Identity Subtexts in the Discursive Construction of Sustainability

Terry B. Porter
University of Massachusetts Amherst

This paper introduces a critical discourse analysis of identity subtexts in the construction of corporate environmental sustainability. It argues that subtexts of identity may be traced in the literature of environmental sustainability, and that these subtexts are naturalized and therefore made invisible within the texts themselves. Moreover, deep underlying identity positions are shaken, jostled, and threatened by the call for sustainability, for advocates of both strong and weak sustainability alike. Identity resides at the heart of sustainability discourse and sustainability debates, and ultimately it is the fear of identity-loss, rather than economic profit or scientific rationality, that underlies management discourse on sustainability.

Introduction

In the United States today, over 80% of the population identify as environmentalists (Ladd & Bowman, 1995), yet the U.S. is by far the largest consumer of the world's resources. This mind-boggling juxtaposition is certainly not unique to the U.S. but is perhaps more blatant there than in other westernized, capitalist societies. At the very least it suggests an ideological disconnect between identity and behavior. This paper aims to explain the origins of such contradictions through a discursive examination of identity in sustainability texts. It outlines an approach and provides illustrations of ways in which identity underlies managerial constructions of sustainability. It argues that identity rather than profitability or ethical behavior is fundamentally at stake in controversies over sustainability today. To limit this undertaking to something approaching manageability, the paper focuses on environmental sustainability, specifically as it is constructed and debated in western management discourse.

Environmental sustainability and sustainable development are the subjects of important discussions in the fields of economics, sociology, the natural sciences, ethics, politics, and others. Within management, sustainability has entered the arenas of strategy, accounting, marketing, organizational behavior, and operations. Discussions amongst these fields and levels of analysis are intertwined in cacophonous dialog and debate, even as environmental problems are arguably worsening daily. This paper adds another voice to the mêlée by suggesting that subtexts of identity may be traced throughout the management literature and on all sides of the debates. The paper further argues that identity and identity dynamics are obfuscated beneath layers of economic, management, and scientific talk. Indeed, surface-level discourse may be a thin veneer that disguises much more powerful struggles around identity establishment, negotiation, and defense. The paper suggests that these issues cut to the very heart of who we are and how we know ourselves, and that deep, underlying identities are shaken, jostled, and threatened by the call to environmental sustainability. Thus, without exposing and reflecting upon the deeper issues, there may be little meaningful progress. The purpose of the paper, therefore, is to develop a theoretical and analytical lens for viewing the identity dynamics

surrounding environmental sustainability, in hopes that this framework may be useful for deepening our dialogs and including underlying, critical issues that may help move the debates forward.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. First, an overview of theory provides a brief overview of discourse analysis and the approach taken in this paper. Second, the central discussion of identity in sustainability discourse is developed in two separate sections. These relate to macro- and micro-level aspects of identity construction, or contextual and textual levels of analysis (Fairclough, 1995). A number of identity-related social science theories and examples are examined. The paper concludes with implications for application and further study, and a non-conclusion, the latter because the article represents an initial exploration rather than a polished theory.

Theoretical Approach
The first premise of a discursive approach to sustainability is that the term has no inherent meaning. Where much organizational analysis assumes a real world and seeks to understand the meaning of this world for participants, a discursive perspective makes no such truth assumptions. Building from the foundations of social constructionism and poststructuralism, it assumes that organizations, individuals, and actions are made 'real' and meaningful through discourse (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p.52). The aim of discourse analysis, therefore, is to explore the co-constitutive relationship between discourse and social reality, how discursive meaning systems are created and particular discourses effect individuals, groups, and life systems (Gergen, 1999).

In particular, this paper explores the intertwined concepts of discourse, subject positions, power, ideology, and identity in management writings on sustainability. To do so it draws upon three broad approaches to discourse analysis. The first is Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional perspective, which consists of textual, discursive, and contextual levels of analysis. The second is critical discourse analysis (Parker, 1992; Phillips & Hardy, 2002), and the third is narrative analysis (Czarniawska, 1997). Together these perspectives create a means for studying identity in discursive regimes of sustainability.

Fairclough (1995) approaches discourse analysis by identifying three levels of analysis: text, discourse, and context. Texts are the fundamental unit of analysis. Importantly, they are not objective accounts of real events, but rather inscribe their subjects in inherent systems of meaning which themselves go undetected unless they are pointed out:

> Texts set up positions for interpreting subjects that are 'capable' of making sense of them…in so far as interpreters take up these positions and automatically make these connections, they are being subjected by and to the text (Fairclough, 1992, p. 84).

Textual analysis involves bracketing a text as an object to be interpreted and describing its subjects and objects, the connotations it evokes, and also what is absent from the text—for what is not present is as significant as what is there (Parker, 1992).

Discourses are interrelated sets of texts and the practices of production, dissemination, and reception that bring a particular version of social reality into being (Fairclough, 1995). They are historically located, and integrally entwined with other discourses and texts. At the discursive level of analysis, the broad aim is to map the world according to this discourse (Parker, 1992). Intertextuality is an analytical resource in this regard: it refers to the multip le, overlapping, sometimes contradicting and overlooked texts that are implicitly drawn from in constituting a focal discourse. Finally, the contextual level turns to relations between a discourse and its social and cultural contexts. Where intertextuality involves how elements of one text are inscribed in other texts, interdiscursivity refers to the ways in which orders of discourse are tied to one another and to broader socio-cultural conditions. For instance, this paper will attempt to show how Enlightenment and modernist identity discourse is implicit in many managerial accounts of sustainability.

Fairclough's (1995) three-tiered approach provides a useful analytical rubric for unpacking the identity operations behind management accounts of sustainability. It is not a rigid typology, however, for all three levels are inseparably interwoven in practice and analysis may overlay one or more levels to provide a more complete perspective. By the same token, all analysis must make choices and tradeoffs, since discursive formations are too large, and interpretations too subjective, to ever be comprehensive (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) extends the framework described above in order to focus on embedded power relations and ideologies (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). CDA makes three additional assumptions beyond the basic framework of discourse analysis (Parker, 1992). First, discourses support institutions: particular social, political, and economic regimes are associated with particular types and orders of discourse. Second, discourses reproduce power relations, where power is defined as asymmetries between participants in discursive events and as unequal capacity to control how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed in specific contexts (Fairclough, 1995). Third, discourses and texts have ideological effects: they carry traces of the implicit doctrines and beliefs that underpin any political, economic, or other system. Given these assumptions, critical discourse analysis asks what political, economic, and social regimes are reinforced, and what type of subjects and objects benefit or lose out in a focal discourse.

Narrative theory extends the notion of text by asserting that all texts tell stories, which is one of the important ways in which discourse constructs realities (Gergen, 1999). Texts have subjects, objects, and implicit storylines and prescribed menus of outcomes. Narrative analysis provides a method by which the stories contained in texts may be unpacked to explore how meaning is created within them. Germane to the question of identity in sustainability discourse, there are two ways in which selves may be constructed in discourse. The first is simply by participating in narratives: we understand our own participation in daily life through the stories we tell ourselves, our self-talk (Czarniawska, 1997, p. 70). Second, the structure of a narrative in which we place ourselves or that others place us in conditions the options open to us in identifying who we are. As characters in these narratives our identities are disciplined such that we have a limited number of choices of who we can be.

A second important feature of narrative analysis is that it shows how organizational and personal identity dynamics operate in very similar ways. As Czarniawska (1997, p. 41) observes:

> Despite the claim that machines and organisms are the most popular images of organization, there is another metaphor that is as popular but whose metaphorical character has been almost forgotten, so taken for granted it has become. This is the organization as super-person.

In other words, an organization or group functions exactly like any other subject in the perspective of narrative analysis. Thus, a narrative approach to the discursive analysis of identity and sustainability may consider individuals *or* organizations to be central characters in sustainability texts, and attempt to analyze either one in terms of identity dynamics and operations.

In the theoretical approach of this paper, therefore, discourse analysis brackets "reality" as a set of discursive conditions. Actors assume speaking positions through participating in a discursive regime, and a speaking position involves the rights, obligations, and kinds of statements that a person occupying a particular position in discourse can make (Harre, Brockmeier, & Muhlhausler, 1999). Thus, discourse recruits, transforms, 'interpellates' (Althusser, 1977) actors into subjects who believe their relationship with the world is real, natural, and of their own making (Thomas, 1998), which is to say that discourses convey identities, or contain identities. A discursive approach to identity eschews the modernist idea of identity as self-concept, the enduring sense of sameness that one develops, owns, and carries throughout life. Instead it argues that identity is textually and contextually constructed, and that actors tend to conflate subject positions with enduring identities. It seeks to expose and question the linguistic and ideological framing that conditions views of sustainability that are possible in a text or discourse. Power relations are a lightning rod connecting all levels of analysis: "exploring the operations of power, especially micro-power…always says something of broader ideologies and discourses" Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 18). This paper argues that subject positions in sustainability discourse contain embedded power relations that are invisible due to their incorporation as taken for granted assumptions within texts. The next section of the paper discusses this interconnection of identity and sustainability at the level of discourse.

Macro Level Context of Sustainability
The much cited, abridged definition of sustainability that was advanced by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987, p. 43) is often referenced as the entrée of sustainability into economic and management thinking. The Commission defined sustainable development as the ability of current generations to meet their present needs without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. While it was intended to delimit sustainable development rather than sustainability in general, in many ways this conceptualization has come to signify a broad societal shift towards increasing sensitivity about the natural environment (Peterson, 1997). It marks a discursive sea change that gained strength through the 1980s and 90s and continues today

in the form of ongoing controversies surrounding strong and weak versions of sustainability. Strong positions advocate a more-or-less complete re-visioning of the relationship between humans and the natural world, while weak positions entail no disruption to this worldview. For example, Turner (1993) describes a continuum of four sustainability positions from very strong to strong, to weak, to very weak, equating it with Victor's (1991) four-part economic typology that varies according to how much the preservation of environmental resources is prioritized over economic growth. Very strong sustainability adopts the 'thermodynamic' position that human activity must not exceed the carrying capacity of the biosphere. The very weak position, in contrast, represents the mainstream neoclassical assumptions of limitless and interchangeable resources.

The strong versus weak dichotomy, of course, is longstanding. Indeed, the concern behind it is as old as western colonial capitalism. In the 17th century, for instance, European scientists, medical officers, and gardeners traveling on other continents sent back alarmed reports of "the multilayered ecological impact of capitalism and colonial rule…with forceful depictions of the stark reality of felled ebony forests" (Harre et al., 1999, p.14). According to Harre et al., there was also concern at this time with global warming. In contemporary texts, the dichotomy is known by terms such as radical and conservative, ecocentric and technocentric (Shrivastava, 1995), biocentric and anthropocentric (Purser, Park, & Montuori, 1995), conservationist and exploitationist (Fill & Mulhauser, 2001), symbolic and substantial (Hoffman & Ventresca, 2002), and greening and greenwashing (Laufer, 2003). Discussion and debate about sustainability is generally conducted within the bounds of these polarities, but a critical discourse analysis of identity subtexts proceeds from a different point. It seeks to examine the framing of the debate itself for clues to embedded identity operations. Interdiscursivity is a resource in this regard, in particular the intermixing of current approaches to sustainability with the Enlightenment story of self.

The Enlightenment and Age of Reason ushered in a revolutionary concept for its time, the capacity of individual autonomy and independent, conscious thought to fulfill god-given rights to self-determination. Intrinsic to this capacity is the modernist concept of identity, an "essence at the heart of the individual which is unique, fixed, and coherent and which makes [him or] her what she is" (Weedon, 1987, p.33). Subject positions on all sides of sustainability show how deeply the Enlightenment story of the rational, autonomous self is embedded in our language and conventions of thought (Gergen, 1999). For example, the website of General Electric's Ecoimagination, a heralded program of corporate environmentalism, declares: "As a global leader in energy, technology, manufacturing, and infrastructure, GE is uniquely suited to help solve environmental challenges profitably, today and for generations to come." And dedicated environmental thinktanks reflect the faith in rationality and science that are inherited from Enlightenment philosophy, such as the mission statement of a highly reputable conservation center:

> Manomet is a *scientific* organization dedicated to applying *scientific* knowledge to improve and protect the environment (Manomet, 2005, emphasis added).

Science and technology are the white knights of rationality, and these stories are hero sagas where superbly endowed organizations operate autonomously to corner and checkmate environmental problems.

Symbolic interactionism helps to refine the analysis further, the sociological perspective that focuses on the creation of personal identity through interaction with others. While still an essentialist approach to identity, symbolic interactionism reflects significant movement towards the social constructionist perspective in its emphasis on the *social* aspects of identity formation. For Mead (1934), a pioneer of this approach, identity is constructed in the social interplay between 'I' and 'me'. The 'I' refers to one's ultimate identity, the source of creative agency that is unknowable to itself, while the 'me' is the self-object visible when observing oneself from the position of the other. Images, or 'reflected appraisals' (Cooley, 1902), are the keys to recognizing our identity in this view, especially images of how we appear to others and perceive others' evaluations of us. In other words, my identity, my 'I' so to speak, is unknowable except through reflections; I only recognize my identity through the image of myself that is reflected back from you. Thus, critical to the subject positions available in sustainability discourse is the 'you' I unconsciously select as the referent for my reflected images of self. This iterative identity formation cycle is motivated by the desire for positive self-evaluations in others' eyes and the need to create order in social space (Franks & Gecas, 1992).

At the organizational level a symbolic interactionist interpretation of identity works in quite the same way, through an "array of organizational images" (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). The view of the organization held by insiders is its image, while the view held by outsiders is its reputation (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). The organization (as person) knows "who it is" (Albert & Whetten, 1985) through the accumulated images reflected from both members and stakeholders. While impression management (Goffman, 1959) and institutional mimesis (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) are other theoretical explanations for these phenomena, this paper argues that a common denominator of both is the fundamental need for identity and stability in social space.

The argument here is that *all versions of sustainability are based on identities reflected from human as opposed to natural systems.* Underneath the rhetoric and debate, at a much more fundamental level, we identify ourselves through reflections gained from other people and manmade systems, rather than from nature. And herein lies the deeper tension in sustainability discourse, that as its captive participants we cannot see that we are wholly interpellated by its modernist formation of identity.

GE's Ecoimagination, the Manomet mission statement, and the Brundtland definition of sustainability all exemplify an underlying, deep identification with rationality, the human mind, and autonomous willpower. Only the deep ecologists, often dismissed as quacks in management circles, call attention to this reversal of anthro- and eco-centrism, yet Rogers (1994, p. 98) points out that even here there is a fundamental problem. In *Nature and the Crisis of Modernity,* he argues that after centuries of systematic removal from our natural origins we have *lost the capacity* to remember how much our personhood was once based in the natural environment:

It is the anthropocentric perspective which assumes that all meaning is socially created by humans…The invisibility of nature in this kind of construct dismisses the manifold ways in which human identity is rooted in natural being.

We identify with using, manipulating and proclaiming our technical expertise to maintain the environment, rather than acknowledging the terrifying predicament of entrapment within our own consciousness. How often do we recognize, for instance, the deep discursive ambivalence reflected in the double use of the word 'environment' in management discourse, as both what is strategically external to the firm and as the totality of the natural world? In the now-unconscious anthropomorphism that has developed over many centuries, we have forgotten what we have forgotten.

To be fair, the Brundtland definition and the entrée of sustainability discourse into mainstream management are important milestones. Turner (1993) makes three notable points about the Brundtland contribution. First, it was among the first voices to raise the issue of intergenerational equity in relation to economic development and the consumption of natural resources. Second, it made a distinction between 'needs' and 'wants', thereby creating a means for comparing the needs of the world's poorest citizens against what are arguably the whims of its richest. Yet despite these advances the third point is that it stopped short of challenging the fundamental neoclassical economic assumption of limitlessness and substitutability of capital. Nature remained defined as a form of capital with no questioning of the fundamental identification with human dominion. Peterson's (1997, p. 1) rhetorical analysis presses this point: 'the term sustainability offers an alternative to the ecocentric / anthropocentric dichotomy for framing ethical questions about natural or ecological integrity', and yet within its framework it is incapable of critiquing itself.

The subtext of modernist identity has been discussed as the macro-context of sustainability discourse in order to emphasize one issue, which is the profound nature of the crisis behind it and the distinct possibility that our terms for addressing this crisis are incapable of providing an answer. Peterson (1997, p. 3) describes a deep dis-ease beneath our western, industrialized ways of life as, "technologized conditions of our own making but not necessarily to our liking". Handy (1998, pp. 149-50) extends this point by suggesting an origin of these conditions:

Businesses and other organizations have a privilege denied to ordinary mortals-- they don't have to die …. the successful company will try to ensure that its soul and its personality or essence outlive the transient careers of its people. It must aim for immortality, even though it may never achieve it.

Herein lies the crux of the problem: 'sustainability' connotes immortality by its basic definition, but organizations and individuals resist facing our own demise. It is our (very human) fear of death that drives the unending identification with rationality and the capability of technology to solve our problems. Loss, grief, and death are the invisible shadows behind our modernist identities, what must somehow be faced if we are to move

towards any meaningful solutions. Focus on the subtext of identity in macro-level management discourse, therefore, has shown how intractable and terrifying our predicament truly may be.

Micro Level Identities in Sustainability Discourse
The preceding discussion presents one analysis of the contextual background of sustainability discourse, but it falls short of explaining firms' and individuals' behavior at the micro level. To consider some of the micro-dynamics in sustainability discourse I now turn to two other theories of identity that have been applied to organizations and the individuals who work in them.

Social identity theory (SIT) and social categorization theory (SCT) have been combined to offer explanations of familiar patterns of organizational behavior (e.g. Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Rao, Davis, & Ward, 2000). Such explanations are revealing, not as truth accounts, but as narratives (Czarniawska, 1997), good stories to account for identity operations in organizations. Both are essentialist theories that assume a fixed and knowable social reality, the 'self' as something real, and identities as transparent, self-evident, and instrumental in achieving desired outcomes. They are good stories because they provide a plausible rationale for observable behavior—which in positivist research is interpreted as causality—but from a discursive perspective they are good stories because they illustrate how institutional regimes and power relations are reproduced through discourse.

SIT was developed by Tajfel (1981), Turner (1985), and others, who showed experimentally that such in-group and out-group attitudes as stereotyping, ethnocentrism, and favoritism were results of simply being assigned to a group, a priori of any interpersonal conflict or even interaction. When a particular social identity is invoked, such as the green organization or the socially responsible manager, individuals naturally categorize themselves as either 'in' or 'out' of this group, while evaluating others in similar ways (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). This process has the effect of giving order to social relations, and, again, is motivated by needs to reduce uncertainty and enhance self-esteem through favorable comparison with others (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). Organizations and individuals continually engage in this categorization and identification process, in the environmental realm as in every other. It involves claiming membership in a reference group or organization through a cognitive process of 'othering', or distinguishing oneself from an outside group, often stereotyping or disparaging the 'outgroup'. These operations very often have a pejorative, or at the very least judgmental quality. Yet the process is so ingrained that it often takes a monumental effort for us to simply to notice ourselves doing it.

An example of social identity theory in practice is Livesey's (2001) analysis of the combative "language games" engaged between Royal Dutch/Shell and Greenpeace over the company's disposition of a huge oil storage and loading platform. Greenpeace disparaged Shell by accusing it of participating in the "modern western industrial consumer culture" (p. 69), a large mouthful signifying a negative, irresponsible 'outgroup' to many of its constituents. The company wished to avoid this perception and

be a member of the 'ingroup' of green companies. Livesey showed how it shifted its discourse and behavior in order to do so: Shell changed its rhetoric and behavior in order to join those with a positive 'eco-identity', thus building its reputation as a socially responsible firm.

In sum, a micro level analysis of identity in sustainability discourse provides a window to the deeper dynamics at work in environmental management. Actors make environmental decisions out of a need to establish a positive identity, to think well of themselves in relation to their peers, and to provide order to their worldviews. Identity interests precede and supersede the actual content of any environmental decision or action taken. Overlaid on the contextual backdrop of modernist estrangement from the natural world, these explanations collectively suggest that identity resides at the heart of sustainability discourse. Ultimately, it is the fear of identity loss, rather than environmental degradation, that lies at the heart of all sustainability debate.

Implications
Four discursive and practical implications may be drawn from the foregoing analysis. First, the field of environmental sustainability has become an arena in which individuals and organizations create and protect their identities. In one sense this new field for identity negotiation reflects a strength behind the preservationist movement: the natural environment has gained enough stature to have become relevant in the eyes of corporate image-makers. It is involved, invoked, part of many annual reports and mission statements. On the other hand it may be a negative development because of the proclivity towards 'greenwashing', the striving for environmental *image and reputation* without concomitant action. For example, Livesey and Kearins (2002) analyzed the metaphors of transparency and care deployed in corporate sustainability reports. They found that by evoking images of openness and clarity these reports constructed firms and businesses as making progress towards sustainability, while at the same time disguising their reluctance to make substantive change. The authors argued that metaphors of transparency and care in corporate reporting indicate "the institutionalization of the new communicative practices associated with sustainable development" (p. 248), whose deployment may be more concerned with portraying an image of environmentalism than with achieving its substance. Thus, the interest in promoting a positive identity is paramount and may belie an underlying superficiality.

Secondly, the foregoing analysis has shown that environmental decision making operates through a process of 'othering'. One person or organization is perceived or juxtaposed against another, in order to create and sustain an identity. This process means that there must always be an "other" for an organization to identify itself through, with, or against. The world thus consists of separate, individuated entities with a pressing need to maintain their external boundaries: regardless of how important environmentalism becomes it is always conceived in a context of separate, strategic entities. Consider, for example, the position of the natural environment in the 2002 annual report of Home Depot, the mega-chain of building and home supplies. The environment is tucked in amongst many other avenues the company identifies as opportunities for future growth: "We will also build on our merchandising success by enriching the vitality and velocity of our inventory through

programs that identify opportunities like energy conservation, environmentally-friendly products, and home security." As was the case with General Electric, the natural environment is a strategic object made use of by HomeDepot as it constructs its identity through projecting images and scanning for the interpretations of these images by others. HomeDepot uses the environment in attempting to distinguish itself from others in its field, thereby perpetuating the fragmentation characteristic of our competitive economy. In such a world it is difficult to see how the kind of broad-based collaborative action that may be needed to make significant environmental improvement can even be conceived.

Third, it seems clear that that the natural environment has little power of its own in the identity operations of organizational actors. In terms of discursively generated power relations, the natural environment is in the ultimate position of powerlessness because it has little voice, identity, or means to engage in identity games as a subject. At best, it is an object that is deployed in human and organizational "identity work" (Schwalbe & Mason-Schrock, 1996), for example in the notion of the natural environment as silent stakeholder (e.g. Starik, 1995). At worst it is one of several interchangeable forms of capital. The silencing of the environment in these ways suggests that we in western cultures using market-based business models are greatly handicapped in approaching the immense challenge of environmental degradation. The greatest barriers to collective, large-scale response are our own inbred processes of self-construction: these are inside us and they are invisible without a great deal of effort.

Fourth, and most profound, the identity theories reviewed in this paper show that underneath all our identity work is an unnamed but colossal anxiety, and it is this anxiety that explains and perpetuates the intractability of the sustainability debates. Return for a moment to the underlying motivations posited behind the theories that have been examined, the desire for self-esteem and the desire for an ordered social world. Based on these assumptions, to *not* engage in identity-making would be to surrender the desire for externally validated self-confidence and social stability. Yet refraining from commonplace modalities of self-making and self-knowing is precisely what we must risk doing if we are to transcend the strong-versus-weak sustainability divide. Our own insecurities about identity lock us into a system of 'othering' where there are always winners and losers. It is extraordinarily difficult to imagine a world where categorizing, comparing, and judging others, as the basis of identity-making, would be the exception from the rule.

Beyond these four implications, this paper purposely abstains from making recommendations for future research or practice. Its object has simply been to make the case that identity relations and dynamics are at the heart of our environmental dilemmas as well as the conceptions of sustainability we now have for addressing these dilemmas. If it were to continue by positing exemplary visionaries or potential models, such as Peter Reason's (2002) inaugural lecture at the University of Bath, it would be participating once again in the othering process. Reason observes:

> We cannot continue to deny the gravity of the human situation…we have no choice but to engage with these issues sooner or later. If we do so sooner we can do so with more dignity and more hope.

Reason's voice is one with which I personally resonate, but to suggest that "we all should take this position" or "this person is a model environmental leader", would potentially imply a judgment and deprecation of those who didn't, or don't, or haven't. I don't mean to suggest that there is nothing we should do. I am an author with strong preservationist interests, and I struggle with identity issues like everyone else. This paper is simply one interpretation of the vast, complex, terrifying, enlivening world that we all confront and create every day.

References

Abrams, D., & Hogg, M. (1990). An introduction to the social identity approach. In D. Abrams, & M. E. Hogg (Eds.), *Social identity theory: Constructive and critical advances*: (pp. 1-9). New York: Springer-Verlag.

Albert, S. & Whetten, D. A. (1985). Organizational identity. In L. Cummings, & B. Staw (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior* Vol. 7 (pp. 263-295). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Althusser, L. (1977). *For Marx* (B. Brewter, Trans.). London: NLB.

Alvesson, M., & Deetz, S. (2000). *Doing critical management research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ashforth, B., & Mael, F. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization. *Academy of Management Review*, 14 (1): 20-39.

Cooley, C. H. (1902). *Human nature and the social order*. New York: Scribners.

Czarniawska, B. (1997). *Narrating the organization: Dramas of institutional identity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

DiMaggio, P. & Powell, W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48 (April), 147-160.

Dutton, J., & Dukerich, J. (1991). Keeping an eye on the mirror: Image and identity in organizational adaptation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 34 (3), 517-554.

Dutton, J., Dukerich, J. & Harquail, C. (1994). Organizational images and member identification. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 39, 239-263.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language.* New York: Addison Wesley.

Fill, A. & Mulhauser, P. (Eds.). (2001). *The ecolinguistics reader: Language, ecology and environment*. New York: Continuum International.

Franks, D. D. & Gecas, V. (1992). Autonomy and conformity in Cooley's self theory: The looking-glass self and beyond. *Symbolic Interaction*, 15 (Spring), 49-68.

Gergen, K. (1999). *An invitation to social construction*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Handy, C. (1998). *The hungry spirit: Beyond capitalism: A quest for purpose in the modern world*. New York: Broadway Books.

Harre, R., Brockmeier, J. & Muhlhausler, P. (1999). *Greenspeak: A study of environmental discourse*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Hoffman, A., & Ventresca, M. (Eds.). (2002). *Organizations, policy, and the natural environment: Institutional and strategic perspectives.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Hogg, M., & Terry, D. (2000). Social identity theory and self-categorization processes in organizational contexts. *Academy of Management Review*, 25 (1), 121-140.

Ladd, E. & Bowman, K. (1995). *Attitudes toward the environment: Twenty-five years after Earth Day*. Washington, DC: AEI Press.

Laufer, W. (2003). Social accountability and corporate greenwashing. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 43 (3), 253-261.

Livesey, S. (2001). Eco-identity as discursive struggle: Royal Dutch/Shell, Brent Spar, and Nigeria. *Journal of Business Communication*, 38 (1), 58-91.

Livesey, S. & Kearins, K. (2002). Transparent and caring corporations? A study of sustainability reports by The Body Shop and Royal Dutch/Shell. *Organization and Environment*, 15 (3), 233-258.

Manomet. (2005). Manomet center for conservation sciences. Manomet, MA: Manomet center for conservation sciences.

Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self, and society.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Parker, I. (1992). *Discourse dynamics: Critical analysis for social and individual psychology*. London: Routledge.

Peterson, T. (1997). *Sharing the earth: The rhetoric of sustainable development*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.

Phillips, N. & Hardy, C. (2002). *Discourse analysis: Investigating processes of social construction*. London: Sage.

Purser, R., Park, C. & Montuori, A. (1995). Limits to anthropocentrism: Toward an ecocentric organization paradigm? *Academy of Management Review*, 20 (4), 1053-1089.

Rao, H., Davis, G. & Ward, A. (2000). Embeddedness, social identity and mobility: Why firms leave the NASDAQ and join the New York Stock Exchange. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 45, 268-292.

Reason, P. (2002). *Justice, sustainability and participation.* Paper presented at the Inaugural Lecture: Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice, School of Management, University of Bath.

Rogers, R. (1994). *Nature and the crisis of modernity: A critique of contemporary discourse on managing the earth.* New York: Black Rose Books.

Schwalbe, M. L., & Mason-Schrock, D. (1996). Identity work as group process. In B. Markovsky, Lovaglia, M. & Simon, R. (Ed.), *Advances in Group Processes*, Vol. 13 (pp. 115-149). Greenwich CT: JAI Press.

Shrivastava, P. (1995). The role of corporations in achieving ecological sustainability. *Academy of Management Review*, 20 (4), 936-960.

Starik, M. (1995). Should trees have managerial standing? Toward stakeholder status for non-human nature. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 14, 204-217.

Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories: Studies in social psychology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Thomas, P. (1998). Ideology and the discourse of strategic management: A critical research framework. *Electronic Journal of Radical Organization Theory*, 4 (1). http://www.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/depts/sml/journal/special/thomas.htm ed

Turner, J., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Turner, J. C. (1985). Social categorization and the self-concept: A social cognitive theory of group behaviour. In E. J. Lawler (Ed.), *Advances in Group Processes*, Vol. 2 (pp. 77-122). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Turner, R. K. (Ed.). (1993). *Sustainable environmental economics and management*. New York: Belhaven.

Victor, P. (1991). Indications of sustainable development: Some lessons from capital theory. *Ecological Economics*, 4, 191-213.

Weedon, C. (1987). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). (1987). *Our common future* (Bruntland Report). Oxford: Oxford University Press.