification. In examining how organizational members respond to corporate environmentalism we analyze how top management interpret sustainability and how they accept, negotiate or reject integrating sustainability within their business decisions. Our findings offer six management identity responses to corporate environmentalism (see Table 1). Although discussed under six distinctive themes, each type of identity is not fixed and is not intended to be used as a categorization tool. Rather, our informants moved from one

identity to another, emphasizing identity as constantly under construction, shifting between enabling, constraining and contradictory forces. Yet, in order to build a coherent identity, our informants refer to a dominant discourse of sustainability.

The analysis of the pragmatist, traditionalist, observer, technocentrist, holist, and ecopreneur identities offers ways to understand management identity responses to corporate environmentalism. Each identity was constructed in the face of sustainable development decisions. For some, corporate environmentalism represents a contradictory element to organizational strategy, stakeholder issues and the organizational paradigm (in the case of the hospital setting this means a focus on patient care). For others, sustainable development decisions clearly respond to the organization's economic goals, stakeholder diversity and environmental paradigm. Our informants' subjective perspectives on corporate environmentalism and the impact on the organization emerge from past values, actions and experiences that are continually performed and remembered. In resisting corporate environmentalism, informants drew on past experiences and meanings: the pragmatist is focused on tangible and definite benefits; the traditionalist sees sustainability as antithetical to the organization's mission thereby creating a duality between the organization and the environment; and the observer brings meanings through oppositional entities highlighting that competing interests stand in the way of implementing corporate environmentalism. Correspondingly, in accepting corporate environmentalism, informants also draw on their past experiences: the technocentrist sees the introduction of sustainability practices as a way to benefit the organization; the holist finds meaning in wholeness and unity seeing no apparent contradiction between the aims of caring for patients and caring for the environment; and the nascent ecopreneurs reflexively incorporate sustainability into their responsibilities.

In this study, we note that merging the “holy trinity of social, environmental and economic values” (Dixon and Clifford, 2007, p. 327) under the concept of corporate environmentalism (Banerjee, 2002) can be seen as a double-edged sword: while it fosters a mutually enhancing human-nature relationship, it can potentially create confusion, conflicts or even resistance from managers and senior executives for whom nature is separate from organizations and thus environmental protection should be distinct from economic development (Ghanbarpour and Hipel, 2009; Hipel, 2001). Based on this finding, framing of corporate environmentalism as a multi-layered concept can potentially disrupts organizational identification and create conflicts within the organization.

Our analysis suggests the need to approach corporate environmentalism by way of different and entwined identities thereby promoting sustainable development decisions in different ways. The diversity of identity calls for green marketers and managers to consider that corporate environmentalism can be linked to diverse identities. By integrating this line of reasoning when implementing sustainable development decision, corporate executives may decrease the risk of internal conflict or resistance.

Importantly, the core business of the organization in the current study is patient care. The life and death nature of this business differentiates it from other organizations that do not have these same considerations. Although it is likely that the resistance expressed by some identities to incorporating sustainability principles into their organization practice will be evident across organizational types, the potential incompatibility between the organization’s mission and sustainability may not always be in evidence, or may not be evident to the same extent, across all organizational types.

In conclusion, despite growing evidence for the advantages of corporate environmentalism, there is likely to be continued resistance to a sustainability agenda on the part of some management, especially in organizations where sustainability seems at odds

with the organization's mission. Our findings demonstrate that although top management operated in and experienced the same organizational context, the narratives and identities they constructed in relation to sustainability varied widely. These findings highlight the ways in which management may embrace or resist sustainable development, and in doing so emphasize the challenges inherent in developing an organizational identity that incorporates sustainability principles. Our findings also suggest that successfully navigating the path to more sustainable organizations will require change management strategies to appeal to the diverse values and priorities of organizational managers and executives.

Table 1: Identity Responses to Corporate Environmentalism

Three Approaches to Corporate Environmentalism (Banerjee, 2002)	Defensive identities	Supportive Identities
Strategic (economic orientation)	<i>Pragmatist</i> : expresses doubt about environmental sustainability, is financially minded and fears uncertainty.	<i>Technocentrist</i> : identifies practical gains of environmental sustainability, is financially minded and identifies resource and financial savings from environmental initiatives.
Paradigm Shift (environmental orientation)	<i>Traditionalist</i> : resists environmental sustainability and identifies how it conflict with organizational objectives.	<i>Holist</i> : approaches environmental sustainability at a holistic level and discusses sustainability in terms of personal and organizational values.
Stakeholders (social orientation)	<i>Observer</i> : observes and commentates change within the organization. Identifies supporters and resisters of change.	<i>Ecopreneur</i> : takes on responsibility for the future generation and considers themselves to be a custodian of the natural environment.

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