PRAGMATIC CORPORATE CULTURES:
INSIGHTS FROM A RECYCLING ENTERPRISE*

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*In keeping with our promises to respondents in our field research, we have provided fictional identities for the personnel, organizations and communities used in this paper. The order of authors is alphabetical.

Abstract

Over the last few decades, many social analysts have come to focus on the contradictions between economic, social, and environmental goals in modern corporations. In this paper, we examine the case of Community Recycling Incorporated (CRI), a formal organization that has successfully embraced a set of economic, ecological, and social goals. We argue that CRI's ability to move towards "green practices" is due to an organizational culture that allows for pragmatic decision making. Pragmatism is a form of logic that presupposes a self-reflective process, which continuously reflects on its own methods, theories, and standards of evaluation. Pragmatic decision making requires an organizational culture that: (1) can recognize and deal with paradox and irony, (2) is critical and reflective of its own motives, means, and missions, and (3) uses reason instead of morality or rationality.

Pragmatism: An Alternative Culture to Positivist and Practical Management

Over the last few decades, many social analysts have come to focus on the contradictions between economic, social, and environmental goals in modern corporations (e.g., Schnaiberg & Gould 1994, Barnet & Cavanagh 1994, Harrison 1994). In response, some managerial and social theorists have called for these formal organizations to develop new practices that would lead to environmentally- and socially-sustainable development (see note 1), through reducing such contradictions between economic gains and environmental-social losses. Some "green" firms (Weick 1976) have enacted organizational cultures which we label here as "**positivistic**". Using technology or niche marketing, such firms attempt to resolve the

contradictions by locating distinctive practices that meet each separate goal (e.g., Tibbs 1993a,b; for a critique, see Schnaiberg 1995). Other firms have developed "**practical**" organizational cultures. Decision makers constantly find compromises that satisfy "enough" of each goal (Reder 1994; Makower 1994). In this paper, we argue, through one empirical example, that there is a third possible way. Firms can develop organizational cultures that allow for **pragmatic** decision making.

Pragmatism is a form of logic that presupposes a self-reflective process, which continuously reflects on its own methods, theories, and standards of evaluation. When applied to organizational culture and decision making, pragmatism's epistemological frame values the decision making **process**, as part of its search for an historical series of organizational problems posed and problems solved. Pragmatic organizational culture thus emphasizes process, method, correction, and change. Definitive and/or permanent results are downplayed. By insisting on this type of continual process, pragmatists argue that organizational effectiveness is always open to correction by the organizational community. Managerial principles or "truths" emerge only in a process of self-correction. Managers assess practices by their consequences. Practices emerge from a combination of managers' experiences and the application of reasoning. Over time, pragmatic managerial theorists may be able to further classify practices and their consequences more systematically. For now, neither such scholars nor managers of enterprises can claim to have found any managerial "truths" about creating new organizational structures to create truly-sustainable production. Thus, managerial truth about "sustainable development practices" is usually a matter of degree, which is organizationally and historically specific.

In sharp contrast, a **positivistic** organizational culture values decisions that **solve** problems. Positivist managers, generally supported by management school teaching, believe that there are **enduring solutions** to common problems. To a pragmatist, though, life is an **enduring tension,** which she/he can only attenuate. Pragmatic managing is a process of using past consequences and current knowledge as tools, to identify these underlying tensions, and thereby to locate a

range of ways to reduce them. Whereas the **practical** manager continually finds compromise, a manager steeped in pragmatic organization eschews compromise. It neither achieves enough profit to sustain the organization, nor enough social good to sustain society (Schnaiberg 1995). The pragmatist views compromise as misconstruing the relationship between the goals. For the green firm, the organization must attain economic, social, and environmental goals, which exist in fundamental tension, which require that contradictory organizational values be addressed in often-unprecedented ways. Figure 1 illustrates these differences.

INSERT FIGURE ONE HERE

For "green" firms, three aspects of the organizational culture are important components of pragmatic management. We will have more to say about each of these in our concluding section.

(1) Reaching multiple goals often places organizational values in constant tension. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars' (1993) have argued that organization cultures are defined by seven pairs of polar values:

1) universalism vs. particularism,
2) analyzing vs. integrating,
3) individualism vs. communitarianism,
4) inner-directed vs. outer-directed orientation,
5) time as sequence vs. time as synchronization,
6) achieved status vs. ascribed status, and
7) equality vs. hierarchy.

Profit-seeking firms can operate by selecting one or the other value. But there is no combination of choices within the seven tensions that would allow a firm to achieve a state of "greenness." Rather, sustainable development entails embracing some measure of **each** of the value-poles. Decisions are made by identifying these values as being paradoxical in relationship. The organizational culture is configured in ways that allow

for constant renegotiation about where the organization falls, with respect to these tensions.

(2) Rules are treated as working hypotheses. They are constantly refined, based on experience, which is defined as "what works." Thus, there is no clear distinction between ends and means. The ends exist through the current means.

(3) Moral and rational approaches to decision making are brought together through reason. Respected values of the organizational culture become: orderly thought, ultimate goals, experience as empirical evidence, practical wisdom, and open dialogue (see Selznick 1995, chapter 2).

In what follows, we demonstrate these ideas using the example of Community Recycling Incorporated (CRI). This is a public-private venture between the local Private Sector Group (PSG) and a suburban department of streets and sanitation (in Subopolis, a community bordering Chicago). The firm embraces a set of ecological goals based on preserving virgin materials, while preventing the siting of new landfills. The latter posed a variety of ecological problems. CRI also embraced a social goal of retraining dislocated and/or unemployed residents in Subopolis.

As a recycler of post-consumer waste, CRI's main activity is running a post-consumer materials recovery center (or 'MRF'). The MRF employs local welfare recipients. In addition to working on the line sorting and cleaning recycled materials, the workers receive job retraining, which includes a Friday morning seminar. Workers were allowed to work at the center for a maximum of eight months. After this period, they are expected to find a job, with CRI's help. The center employs fifteen young persons: 99% of the trainees are African-Americans, and the majority of those are male.

After three years, CRI boasts a successful list of economic, environmental, and social successes. CRI produces one of the highest quality recycled waste streams in the Chicago area.

This allowed it to continually receive high prices for its goods, even during the market slump of the early 1990's. Environmentally, CRI has diverted over one million pounds of newspaper, glass, aluminum cans, magazines, and plastic bottles from the waste stream each month. Socially, CRI has a job placement rate of nearly 80%, in a local economy that suffers from upwards of 11.4% unemployment rate for African Americans, and a total unemployment rate of 11.3% (United States Census Bureau 1990).

The organization is managed by a recycling coordinator, Norma, and a "life skills" instructor, Henry. As the recycling coordinator, Norma is in charge of securing markets for the firm's products, quality control of materials recovery, monitoring shipment loading and unloading and handling public affairs. For example, during a two hour interview we witnessed her weigh in five truckloads of materials, receive and send out faxes, make phone calls, and place a bandage on an employee's cut finger. She is a city employee, Caucasian American, and her occupational background is in journalism and advertising. As Life Skills Instructor, Henry counsels the firm's workers on job skills, social etiquette and comportment for job-seeking purposes through weekly class instruction. As an African American, Henry serves as a valuable cultural link between the workers and the plant's management. Like Norma, Henry is from a non-management background. He is a former drug rehabilitation counselor, a professional advocate for the homeless of Illinois, and a seasoned retrainer of dislocated workers[1]. As co-manager of the firm, he is an employee of the Private Sector Group. Together, he and Norma form the public-private management partnership over Community Recycling Incorporated.

In the next section, we present observations from CRI to show how an organizational culture of pragmatism can help firms move towards sustainable development goals. To organize our observations we use Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars' (1993) value categories.

Pragmatically Ordered Management:

The Case of Community Recycling Incorporated (CRI)

Universalism versus Particularism

The job-retraining component was an essential part of CRI's economic success. The retraining allowed the facility to employ workers at a low wage: it was a stipend, and not a long-term salary. This also ensured an enthusiastic workforce, and provided a continual re supply of new workers. Together, these factors allowed CRI to continually produce one of the highest-quality recycling streams in the area, at one of the lowest operating costs. Norma explains:

> "...it's been good for the program because we've had a good, reliable work force for the most part. And it keeps the clock ticking down when people are here on a temporary basis, with idea that they're going to be sent out on job interviews."

The retraining aspect was also an important factor in the public funding for parts of the facility. When asked about the Mayor's support of CRI, Norma replied, "Louise [the Mayor] likes the PSG program [the retraining aspect of the recycling program]."

Maintaining a successful retraining component required Henry to eventually place workers into stable employment. This, in turn, required an organizational culture that could embrace both universal values (general rules that always apply), as well as particular values (knowledge that is contextualized). For example: every worker needed training in identical skills during their tenure with CRI. Henry commented:

> "The Program teaches them good work habits, good work skills, job retention. We have classes on Fridays where we have a teacher that comes in, who teaches at Truman College, to help them upgrade their math, reading and writing skills, the three R's."

The application of this universal rule to the retraining program helped reduce the economic uncertainty of the firm by ensuring that each worker would have the skills needed to gain employment. Thereby, it ensured that the retraining program would have the ability to continuously recruit low-paid but highly-motivated workers.

At the same time, however, the social aspects of the program required more particularistic values. The second part of Henry's statement was:

> "and we also have two hours of motivation and self esteem classes to help them raise their self esteem. 'Cause we get people in here who have hit rock bottom, whose self esteem is very very low. And we all know that as human beings once your self esteem goes, then you basically have no purpose for living. So this program really gives a lot of people a second chance in life--a big turnaround, and we've seen that several times."

Empowering worker-trainees in the class room was dependent upon Henry being able to draw from his personal experience, to refine the rule of what should be taught in the classroom. Henry explained:

> "Sometimes we have segments on Black history, and a lot of these kids have very little knowledge of what Black folks have accomplished. I think it's important to sometimes put down the curriculum, put that aside. Let's address the real issues, not only the things the curriculum is going to help you learn, but also the things that are going to make you a more well-rounded individual. It's these things you have to know that you, being a Black person, that doesn't mean you have to be second class to anybody. You do belong in this society...."

The rule of teaching the "three R's" was a working hypothesis. When Henry sensed an opportunity to reach a social goal, he had the discretion to do this. Such discretion was a product of his organizational power. There was an organizational culture that valued his use of discretionary power to stop and reconstruct the curriculum. He assessed both this opportunity, and substituted a more favorable topic. Both decisions were based on his previous experience as a counselor, finding *ad hoc* topics to gain the attention of young black men.

Analyzing versus Integrating

Embedded in the history of the idea for a recycling center was an example of the dual needs for an organizational culture that valued both analytic and integrated decisions. Analytically, parts of the organizations were examined, conceptualized, and dealt with separately. Conversely, integrative decision making arose from focusing on the relationships between these organizational components.

Subopolis was faced with a garbage problem driven by diminishing landfill space. This created a short-term problem of high tipping fees for waste haulers, and a long-term problem of a shortage of landfill space (Weinberg, Gould & Schnaiberg 1995). CRI emerged partly from analytic management styles employed by the head of Subopolis's sanitation department. Subopolis's waste stream was broken into parts, with facts gathered on costs of disposal and potential alternatives. Recycling was chosen as one cheap alternative. But CRI also emerged from other integrative thinking. The Subopolis Mayor drew connections between the waste stream problem and other local socio-environmental problems.

Using both analytic and integrative values, then, the Mayor used reason to locate a solution that fit Subopolis's multiple needs. The decision was partly rational. Recycling would save money. But the decision also contained a moral component as it embraced a variety of ecological and social goals that, at the time, offered few historical precedents or economic guarantees. The Mayor's thought process was more than rational or moral. Her decision was based on reasonable evidence about the economic, ecological, and social problems, and on sound arguments about potential local solutions. To decide between these options, she drew on her own experience about what could work in Subopolis, based on the history of how things had worked there in the past. CRI was viewed as "change within a framework of limited alternatives

and necessary trade-offs" (Selznick 1994: 58). To make this decision, the Mayor identified ends based on principles of social and ecological ends. This was not simply subjective. Rather, it drew upon her inventories of knowledge, based on her past experience about what had earlier constituted appropriate community principles. These principles became refined, as CRI developed in ways that made no enduring distinction between its means and its ends.

Individualism versus Communitarianism

When asked about meeting CRI's social goals, Henry responded:

> "A lot of companies are going to this testing, this reading and math testing--that you have to test at a certain grade point. Some of our kids don't meet that expectation. So that's where the classroom comes in -- to help them boost their reading levels. All-Electronic is one of those companies that gives that test and I applaud them for it. Because in order for you to go further in a company, and do anything for that company, you've got to be able to read, do the math, you've got to know the basics. Or else you're stagnant, you're not doing anything for yourself or for your company.
>
> I applaud them for doing it. They are all very open. Some companies have a policy that they won't take anybody with less than a high school diploma, [or] they won't take anybody who has a criminal background in less than five years. I understand that, too. Their policies and their rules are their rules. We don't have many companies that do that, but we have companies that say: 'We will train them, but they must have a high school diploma'. I've had some people come through here who don't have it. They can be a good worker, and they may want this job. But if this is one of the minimal requirements that the personnel manager's telling me, I'm not going to send you to the interview. Because I know what they told me.
>
> If I send you to the interview and you don't have this, then *that's looking bad on me, and looking bad on you.* Because they told me what they required. I've had people

> say to me 'Well, I can talk my way through it and they would never know it'. Sooner or later they'll know it. And once they find out you lied, then you're fired. You're back to square one. That's not what we want." [Emphasis ours]

Embedded in this quote was a constant shifting between two styles of management. There was one very clear strand of managing for <u>individuals</u>. Henry talked about making decisions that were best for "the kids." He did not want to do things that would diminish their opportunities. Simultaneously, he managed practices for the endurance of the CRI organization. Henry respected the right for All-Electronic to test applicants. Organizations, he felt, should create rules to protect themselves. Likewise, CRI would not break these employers' rules, by lying about CRI's individual employees. That would eventually only make CRI "look bad". At times, Henry alluded to a connection between these styles of management. What hurt the CRI organization would, by virtue of association, also hurt the individual worker. Here the social, the environmental, and the economic logic were all embedded within a communitarian approach.

At other points, the goals were separated. The needs of worker-students clashed with those of the CRI organization. Henry managed this tension, shifting back and forth. He continually reflected on the situation at hand, drawing on his past experience, and using reason to make his decisions. He did not compromise. Rather, he shifted back and forth, refining his stance and his goals (1) as the situation dictated, (2) based on consequence he projected, and (3) deriving his synthesis of these from his reasoning.

As Henry talked more, what we observed was a decision process that kept asking what a decision meant for the type of worker <u>and</u> the type of organization that the decision would help produce. Thus, the internal consequence of a decision was valued. This allowed Henry to make decisions in order to reach social and ecological goals, as much as to meet economic goals.

Importantly, this meant that Henry saw no separation between means and ends. Underlying his comments was a clear appreciation for meeting the ends by embodying them in each practice or means. He saw this process as an intrinsic part of his everyday struggles of decision-making, taking into account the impacts of their immediate consequences.

Inner-directed versus Outer-directed Orientation

Social and environmental responsibility can arise from very inner-directed judgments, decisions, and commitments. Alternatively, it can arise from outer-directed signals, demands, and trends. Recycling is particularly susceptible to this tension, because the outer-directed signals, primarily market demand and price, change rapidly.

Concerning markets, Norma commented:

> "On plastic it changes frequently. On news it changes frequently. On glass it never changes [laughter]. On steel cans it's pretty steady ... Aluminum...it's come down a lot since we first started, because of the political situation in Russia, with all the bauxite that's come into the market. I try and get the best price that I can in the market and sometimes in the summer times, the prices are really bad, so what I try and do is to make sure that I have somebody that will buy it.... I have a broker now that I sell most of my paper to, who lives in Subopolis and I feel she has a vested interest in it."

Here, in an outer-directed fashion, Norma continuously configured and reconfigured her position as the market shifted. All the while, she maintained her inner-directed drive toward relational contracting (Dore 1983) and resource recycling. When asked about who she sold to, Norma stated:

"I don't always sell to the same people. But I do try to establish relationships with

people...."

Throughout the interview, Norma filled in missing pieces of this statement. At times, she selected brokers based on price. At other times, she selected brokers based on CRI's social and environmental goals. She picked smaller, locally-owned firms that, to her, embodied the non-market aspects of recycling. In response to the question, "how do you juggle your social, environmental and economic responsibilities?", Norma responded: "It's very difficult. I think probably the one thing that keeps me somewhat sane is that they [the city administration] don't bother me about who I sell to or they don't make me have contracts." Her world was full of uncertainties regarding both market and environmental quality. She had to pragmatically order these tensions. She viewed the market as something that is "out there", which guided her (outer-directly). But she also saw that we were all a part of the natural and physical environment, whose fate intersected with our own, and whose preservation had to come about because of our personal willingness to achieve it (inner-directness).

Most "green" firms have to make compromises between competing goals. This is often done at some standardized time, through fixed contracts. Norma, in contrast, was able to maximize the ecological and social goals everyday by continually refining her management practices. Norma's ability to do this indicated her ability to abandon more traditional organizational values of determinacy, order, precision, in favor of imprecision, reconstruction, and refinement. She managed without contracts, in a market of shifting prices. That is to say, she managed without the reassurance of predictable prices, precise timetables, and predetermined flows of goods. This allowed her to constantly mix and match, refining her everyday practice in a way that allowed for the meeting of ecological and social goals, as much as she deemed possible.

Time as Sequence versus Time as Synchronization

Through its production processes and labor-management relationships, CRI pragmatically ordered these two time orientations. It produced good products both rapidly and efficiently, as it

negotiated cultural differences its managers have constructed between their African-American workers and the corporate marketplace. We first examined the shop floor processes.

Henry describes the plant's quality management and parallel processes:

> "...We have it set up in two different sections. We have a conveyor belt that runs paper products that is anything from newspapers to cardboard boxes to magazines to plastic milk jugs. We have another belt that we call the 'wet products' which runs glass, aluminum and steel cans. We break the group down so we have a section [of workers] working on the paper line, and we have a section working on the top line, the wet line. And we rotate them so that the positions don't get so boring, because if you stand there doing the same thing day in and day out, it can get pretty monotonous."

CRI was unique in its willingness to address the tensions between what Henry has constructed, the substantial differences between his African-American workers' and mainstream cultural time orientations. An African-American himself, Henry opened up to the workers during a class session:

> "Now we all know that, as Black people, we have been labeled -- mislabeled-- as not knowing how to be somewhere on time. If you're one of those people that can say 'I've had the problem in the past of not being punctual, but on my last job I never missed a day in six months, I was never late in six months;' that lets the employer know that you have had a problem--a weakness--but...you're turning it into a strength.

During one session, Henry asked George, a worker, to identify one of his weaknesses -- a lack of punctuality. He did so to help George anticipate future interview questions, and to improve George's own chances of obtaining future employment:

> "*Henr*y: What about you, George? What is your weakness?
>
> *Geor*ge: Coming in late.

*Hen*ry: Your weakness.

*Georg*e: Right, but I like working here.

*Hen*ry: Once you get here. But part of your weakness is getting here.

*Georg*e: But I catch on fast!

Henry: Yes, you do work hard and you learn fast"

This exchange provides a window into the unique cultural context, within which the CRI operates. As Henry acknowledged, there existed a strong stereotype, within and outside the Black community, that African Americans were generally on a different time table than are white Americans. Often referred to as "CPT" or "colored people's time," this idea was often the subject of good-natured fun and ethnic humor within and between other cultural groups (Kornblum 1974).

The point is that values of time and punctuality arose here, as negative forces. Potentially, they might culturally mismatch CRI's Black workers with typically white-American managers. However, CRI's management recognized this as an existing tension, and made continuous efforts to manage it. The supervisor pragmatically ordered this dilemma between the quantity and quality of work. He allowed for the employee to be late periodically, if he balanced this loss with higher-quality work performance. The general rule of punctuality in instilling good job skills was refined, based upon Henry's sense of what was required, at a particular moment, to work. Henry did not stay focused on "the end". Rather, he integrated the end into the means. Since the end and means were inseparable for him, he could refine a rule as the situation required, judging this need based on systematic observations from similar past experiences of his.

Ascribed versus Achieved Status

Training and preparing disenfranchised youth for the job market was, by definition, wrestling with the dilemmas of whether or not certain individuals or groups ought to be

afforded "special treatment." As we noted above, CRI negotiated the particularistic needs of workers from the local the African-American community, while addressing CRI's more universalistic needs as a firm. However, workers also had to meet various ascribed and achieved criteria. In fact, the workforce was not exclusively African-American, so racial criteria did not overtly enter into hiring and promotion decisions within CRI. The following are "ascribed" characteristics required of workers (see note 2).

1. *Workers must live in the city.*

This requirement makes good community sense, because, as Henry put it:

> "This is in the contract that was mandated by the City Council, which makes sense, because we're putting the money back into the community."

2.*Workers must be recipients of some form of welfare or general assistance.*

This is because, as Norma put it, "It's a program designed to get people off welfare."

The previous discussion concerning the social construction of the African-American worker's timetable was relevant to their achieved status. Henry factored punctuality and attendance--along with work performance, of course--into promotion decisions. He also drew upon these indicators, in his decisions as to which employees to send to interview for jobs at the "good companies":

> "I send them [the companies] people I feel are going to work for them. You've got to have a good attendance record, because I keep good attendance records. I'm very strict on attendance."

We should note that there was also upward mobility within the firm among workers. Two assistant supervisors we interviewed were former line sorters. According to Norma:

> "Some of the people, like the assistant supervisor, is somebody who came through the

> program. So he got hired by the PSG. A couple of them have gone on to work for the city. In fact, one of the guys who worked here and came through the PSG program is now a city employee."

Thus, in a short period of time, through hard work and perseverance, many workers gained status within CRI before leaving.

In confronting many stigmatizations and stereotypes associated with African-American welfare recipients, CRI's management negotiated these conflicting achieved and ascribed status values. It made use of multiple criteria for decision-making in workers' raises, promotions and even in deciding to which employers they might eventually be targeted. This allowed CRI to meet a current political need to appear part of the "market," without somehow making the organizational assumption that all youths possessed equal opportunities in the marketplace.

Equality versus Hierarchy

Firms characterized by shared decision making and flatter hierarchies exhibit less inequality among and between employees, supervisors and managers. One might expect green firms and other socially responsible ventures to possess flat rather than steep hierarchies. Yet, CRI was partly publicly owned. This gave Subopolis's residents a vested interest in seeing CRI operate successfully. Thus, the CRI management treated local citizens as partners in their venture. The CRI even had a sort of "quality control" process, whereby the firm employed volunteers, in what Norma describes as a

> "'Recycle it Right contest ... [W]e have volunteers go out and look in peoples' bins and we give them a report card. Talk about a sociological experiment! "

This served as a form of "relational contracting" (Dore 1983) between CRI and local citizens, whereby both sides had to uphold their part of the bargain. At times, citizens practiced their own quality control on the CRI. Norma tells the story of how it took more than just

training to acclimate the city's streets and sanitation workers from landfill-destined garbage pickup, to materials recovery facility-destined post consumer waste:

> "It became a different kind of job, and a lot of them just looked at it as garbage anyway, and just thought it was just really picky. You know, why should I do all this stuff? I'd rather just throw it in the garbage! And that did happen, and we did have a lot of phone calls from people, saying that the garbage truck was coming along and just dumping it in the garbage. There were just some problems. But I think a lot of that has improved now."

This was a good example of local citizens serving as the "eyes and ears" of environmental protection on the ground (Gould, Schnaiberg and Weinberg 1996). Residents served as a local monitoring system.

Thus there was very little hierarchy between the larger partners in this venture. Finally, however, we must ask, how this worked on the inside of the plant. When we asked a line worker the question, 'So whom do you answer to?' he responded:

> "We're supposed to answer to PSG, but we <u>do</u> have to respect what the City bosses say and vice versa. We all have to get along here, if we're going to get the job done."

When we asked Norma what the hierarchy looked like, she responded,

> "The only people who are not PSG workers are the operations manager, Doug Hampton. He and I work together. I'm not his boss, but I tell him what he needs to do. Because I'm the one who has contact with buyers, so I'm the one that knows that this truck needs to be loaded next, or they need this done with their news [paper], or their plastic. So I'm constantly giving him instructions as to how things should be organized. And then he decides how to organize it over on the floor, and the PSG people do the actual sorting work:...they have two supervisors. One ... is the head

supervisor and [the other] an assistant supervisor."

Conclusion: Pragmatic Managing Within a Transnational Treadmill of Production

Every action taken by CRI was embedded in certain arrangements of the political-economy (Granovetter 1986). Elsewhere we have developed a model of the current U.S. political economy as a *treadmill of production* (Schnaiberg 1980, 1986, 1994; Schnaiberg & Gould 1994; Gould, Weinberg & Schnaiberg 1996). The economic component of the treadmill has the publicly-stated goal of expanding of industrial production and economic development, as well as sustaining a concomitant increase in consumption. The political component of this system has a public confluence of private capital, labor, and governments, in promoting this goal. Such confluence of interests is based upon the increasingly widespread social belief that advances in public welfare are achieved primarily through economic growth. Treadmill interests are manifest in private investments in fixed capital, in public institutions developed by the state to facilitate economic growth, and in the orientation of organized (and non-organized) labor toward these investments and institutions. Overall, these dynamics are exemplified by the recent passage of GATT and NAFTA, and the movement towards a European Union (Gould, Weinberg, & Schnaiberg 1995).

Within this emerging transnational treadmill of production, managers and formal organizations are under increasing pressure to restructure and rationalize production (Harrison 1994). This pressure places, economic, environmental, and social goals in contradictory relationship to each other. Despite the topography of this terrain, CRI has been able embrace a multifaceted "green" agenda, through enacting an organizational culture that allows for pragmatic decision making.

Across each of our examples, there has been a common problem. How was CRI to address multiple goals, which often required the firm to hold contradictory organizational values? Perhaps the best example was the need by CRI to embrace, at different times, values of

universalism and of particularism. CRI did not solve these contradictions. Decisions were made by identifying these values as being paradoxical in relationship. CRI then configured its organizational culture in ways that allowed for constant renegotiation about where the organization would fall with respect to these polar values. CRI was able to do this in part by treating rules as working hypotheses, which were constantly refined, based on experience -- defined as "what works". This, in turn, required that CRI's organizational culture brought moral and rational approaches back together, through CRI's own reasoning. CRI drew on a set of organizational values that included:

- orderly thought
- ultimate goals
- experience as empirical evidence
- practical wisdom, and
- open dialogue.

These values were moral, as well as intellectual. Henry and Norma embodied a form of moral competence that was critical and, at times, self-limiting. It was a form of reason that was comfortable with history, indeterminacy, complexity, and irony (see Selznick 1995: chapter 2). Using reason to draw on past experiences, and through refining general rules, both Henry and Norma shifted between universalism and particularism, in ways that allowed them to empower, train and place workers. They were able to obtain good prices for depressed products, while they also diverted a sizable part of the local waste stream into more ecologically-sound ends (see note 3).

The rise of managerial science, management business programs, and business consulting have all supported organizational cultures rooted in technique. Usually, they support either rigorous inquiry, which processes and manipulates bits of data, or abstracted inquiry, which is based on rational choice models. Both types of inquiry depend upon flawed assumptions of human nature and knowledge (see Selznick 1994: ch.2). As others have noted, they lead to

visions of power <u>over</u> nature, where depleting natural resources is part of "progress", which will be resolved by "progress" (Wright 1990).

In this paper, we have outlined an alternative organizational culture which uses data, theory, and science, without abdicating managerial judgment to any one of them. Obviously, we have only partially sketched what a pragmatic management might look like. We encourage interested readers to see our earlier work (Weinberg 1994; Gould, Schnaiberg & Weinberg 1996; Schnaiberg and Gould 1994), and other work currently being done on pragmatism, in other contexts (Anderson 1990; Selznick 1994). Our call here is for a type of organizational culture that:

(1) can recognize and deal with paradox and irony,

(2) is critical and reflective of its own motives, means, and missions, and

(3) uses reason instead of morality <u>or</u> rationality.

"Reason" here implies a new way of managing. It is a type of decision making that is aware of history, of political-economy, and of social justice. Ends and means are brought together through humility, evidence (usually built around experience), and dialogue. These, we believe, are the starting points for a "green" organizational culture, which has to operate within a treadmill of production, with its own sustained tensions.

Notes

1. In this paper, we draw no distinction between green firms and sustainable development. In our research, we are interested in firms that are moving towards sustainable development goals, which we define as having an environmental and social component. For the purposes of this paper, we will interchange the labels "green" and "sustainable development" firm. See Weinberg, Pellow, and Schnaiberg, forthcoming.

2. Each of these, one could argue, is actually as much "achieved" as "ascribed."

3. We collected most of our data in 1994, when prices for recycled waste streams were still depressed. They have since risen (Holusha 1994). The depressed markets only strengthen our arguments about CRI. They were able to successfully embrace and realize economic, ecological,

and social goals when "times were tough."

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Figure 1

Pragmatism versus Other Modern Management Styles

	Positivistic	**Practical**	**Pragmatist**
Vision of Management	Locating Answers, Finding Solutions	Locates Compromises	Continual Reexamination of Practice assessed on Experience
Role of the Manager	Expert fact finder	Mediator	Manager of Paradoxes
Values	Objective	Objective	Moral, Political
Tools of Manager	Decision Maker	Mediator	Juggler, Reflector
Practice of Managing	Gather facts	Find places of convergence among competing goals.	Refine general principles through continual examination and reconstruction
Truth	Verifiable facts	Shifting	Locally-based, time-specific
Reality	Natural Order	Natural	Unfolds and changes over time