The function of values and values-related discourses in disputes between socially responsible companies and labor unions

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The Function of Values and Values-related Discourses in Disputes Between Socially Responsible Companies and Labor Unions

by

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B.A. Marquette University, 1996

presented in partial requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Montana

May, 2001

Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

Andrew Gilla, M.A., May 2001

The Function of Values and Values-related Discourse in Disputes Between Socially Responsible Companies and Labor Unions

Chairperson: George Cheney

As examples of organizational rhetoric, organizational values and values-related discourses have profound effects on internal and external audiences of organizational messages. Disputes between socially responsible companies and labor unions provide a timely context for the study of the functions of organizational values and values-related discourses.

Interpretive and critical analytical approaches are employed to organizational documents to establish management and labor perspectives on organizational values and employee participation. Although both of these organizations claim social motivations, socially responsible companies and unions express different value commitments and advance contrasting perspectives on employee participation. Interviews conducted with advocates of the socially responsible and labor perspectives expand understanding of how organizations use values and regard union representation.

The socially responsible perspective is characterized by invocations of organizational culture and the values customer/client, diversity, respect, and teams/teamwork. Socially responsible companies emphasize individualism and coordinated activity that can substitute for union representation. The labor perspective is characterized by commitments to justice, working families, and voice. Labor insists that unions provide the most democratic form of employee participation that protects workers from unchecked management control.

Socially responsible companies and labor unions hold differing perspectives on the role of organizational values, and the nature of employee participation. The self-image and reputation of "social responsibility" was postulated as the most important factor that influences socially responsible companies' resistance to unions.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis has covered many areas and borrowed from many perspectives. Two of those guiding perspectives have come from my committee members, Susan Anderson and Sara Hayden. Thank you for lending your experiences and insights to this project.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preview</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Historical Background</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions and motivations of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical development of CSR</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “new” labor movement</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate campaigns by labor</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: Domain of Attention</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of employee participation programs</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critiques of employee participation programs</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee participation – A labor perspective</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four: Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five: Methodology and Previous Analyses</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous relevant analyses</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values and values-related discourse</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research questions</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research table</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Six: Case Studies and Patterns of Disputes Between Socially Responsible Companies and Labor Unions</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case studies</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterns of disputes</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Seven: CSR Perspective on Values</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate messages</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially responsible company messages</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially responsible company values</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A labor perspective</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Socially responsible company values table

Chapter Eight: Labor Perspective on Values
- Values used as arguments for union representation in the workplace
- Preliminary value framework
- Labor perspective themes table
- Labor values
- Labor values — A management perspective
- Labor value table

Chapter Nine: Extension of Organizational Values and Values-related Discourse
- Management interviews
- Labor interviews — Insistence on union representation

Chapter Ten: Discussion
- Insights into the functions of values and values-related discourse in the socially responsible company-labor relationship
- The role of organizational values in organizational reputation, self-image and identity

Chapter Eleven: Conclusion
- Review
- Methodology
- Implications of the research
- Future research
- Final thoughts

References

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Appendix B: Informed Consent
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Rationale

When a dispute about wages and restructuring arose between workers and management at Powell’s Books, a Portland, Oregon-based book retailer, owner Michael Powell insisted, “You say the word ‘union’ and everyone’s supposed to feel all squishy. I don’t get it, I understand if you’re organizing farm workers, or people in Bangladesh. But this is not that type of situation” (Featherstone, 2000, p. 11). Powell’s attitude toward organized labor is a consistent theme within several recent disputes between workers and “socially responsible” employers. According to Powell, organized labor is justifiable in situations of dire need, but not within his company. Several recent incidents suggest that Powell is not alone in arguing that the right to organize is not appropriate for “certain situations.”

In her article “It’s Business, Man!” Featherstone (2000) documents some of the more publicized battles between socially responsible companies and workers attempting to organize. Featherstone names Ben and Jerry’s Homemade, Inc., Borders Books and Music, Starbucks, Noah’s Bagels, Whole Foods, Working Assets, and Powell’s Books as progressive companies that have felt the strain of unsatisfied employees. When the first movement toward organizing occurred at Powell’s Books, Powell insisted that union representation would dissuade free speech and that a liberal, “organic” organization like Powell’s relied on flexibility that would be hindered by a union. Employees countered that union representation guaranteed workers’ speech would be heard and that they would be involved in shaping the future direction of the store. As International Longshoreman and Warehouseman’s Union (ILWU) spokeswoman Marcy Rein told the Los Angeles Times, “What we have is a group of young workers in the new economy, the service
economy, organizing themselves and taking a stand for their jobs, and not only their wages, but for their creativity in their jobs” (Murphy, 2000).

Border’s Books and Music, the second largest book retailer in the world, praised the labor movement while insisting “either unions were irrelevant to the contemporary workplace, or ‘inappropriate for Borders’” (Featherstone, 2000, p. 11). Borders cited domestic-partner benefits offered to gay and lesbian employees as one perk that set it aside from other companies in which union representation may be more “appropriate.”

Featherstone’s claims of “socially responsible companies as union-busters” have been played out on an international stage as well. Dick Hubbard, owner of Auckland-based Hubbard Foods and founder of Businesses for Social Responsibility, faced lunchtime protests at his plant in early 2000 that led to charges from a competitor that he paid employees below market rates. Hubbard, who has been at the forefront of the social responsibility movement in his country, has deliberately overstaffed a plant in a depressed area, donated cash and cereal to charity, and spent $150,000 to take his employees on a three-day vacation to Samoa (Madow, 2000). So why did such a responsible businessman fight the union? As Madow (2000) writes, “social responsibility, Hubbard said firmly, didn’t extend to salary bills that would put the company out of business” (p. 32).

The examples provided in Powell’s Books, Borders Books and Music, and Hubbard Foods illustrate some of the new, “rhetorical” challenges that face organized labor and workers attempting to gain union representation and contracts. This paper will investigate the relationship between socially responsible companies and labor unions.
today using a framework of public organizational values and value-related discourse.¹ Valued concepts like “employee participation” and “workplace democracy” have become the grounds on which management and labor battle to decide whose definition of participation and democracy will take hold in the workplace. As Cheney (in press) argues about Microsoft’s public relations campaign focusing on “innovation, freedom, and cooperation... Such battles over terminology and labels have important practical consequences not only in terms of attitude change but also with respect to decision and policy making” (p. 3). In regards to organized labor, these terminological battles may have lasting effects on worker’s quality of life both inside and outside the workplace. For example, the very notion of “participation” is contested, and the specific meaning that takes hold in a particular organization or industry may mean the difference between openness of management and voice for employees and a mere ritual of “empowerment.”

The paper advances from a decidedly pro-labor bias. The bias originates from a critical perception of organizations consistent with Mumby (1993): “organizations are not neutral sites of sense making; rather, they are created in the context of struggles between competing interest groups and systems of representation” (p21). The “systems of representation” discussed here are management and labor perspectives toward the uses of organizational values. It is proposed that the classifications of “management” and “labor” often profess distinct interests and struggle to define certain values in support of those interests. The pro-labor bias ultimately results from the belief that broad-level “organizational” interests and values often consist of management interest without adequate input from labor. The bias is designed not only to offer an often lacking labor

¹ Throughout this paper italics are used to guide the reader by highlighting key methodological concerns, insights and conclusions.
perspective, but to provoke a management response that leads to productive dialogue between competing interests. It is also suggested that adopting a pro-labor stance serves as a challenge to the labor movement to constantly strive not only to improve the lives of their members, but also the organizations in which they work. Failure to do so limits the extent to which any labor critique of management can expect to influence meaningful workplace change.

Preview

This paper is designed to provide a comparison between the values of socially responsible companies and labor unions with special attention to the cases where these groups have engaged in recent disputes. The paper consists of eleven chapters including an introduction and overview chapter.

The second chapter provides a historical background on the rise of corporate social responsibility and the rebirth of American labor over the last decade. Corporate social responsibility and organized labor are considered emergent movements that are likely to intersect more often in the future.

The third chapter identifies a domain of attention for study based on a review of literature on workplace democracy and employee participation programs. Attention is given to both the management and labor perceptions of the programs' nature, goals, structure, and outcomes.

Chapter four discusses two theoretical premises that guide a study of values and value-related discourse in the socially responsible companies – labor union context.
These premises establish a theoretical ground for the communication of organizational values as a function of organizational rhetoric.

The fifth chapter presents the methodology for gathering and analyzing data. The methodology consists of textual analysis supplemented by interviews with advocates of the socially responsible and labor perspectives. Special attention is given to a critical interpretive approach to data analysis. The critical-interpretative perspective addresses some of the possible meanings that can be attributed to organizational values by different audiences.

In the sixth chapter, case studies are analyzed for broad patterns of disputes between socially responsible companies and labor unions. The case studies and patterns establish this research as significant and timely.

The seventh chapter utilizes corporate documents to represent a socially responsible company perspective on values. The socially responsible values are interpreted from the company perspective as well as critiqued from the perspective of organized labor.

Chapter eight shifts focus to the labor perspective on values. A labor perspective framework adapted from Hansen-Horn and Vasquez (1997) is elaborated through the analysis of documents from the AFL-CIO. The developing perspective is then critiqued from a management and socially responsible perspective.

The ninth chapter extends the textual analysis with select interviews. Interviews broaden the understanding of organizational uses of values, management perspectives on employee participation and labor unions, and the labor insistence on union representation as the most effective form of employee participation.
In the tenth chapter, general insights into the causes of labor unrest within socially responsible companies are discussed. It is posited that a socially responsible reputation and self-image are central factors in a sense of betrayal that socially responsible companies feel in response to organizing attempts.

Chapter eleven concludes the paper with a review, methodological limitations, implications for the corporate social responsibility and labor movements, recommendations for future research, and final thoughts on the importance of critical-interpretive analytical approaches of organizational values and values-related discourse.
Definitions and Motivations of Corporate Social Responsibility

To begin, it is important to establish a conceptual understanding of what is meant by the term corporate social responsibility (CSR). Business for Social Responsibility (BSR), a San Francisco-based membership association of more than 1,400 companies, defines CSR as:

operating a business that meets or exceeds the ethical, legal, commercial, and public expectations that society has of business. CSR is seen by leadership companies as more than a collection of discrete practices or occasional gestures, or initiatives motivated by marketing, public relations, or other business benefits. Rather, it is viewed as a comprehensive set of policies, practices and programs that are integrated throughout business operations, and decision-making processes supported and rewarded by top management (Introduction, 2000).

This definition includes several key elements of CSR. First, CSR requires meeting a comprehensive set of standards, or “expectations,” that the larger society has of business. Reference to the “expectations of society” indicates that socially responsible companies understand their place in a larger environment and recognize that members of the larger environment are affected by company action.

Second, the definition addresses a widely debated topic surrounding CSR – the motivation that underlies socially responsible policies and actions. The continuum of socially responsible motivations ranges from the “cynical” to the “fanciful” (Tracy, 1996). The cynical approach suggests “social responsibility” is a marketing gimmick motivated solely by an increased bottom-line. Such “cause-related marketing” positions a company within a market and draws consumers and shareholders to an organization’s products and/or services. The “fanciful,” or idealistic, approach suggests that corporations do good because it is the right thing to do. In other words, corporations are
run in accord with some basic, human ethic that goes beyond increased profits. The fanciful approach certainly has its proponents, as evidenced by statements from some of the forerunners of CSR. In their book *Ben & Jerry's Double-Dip: Lead With Your Values and Make Money, Too*, Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield (1997) argue that values-led businesses have a responsibility to the society that makes their existence possible. Regardless of one's stance on why companies practice socially responsible behavior, it is clear that more and more companies are riding the trend.

CSR organizations and corporate membership in those organizations is steadily growing in the United States and other parts of the world. BSR, the world's largest membership association for "responsible" companies, has more than 1,400 member companies "representing more than $1.5 trillion in combined annual revenues and employing more than six million workers" (FAQ, 2000). Several other CSR membership groups exist within the United States and internationally as well. The Instituto Ethos in Brazil, Fundacion Esquel in Equador, European Business Network for Social Cohesion in Belgium, Keidanren in Japan, M.A.A.L.A. Business for Social Responsibility in Israel, Business in the Community in the United Kingdom, and Businesses for Social Responsibility in New Zealand are all committed in various ways to encouraging ethical, values-based business practices. The growth of CSR organizations is probably due to the many benefits that await socially responsible companies. While BSR suggests in their definition that CSR is not motivated by marketing, public relations, or other business benefits, it is clear that certain "bottom-line" benefits are used as bait to draw companies to membership organizations and responsible practices. BSR summarizes quantitative and qualitative research that shows socially responsible companies enjoy increased access to...
capital, improved financial performance, reduced operating costs, enhanced brand image and reputation, increased sales and customer loyalty, increased productivity and quality, increased ability to attract and retain employees, and reduced regulatory oversight (Makower, 1994, details similar benefits and additional research). It would seem that the CSR movement will continue to grow as more research is conducted and the relationship between responsible practices and bottom-line benefits is strengthened.

The Historical Development of CSR

An adequate treatment of the historical development of CSR requires attention to works and movements in both the academic and popular realms. It is important to understand that corporate activity does not simply wait for the next great management book to be published, and that not all organizations are run in accordance with “best practice” management techniques. This line of reasoning is not meant to diminish the influence of organizational scholars on shaping the structures, policies, and actions of the organizations they study. Rather, it is a realization that the modern conception of CSR is, at least in part, a function of social movements that led to increased corporate accountability for actions that affected the larger environment outside of the corporation itself. For this reason, I will attempt to provide a historical development of CSR that weaves together three threads: 1) governmental legislation and regulation, 2) the work of organizational scholars, and 3) popular movements.

The initial momentum in the historical development of CSR was the governmental regulation of business in the late 19th and early 20th century. Vertical and horizontal integration created mega-corporations that dominated entire industries and all
but destroyed free-market competition within these industries. "Captains of industry" and "robber barons" became common labels for businessmen that created corporate empires and stifled competition within certain markets. Men like Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller amassed tremendous wealth while buying up or crushing competitors. Early responses to emerging trusts and monopolies sparked early anti-trust legislation like the Interstate Commerce Act (1887), the Sherman Act (1890), and the Clayton Act (1914) sought to promote competition through a certain extent of regulation (Luthans & Hodgetts, 1972). In essence, the “free markets” of America’s capitalist system needed to be “freed up” from companies that grew too powerful within a market niche. Checks on corporate growth and competitive practices were brought into law and companies had a “responsibility” to meet these standards. In 1938, the Wheeler Act was passed in the United States outlawing false advertising. The rationale behind this legislation was to promote fair competition within industries by regulating the types of messages companies could send to the public.

The corporate response by large businesses to this legislation included the growth of corporate philanthropy and public relations, as well as holding companies and other ways to control several corporations at once. Some of the owners of large corporations became the target of public scorn which threatened their business. The most prominent example was Rockefeller’s image campaign undertaken by Ivy Ledbetter Lee, a former journalist. Following a brutal strike breaking at the Ludlow mine, Lee advised Rockefeller to visit his work sites and use them to enhance his image. The result was, in some estimations, the dawn of public relations and the driving force behind many corporate publicity campaigns that followed. Businessmen became aware that it was
possible to shape the public image and that a positive image could have many benefits to
t heir organizations. These benefits included a decrease in strikes and government
legislation that aimed to curtail anti-competitive behavior.

Along with a rise in public relations came an increase in corporate philanthropy. While undertaking ferocious business practices, the robber barons donated large sums of money to the establishment of charitable foundations and causes. These activities led to two themes that described the earliest movement of CSR - philanthropy and stewardship. Philanthropy and stewardship were the result of a belief that corporate owners could “take care” of employees and even the larger public. Such paternalism continues in the CSR movement as owners assume that they have an innate insight into what is good for society and a responsibility to act accordingly. Philanthropy and stewardship can be good in themselves or for a larger organizational benefit, but can also fail to account for individual differences and freedom.

About the same time as the Wheeler Act (1938), the organizational literature reflected hints of commitment to CSR. In his book, The Functions of the Executive, Chester Barnard (1938) argued that organizations were a collection of communicative, coordinated networks. Barnard suggested management has certain responsibilities within this collection of networks that include conforming to “the government code as applying to his company, that is, the laws, charter provisions, etc... the general moral (ethical) standards of his subordinates...the code that is suggested in the phrase ‘the good of the organization as a whole’” (p. 273). Barnard even suggested that “efficiency” be defined in terms of satisfaction for employees. These beliefs reveal that responsibility encompasses governmental, employee, and organizational standards as well as a sense of
employee well-being. Oliver Sheldon’s *The Philosophy of Management* (1936/1966) extended Barnard’s arguments by suggesting that management have a primary concern for the human and social elements of the organization, not just profit.

In discussing the modern era of social responsibility, Carroll (1999) argues, “A significant challenge is to decide how far back into the literature to delve to begin discussing the concept of CSR. A good case could be made for about 50 years because so much has occurred since that time that has shaped our theory, research, and practice” (p. 268, emphasis added). Carroll (1999) highlights the major works regarding CSR from the 1950s to 1990s. The works that he recognizes serve as a decade-by-decade collection of academic, organizational literature on CSR. While the classification of these works as “academic, organizational literature” may be simplistic, it serves to set them up as counterparts/compliments to other, more popular works and movements. The addition of these complementary works and movements to my review is meant to reveal how public attentiveness to corporate and government action has potentially enhanced the popularity of CSR. In other words, it is my belief that not all corporate “responsibility” has been voluntary, and that public accountability has provided an impetus for corporations to adopt more responsible policies.

According to Carroll, the 1950s best contribution to the field of CSR was *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* by Howard R. Bowen (1953). Bowen pointed out that corporate action, especially that of the largest companies, had effects on people that are not in direct contact with the organization. Bowen’s insight, and why Carroll terms him the “Father of Corporate Social Responsibility,” was his specific concern to determine “what responsibilities to society may businessmen be reasonably expected to
assume" (Bowen, 1953, p. xi). At the same time Bowen’s work was circulating, the seeds of future movements were being planted in the United States and abroad. The Supreme Court ruling in Brown v. the Board of Education deemed “separate but equal” facilities for blacks and whites unconstitutional and provided steam for the growth of the Civil Rights Movement in America. In Calder Hall, England, the first nuclear power plant was built and questions were raised about the regulation and safety of nuclear power as a public source of energy.

The 1960s saw an increase in the amount of organizational and popular literature that added to the potency of the development of CSR. Davis (1960) professed an “Iron Law of Responsibility” that linked the amount of a corporation’s responsibility to their amount of social power. Davis’ argument is significant because of the recognition that more powerful organizations have the capacity to do more good, and harm, to society as a whole. McGuire (1963) further defined CSR when he suggested that corporations have responsibilities beyond the economic and legal realms. Carroll writes, “Although he [McGuire] did not clarify what, exactly, these obligations were in his definition, he later elaborated by saying that the corporation must take an interest in politics, in the welfare of the community, in education, in the ‘happiness’ of its employees…” (p. 272). Walton (1967) extended notions of CSR with a notion of corporate voluntarism. Similar to the “fanciful” approach to the motivations of CSR, Walton felt that companies had to be willing to take certain, responsible actions that were not motivated strictly by increased bottom-line benefits.

As the Civil Rights Movement reached a critical point with the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, two other movements gained momentum. While the
Civil Rights Movement focused primarily on changing government legislation, these new movements took aim at corporate wrong-doing and were established as direct antagonists to large corporations. In 1962, Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* was published. The book exposed in highly dramatic and effective fashion the harms caused by agricultural chemicals. The book was a best-seller and received the attention that led to a thorough reassessment of the impacts of agricultural pesticides. The ultimate success of Carson’s work occurred in 1970 when environmentalism went mainstream with the celebration of the first Earth Day. The publicity of the global impacts of industrial consumption and pollution influenced tighter regulation of corporate waste, and in turn, more “responsibility.”

At the same time the environmental movement was being established as a watchdog of corporate activity, Ralph Nader’s *Unsafe at Any Speed: The Designed-in-Dangers of the American Automobile* was published. Nader’s book, published in 1965, popularized the notion of consumer advocacy. The consumer advocacy movement illustrated that consumers have the right, and power, to hold corporations accountable for the goods and services they provide. As Nader wrote, “What most troubles the corporations is the consumer movement’s relentless documentation that consumers are being manipulated, defrauded, and injured...It is becoming apparent that the reform of consumer abuses and the reform of corporate power itself are two sides of the same coin and that new approaches to the enforcement of the rights of the consumer are necessary” (The Office of Citizen, 2000). These social audits brought forth the concept of responsiveness to internal and external stakeholders. As employees and the public became more aware of corporate activity, corporations were forced to respond to
stakeholder needs and concerns. Such responsiveness influenced movements for increased disclosure by organizations and increased regulation through governmental legislation.

*If the decade of the 1960s marked a highpoint of social audits of corporations, then the 1970s witnessed new areas of governmental regulation of business, the founding of CSR leadership companies, and an expansion of the concept of CSR by organizational scholars.* Makower (1994) notes that within the period 1969-1972, four major American regulatory agencies were formed: the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Equal Employment Opportunity Office (EEO), the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). As the government in the United States continued to "motivate" socially responsible behavior through legislation and regulation, socially responsible pioneers laid the foundations for companies that would prove responsibility and profit are not mutually exclusive.

The work of individuals like Martin Luther King, Jr., Rachel Carson, and Ralph Nader, and certain anti-governmental sentiment indicated a larger trend in anti-institutionalism that occurred in the 1960s into the 1970s. An atmosphere that remained skeptical and critical of institutions and their activities led to increases in corporate accountability. In some cases, the same individuals that fervently fought against institutions eventually became the owners and decision-makers within those institutions.

In 1976, Anita Roddick opened the first branch of skin and hair retailer, The Body Shop, in Brighton, England. In her 22-year tenure as CEO of the company, Roddick became the most widely publicized and recognized proponent of socially responsible corporate activity. The Body Shop is committed to "business as unusual" by retailing
environmentally sound products with minimal packaging and challenging traditional beliefs about cosmetics and beauty products. The company has established and contributed to an array of campaigns and causes including Save the Whales, the renovation of Romanian orphanages, the improvement of Brazilian healthcare, and support of women’s rights in China among others. Through all these good works and contributions, the retailer has spread to 47 countries with more than 1,500 outlets, and made $605.8m in retail sales in 1998/1999. Roddick professes “enlightened capitalism:” “I think you can trade ethically, be committed to social responsibility, global responsibility, empower your employees without being afraid of them” (Entine, 1994).

The American counterparts to Roddick are Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield, co-founders of Ben and Jerry’s Homemade, Inc. Cohen and Greenfield started their first ice cream shop in a renovated gas station in Vermont in 1978. Ben and Jerry’s remains committed to using all natural ingredients in their products and donates 7.5% of their pre-tax earnings to various charities and grants. And, Ben and Jerry themselves, like Roddick, and Yvon Chouinard of Patagonia, are leaders and icons of the BSR movement.

As government and business practitioners realized the need for increased attention to corporate influence on society, so too did organizational scholars. Carroll (1999) notes that the 1970s saw the refinement of CSR definitions and the origin of “alternative emphases” to CSR (p. 291). Johnson (1971) argued that companies have responsibilities to a “multiplicity of interests” beyond the traditional shareholder model (p. 50). A
statement by the *Committee for Economic Development*\(^2\) (Committee for Economic Development, 1971), is reflective of some of the movements of the previous decade:

Business is being asked to assume broader responsibilities to society than ever before and to serve a wider range of human values. Business enterprises, in effect, are being asked to contribute more to the quality of American life than just supplying quantities of goods and services. Inasmuch as business exists to serve society, its future will depend on the quality of management’s response to the changing expectations of the public. (p. 16)

This statement by CED shows that the business community was aware of the movements that sought to inject accountability into corporate action a decade earlier. The CED also realized that business had the power and responsibility to help improve the “quality of American life” beyond providing goods and services. After the work of the CED, CSR literature in the 70s continued to investigate the “practicality” of CSR. Separate research by Bowman and Haire (1975) and Abbott and Monsen (1979) conducted different levels of content analysis on corporate annual reports to catalogue the ways that businesses talked about social responsibility. Holmes (1976) gathered business executives’ perceptions on what CSR meant to them and found that the respondents tended to focus on the result of their social actions.

Literature in the 1980s and 90s refined notions of CSR and continued to search for links between corporate social responsibility and corporate performance. Cochran and Wood (1984) attempted to establish a relationship between company reputation and performance. While the authors admitted their research had weaknesses, it did serve as a starting point for further investigations of a link between responsibility and profitability.

In the mid-1980s through the 1990s CSR was expanded to the notion of corporate social

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\(^2\) The Committee for Economic Development (CED) is “an independent, nonpartisan organization of business and education leaders dedicated to policy research on the major economic and social issues of our time and the implementation of its recommendations by the public and private sectors” (www.ced.org).
performance (CSP), corporate citizenship, stakeholder theory, and business ethics theory (Carroll, 1999). Although there are similarities between these theories, each differs slightly on the standards and motivations of responsible corporate behavior. The definition presented earlier by BSR highlights these differences by referencing the "ethical, legal, commercial, and public expectations of business." These separate segments have very different views on what constitutes "responsible behavior." Whether responsibility is grounded in ethics, the law, commercial trends or social expectation will prove to have critical effects on corporate action.

CSR moved toward the mainstream in the 1990s with the foundation of the membership association BSR. Roddick, and Cohen and Greenfield, were all instrumental in the formation of BSR. The association, whose revenues and membership has been described earlier, seeks to support responsible business practices by creating a network of companies and providing research, education, and consulting for socially responsible companies.

The most recognized voice against the concept of social responsibility is economist Milton Friedman. Friedman (1962) argues that the only obligation of business is to maximize profits in a competitive environment while following the rule of law. He writes, "few trends could so thoroughly undermine the very foundations of our free society as the acceptance by corporate officials of a social responsibility other than to make as much money for their stockholders as possible" (p. 133). Friedman extended his argument in 1970 when he addressed the so-called "responsibility of the businessman." He contends that such a responsibility must be purely a persuasive technique in light of the fact that the only responsibility of businesspeople is to act in the interest of their
employer. Acting without interest to the employer, according to Friedman, includes any activity that is not directly related to earning more money for stockholders. Certainly, maximizing profits does drive a great deal of corporate activity, but certain corporations have “raised the bar” of responsibility through admirable philanthropy, and exceptional environmental and employment policies. *It must be noted, though, that some difficulty lies in the fact that companies can be simultaneously responsible and irresponsible depending on who is making such a values-based judgment.*

Three recent, well-publicized events show how a corporation can be simultaneously responsible and irresponsible. In April 2000, Phil Knight, founder and CEO of Nike, announced he would stop charitable donations to his alma mater, the University of Oregon. Knight is concerned about the university’s membership in a labor organization that has been critical of Nike’s third-world labor practices. Knight has given $50 million to the school for athletics and academics and Nike has been a major contributor to inner-city youth programs. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has donated over $21 billion to a number of charities and has outfitted several schools with computer labs, CD-ROMs, and internet service. Obviously, though, Gates’ company Microsoft has been accused of irresponsible business practices that are considered monopolistic. Under a philanthropic standard of responsibility, the contributions of Knight and Gates are extremely responsible. But, as business practitioners, both have displayed conduct that is considered to fall below ethical and legal expectations.

A third example reveals that values-based organizations are also susceptible to the tensions between profitability and responsibility. Entine (1996) discusses the example of trendy, Seattle-based coffee retailer Starbucks. He writes, “To earn enough to afford a
pound of Starbuck’s coffee, a Guatamalan worker would have to pick 500 pounds of beans, about five days of work...note that this story has a twist; in a glittering ceremony in New York recently, Starbucks was awarded the International Human Rights Award by the Council on Economic Priorities at its annual 'Corporate Conscience' ceremony” (p. 3). After public protests of Starbuck’s contribution to unfair labor practices, the company adopted an ethical code of conduct and promised to make available “Fair Trade Certified” Coffee. With the prodding of fair trade organizations, Starbuck’s is now considered a forerunner of socially responsible retailing.

It is not the goal of this paper to clearly define CSR or question how much responsibility is adequate. For, as Entine (1996) suggests, “The corporate world cannot be divided easily into good guys and evil companies. Companies are dysfunctional families writ large. Mistakes, sometimes whoppers, are built into life, including the life of corporations” (p. 5). Rather, the general question representative of the present research is similar to one that guided Cheney’s (in press) research of the Mondragón cooperatives. Cheney asks, “To what extent can any value-based organization, particularly in the for-profit sector, hold on to its core values in the face of an expanding and pressure-ridden global market?” (p. 18). The adaptation of this question as a supplemental guide in the present research is “how will socially responsible corporations (values-based organizations) respond to the new pressures they face from the resurgence of union organizing brought on by the ‘new’ labor movement?”
The "new" labor movement

The growth of CSR has been paralleled by a regeneration of organized labor in the United States. In the United States, organized labor had steadily declined in prominence for about the last 30 years. Union memberships have tended to grow and recede in relation to larger, global periods of economic growth and recession. Shlaes (1996) informs that total membership in unions went from 22 million in 1975 to about 16 million in 1995. In private-sector unions, membership has gone from about 11.9 million in 1983 to about 9.4 million in 1995. In the time frame 1983 – 1995, the country created somewhere between 20 and 30 million new jobs.

The contributions to the decline of organized labor range from macro-level organizational trends and the proliferation of a negative image about labor to illegal union-busting techniques and lax labor law. Three recent organizational trends have exerted negative influence on organized labor: 1) globalization, 2) the rise of a "contingent" workforce, and 3) attendant corporate restructuring. Because of the magnitude of these three trends, each will be discussed only in terms of its relationship to organized labor.

The surge of global companies has placed American workers in competition for jobs with workers willing (forced) to work long hours for low wages. Free trade agreements have opened the doors for companies to take their facilities out of the country and take advantage of poverty, high unemployment, and relaxed governmental regulation and oversight. Shailor (1998) describes in detail the "bottomless pit of economic processing zones" that accompanies corporations searching for "the newest, cheapest, least regulated source of labor that they can find" (p. 146-147). Although globalization is
touted as the culmination of a truly global market, the residual effects on certain sections of workers is the loss of power and status due to the exploitation of other workforces.

The second recent organizational trend that has negatively influenced organized labor is the rise of the "contingent" workforce. Information and communication technologies and a desire to "flatten" organizational structures have increased the ability of workers to work from outside the traditional office-building setting. Contingent workers do expose employers to certain liability under federal law, but the benefits are undeniable. By contracting outside specialists and/or entire departments, organizations benefit from increased resources, knowledge and flexibility as well as reduced overhead and administrative costs. In making a point about contingent workforces, Cappelli et al. (1997) reveal, “The largest employer in the United States is now Manpower Temporary Help Agency, with more than 600,000 employees” (p. 76). As the trend toward contingency increases, organized labor will be faced with the challenge of devoting resources to organizing campaigns of temporary workers. Cook (2000) reveals “The AFL-CIO calls contingent labor a 'priority issue' but has yet to make an all-out push to organize temps on any significant scale” (p. 15). The reasons for hesitation on the part of labor is clear: “most unions, have, until lately, assumed a defensive posture, opposing the creation of temp jobs as a union-busting strategy rather than looking for ways to unionize temps” (p. 15). Organized labor runs the risk of alienating the contingent workforce and creating a public relations problem if organizing attempts are too aggressive.

A third organizational trend, and one directly related to the rise of the contingent workforce, is an increased emphasis on organizational restructuring. Organizational restructuring takes many forms including downsizing, reengineering, team-based
reorganization, lean production, and outsourcing. While the different forms of restructurin vary considerably, the majority of these efforts often aim to limit overhead and staff while increasing efficiency and production (Rifkin, 1995). Often times, new structures are presented as increasing the decision making power of employees by involving them more in the creation and/or evaluation of work processes. Organized labor has often perceived restructuring as shifting responsibility and accountability away from management to employees. The resulting empowerment is tempered by increased responsibility that allows increased management control over employees. A Betty cartoon offers what can be considered a prevalent labor opinion concerning the management philosophy underlying many reengineering programs. The cartoon portrays a manager stepping inside an employee break room and telling three employees, “Ladies, I just popped by to tell you something about the new shift in management philosophy. I’m sure you’ll be happy to know that an integral part of the new focus on quality over results is empowerment for all company workers!” The first woman questions, “We get empowered without having a say in it?” The second woman offers, “Yet another action of an arrogant male power structure.” The third woman suggests, “In other words, we get job satisfaction whether we like it or not” (1994). The three ladies point out that the new emphasis on quality (a central theme in many restructuring efforts) actually functions to limit their power and extend the reach of management. The effects of work process restructuring will be elaborated on further in light of the management and labor perspectives on employee participation.

Organized labor has also suffered from periods of negative public opinion due to the proliferation of negative images of labor. In the early 20th century, organized labor
was perceived to be closely associated with the Communist party. Communism was growing and was understood as the direct enemy of democratic, capitalistic America. For most of the public, inklings of Communist sympathy within organized labor were enough evidence to consider the unions "un-American." To combat the un-American label, labor threw support behind democratic independence movements around the world. Any improvement in public opinion was damaged when certain factions of labor adopted racist, isolationist tendencies. Montgomery (1999) argues "No part of labor's own legacy proved more damaging to all these efforts on behalf of democracy at home and abroad, however, than the deep-rooted custom within its ranks of identifying 'labor' with white men and depicting people of color as instruments of rapacious capital – as 'cheap labor'" (p. 104). These racist attitudes turned devastating when white workers murdered blacks in incidents in 1917 and 1921. Labor leaders and organizers are addressing the issues of racism and isolationism to this day.

Maybe the most widespread negative image of labor is that of a corrupt organization. This image certainly has some foundation, as evidenced by publicized scandals of larger unions. The destruction of non-union shops, threats and beatings of non-union and "scab" workers, and relationships with organized crime have all soiled the image of organized labor. The low point of labor may have taken place when Teamsters' president Jimmy Hoffa was indicted and convicted of bribery and fraud charges by then Attorney General Robert Kennedy. The Hoffa trial was highly publicized and perpetuated public perceptions of union corruption and greed. Accusations of corruption
have followed unions throughout history and are still used as an initial response to attempts at organizing.\(^3\)

Friedman (1962) suggests that labor successes can have negative long-term effects on the ability to organize:

If unions raise wages in a particular occupation or industry, they necessarily make the amount of employment available in that occupation or industry less than it otherwise would be – just as any higher price cuts down on the amount purchased. The effect is an increased number of persons seeking other jobs, which forces down wages in other occupations. Since unions have generally been strongest among groups that would have been high-paid anyway, their effect has been to make high paid workers higher at the expense of lower paid workers. Unions have therefore not only harmed the public at large and workers as a whole by distorting the use of labor; they have also made the incomes of the working class more unequal by reducing the opportunities available to the most disadvantaged worker. (p. 62)

Friedman contends that an increasingly organized workforce works against both unions and the economy in general. In essence, a monopoly of organized labor ultimately decreases the amount of jobs available. Shlaes (1996) provides a similar, practical example: “It is incontrovertible that workers in countries like Germany and France have secured extraordinarily generous benefits from their employers as well as the state. It is also incontrovertible that these benefits have been extracted at an extraordinarily high price: namely, unshakeable economic stagnation and chronic double-digit unemployment rates” (p. 7). This line of argument against organized labor has been used to show that the “economics” of organizing often result in improved living conditions for only a small minority.

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\(^3\) It is interesting to note that when workers at Powell’s Books approached the International Warehouse Union’s (ILWU) Local 5 about representation, Michael Powell sent letters to employees’ homes accusing the union of corruption. In reality though, Powell had actually confused the ILWU with another union (Featherstone, 2000).
From the labor perspective, the recession in organizing is due primarily to lax labor law and illegal union busting techniques from corporate management. Contrary to corporate claims, cries of unfair labor practices may be more fact than fiction. Bensinger (1998) suggests that in 98 percent of representation elections, employers break a law that forces unions to file charges with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Other evidence suggests that illegal union busting techniques are not only acceptable, but profitable as well. At least one popular title, *Confessions of a Union Buster*, outlines the illegal activity of a management consultant specializing in blocking organizing campaigns and breaking strikes. New York labor attorney Alfred DeMaria trains human resource managers to recognize the earliest stages of organizing and offers advice on how to turn organized labor's negative image against the organizing campaign. In dealing with human resources personnel, DeMaria strikes up “images of unions stirring up betrayal among loyal employees…{and} instructs the managers to terrify the supervisors with visions of greedy, fat-cat, strike-happy, Mob-infested unions” (Phillips-Fein, 1998, p. 63). The ultimate authority of management over employees is the power to fire pro-union workers at the beginning of organizing campaigns. Such activity is outlawed by the National Labor Relations Act, but DeMaria admits to its effectiveness:

Let’s suppose during the early period of card signing you discharge a prime mover, and the NLRB finds that you did it on a discriminatory basis. What are the remedies? Reinstatement, back pay, and you gotta post a notice saying, We’ve been bad boys and girls, we won’t do it again,” says DeMaria. By the time an employer’s appeals are over, the worker will probably have a new job, so reinstatement won’t be a real issue, and the back pay requirement will have been offset by the wages the employee earned in the meantime. The potential consequences of such a firing are so minor that, as DeMaria puts it, “Some companies will just say, ‘Hey, where’s the check?’” Workers who believe in unions because they think they offer the best chance for dignity and democracy in the
workplace implicitly deny management’s prerogative for total control. (Phillips-Fein, 1998, p. 64)

Despite such negative images and harsh union-busting techniques, labor has shown signs of rebirth in the last few years. Today, the AFL-CIO, the country’s largest association of organized labor, represents over 13 million working men and women in 68 national and international unions. In 1995, the dormant AFL-CIO received a boost when the organization held the first democratic elections in its history. The new leadership has shown a committed determination to recapture the “militancy” that characterized labor’s initiatives and has been successful at tapping into the anger and insecurity that workers face in an increasingly global and shifting job market. The AFL-CIO Executive Council, led by John Sweeney (President), Richard Trumka (Secretary-Treasurer), and Linda Chavez-Thompson (Executive Vice-President), implemented a comprehensive set of programs focused on rebuilding the power of labor. The programs of the AFL-CIO are designed to empower labor in four key areas: 1) capital spending, 2) public relations, 3) political influence, 4) increased organizing. I will now briefly discuss the general philosophy and accomplishments of these four programs.

Capital Ownership and Influence

Labor has traditionally been in somewhat of a tenuous position when attempting to influence corporate policy and action through a shareholder model. Union members with stock may feel empowered as they wage some influence over the election of the corporate board that guides the company. But in most cases, corporate shares controlled by union members are token compared to CEOs, presidents, and vice-presidents.

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4 In 1995, Former U.S. Secretary of Labor Robert Reich told Time Magazine “In two and a half years I haven’t seen as much raw anger as I see in the workplace today. One thing I’ve heard repeatedly around
Ultimately, then, the goal of union capital strategies is to equate corporate interest with worker interest. Moberg (1998) observes, “Unions can play a role in defining strategies that start with the view that workers create the company’s value. If a strong alternative view of how to do business successfully is presented, it will influence the thinking of workers, citizens, politicians, and maybe even managers and investors” (p. 212). This “alternative view” consists of shifting corporate focus away from a purely shareholder, profit-driven model to a broad-based, stakeholder model that stresses the importance of workers.

**Political influence**

The impetus behind the AFL-CIO’s new political programs is the realization that labor cannot win a political check-writing contest against corporate America.\(^5\) Rather, labor must leverage their power in two areas: votes and organizing. The AFL-CIO’s sheer size provides them with the power of 13 million potential votes. Unions also have well-trained organizers that can offer door-to-door, grass-roots assistance to political campaigns.

The AFL-CIO has had to take a different course in mobilizing union members for political activity. Commissioned research suggests that union members seek comprehensive political information from their unions. The old method of instructing members to support specific Democratic candidates is no longer viable. The AFL-CIO now presents information to members in a more objective manner. Union members are also being urged to register to vote and run for political office. Steve Rosenthal, political

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the country from unorganized workers is the following: ‘I never thought about joining a union, but for the first time I’m now thinking about it, because I need somebody to protect me’” (Greenwald, 1995).

\(^5\) A study by the Center for Responsive Politics found that in 1996, corporations outspent labor $653.8 million to 58.1 million, about 11 to 1, in political donations (in Rosenthal, 1998).
director of the AFL-CIO, believes, "We hope to not only change the terms of the debate on Capital Hill, but eventually also change the debaters themselves" (p. 111).

Organizing

The central concern of the new labor movement is to shift resources from politics and contract negotiations toward new organizing campaigns. Increased union membership facilitates victories in the financial, public relations, and political arenas. Several programs are evidence of the AFL-CIO's renewed commitment to the organization of workers across industries. *Union Summer* was started in 1996 as an organizing internship program. More than a thousand college students and workers collaborated on organizing campaigns. The *Organizing Institute*, a group that recruits and trains organizers, was established to provide organizing campaigns with a prepared leadership. Graduates of the *Organizing Institute* do the day-to-day work of seeking new union members and training members to increase membership numbers themselves.

The focal point of labor's new organizing strategies has been the organization of two rapidly growing groups: service employees and immigrant labor. These two groups share a considerable amount of members — more than 90 percent of members in the Service Employees International Union's (SEIU) Local 1 in Chicago are immigrants (Blackman, 2000). It also appears as if organizing the immigrant workforce in the future is necessary for union survival.6

Maybe the most successful organization of immigrant labor is the *Justice for Janitors* (JFJ) campaign. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) initiated the JFJ campaign in large cities like San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and

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6 The Hudson Institute (1990) suggests that in this decade 85% of individuals entering the workforce will be immigrants, minorities, or women.
Washington D.C. Janitors in these and other cities have lobbied for increased wages, reduced workload, and better health care benefits. In February 1999, 74,000 independent contractor home care workers joined SEIU. Spring of 2000 was a busy period for SEIU as more than 8,500 janitors voted to strike in Los Angeles on April 8 and another 5,500 Chicago janitors followed suit on April 17.

Public relations

Until recently, the leadership of the AFL-CIO had an adversarial relationship with the majority of national media. The media had often been perceived as a corporate tool used to garner anti-union support. Corporate public relations efforts framed unions as un-American (mostly communist) organizations with destructive tendencies. Striking workers were considered a threat to the United State's role as defender of the democratic way of life. (Chomsky, in Rushkoff, 1996). Subsequently, the AFL-CIO relied on its “Department of Information” to reactively coordinate external communications with very few attempts at proactively influencing media coverage. A commissioned study by public relations firm Greer, Margolis, Mitchell, and Burns led to the formation of a committee charged with restructuring the AFL-CIO communications department. The committee suggested that “unless we change the public face of the labor movement, we will fail to organize, bargain good contracts, or win political and legislative gains for working people.” A successful public relations campaign, the committee continued, requires a “strategic plan, a common message and new images” (Mort, 1998, p. 47). The proliferation of the new image was undertaken with both external and internal communications sources. Among other tactics, the organizational newsletter was revamped, stories were pitched, leadership was prepared with speaking points and media

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training (and made available to the media), town hall meetings were set up, and an academic lecture series was sponsored. The AFL-CIO has recognized that public messages are easily lost when they fail to occupy a special niche. The public are inundated with competing messages and images that limit “the possibilities for genuine dialogue” (Cheney et al., 1998, p. 36). By improving their modes of dialogue, the AFL-CIO hopes to improve their image, garner support and gain power within the workplace and the national government.

Two important indicators suggest that the AFL-CIO’s renewed commitment to organizing and other programs has been successful. First, union membership has shown a steady increase over the last two years. In 1998, union membership increased more than 100,000. The year 1999 saw 265,000 people join unions — the largest increase in more than 20 years.

Second, over the last three years, AFL-CIO affiliated unions have executed several successful corporate campaigns in defense of “working families” in America. Two things are especially interesting about these strikes. First, the strikes were more reliant on improving and maintaining the public image of labor than previous strikes. Second, the strikes were focused almost solely on non-wage issues, like benefits, job security, and status.

Corporate campaigns by labor

The model for the high-profile strikes of the last three years was the Teamsters led strike of United Parcel Service (UPS) in 1997. The major impetus behind the strike was UPS’ plan to cut the number of full-time jobs and shift work to more part-time and
contracted employees. Many of UPS' employees were working full-time hours while earning a part-time wage and no benefits. Added to this were attempts by UPS to implement a "Team Concept" program. The union response to the Team Concept was employee education program showing that the new program undermined the union contract and lessened the power of union representatives (Witt & Wilson, 1998).

Along with the education program, the Teamsters launched a full-scale information attack that sought to publicize their stance on the issues surrounding the strike. Information was distributed to UPS workers, the media, and academics. This information included UPS' safety record, audio tapes of the UPS negotiator, and descriptions of UPS workers with two "part-time jobs." Some UPS drivers even made their scheduled stops without packages in order to describe the situation to clients. Media attention given to struggling part-time workers was maybe the most powerful tactic of the strike. Witt and Wilson (1998) describe the publicized testimony of Rachel Howard, a part-time employee that waited eight years for a full-time position: "There are many weeks when I've logged more than sixty or sixty-five hours. But UPS calls me a part-timer and pays me part-time wages. I have a son that is 15 months old, this strike is for him. And I'm willing to sacrifice for as long as it takes to make sure he has a future" (p. 186). The Teamsters' information campaign successfully created public sympathy and support that increased pressure on management to settle the strike. It also improved the "face" of labor and provided momentum for other high-profile labor campaigns that followed.

For labor, one downside to the success of any organizing campaign or strike is that management learns from mistakes and develops new strike-busting strategies for the
next dispute. Such was the case in the 1998 United Auto Workers’ (UAW) strike of General Motors in Flint, Michigan. The UAW strike resulted in GM’s commitment to the investment of about $800 million toward improvements and new construction of manufacturing plants in Flint. The investments improved safety standards and affirmed GM’s commitment to the long-standing tradition of Michigan as the center of the American auto manufacturing industry. Glenn (1998) argues that such victories could serve to be detrimental in the long run; “During the summer GM unveiled several new hardball tactics and strongly signaled it will take a very tough line in next summer’s national contract negotiations” (p. 18). These new hardball tactics included renewed vigor in battling unions on the public relations front. Unlike UPS before, GM responded to public criticism up front and filled the space that could otherwise be dominated with union messages.

A third corporate campaign at Boeing indicates how the traditional bargaining points of management – labor disputes have changed. The most recent strike at Boeing was undertaken by white-collar engineers represented by the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SEEP). The engineers earn an average salary of about $63,000 a year but have recently felt a status pinch as high-tech companies have moved into the region. David Olson suggests the strike centered on a type of “status dislocation” that the engineers experienced inside and outside the company (Economist, 2000). Union tactics were similar to those of any strike and also included numerous web sites that invoked the “brothers and sisters” language of traditional blue-collar strikes. The SEEP strike at Boeing signals some of the major workplace changes that are occurring in the information technology “e-conomy.” Labor unrest may continue to be
less about wages and more about workplace empowerment and organizationally recognized status, or “displacement” of workers in the workplace.

Summary

Understanding the development of CSR requires attention to movements and works from both the popular and academic realms. The modern conception of CSR is a result of government regulation, organizational scholarship, and activists that have increased corporate accountability for activity that harms society. CSR is gaining momentum as more research indicates that ethical corporate behavior provides bottom line benefits. The growth of CSR is being mirrored to some extent by a reemergence of organized labor in the United States. Labor has committed itself to organizing new sectors of the workforce and in improving the “face” or image of labor. The results of these commitments are promising. After a period of decreasing membership and power, union memberships have steadily increased over the last few years. AFL-CIO affiliated unions have also conducted several successful corporate campaigns over non-wage issues like job security and employee status. If socially responsible companies and labor unions continue to grow in numbers, their paths will cross more often forcing them to share their views on the nature and future of employee participation and workplace democracy.
CHAPTER THREE: DOMAIN OF ATTENTION—DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES ON EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION AND WORKPLACE DEMOCRACY

It is no small statement to suggest that corporate management and organized labor have an adversarial relationship. Management and labor often perceive incompatible goals and dubious motives from the other. Management argues that unions are constantly in search of concessions when wages and benefits are already at high levels. Labor counters that management secures high salaries and investment packages while offering the bare minimum in wages and benefits to workers. In modern times, these traditional bargaining points have expanded to include debates over basic employment structures and the right to participate in the future direction of the organization. For labor, "genuine" participation means union involvement and the creation of a democratic, representative organization inside the company. Only such an organization will possess enough influence to affect workplace change that benefits all employees. The rift between management and labor perspectives on "genuine" employee participation is considerable and marks ripe territory for further tension within unionized organizations.

The following review of organizational and labor literature provides insight into the differing management and labor perspectives on employee participation and workplace democracy. I will first provide a brief history and overview of employee participation programs. Within this history, I will focus on the management perspective of the benefits of these programs. Next, I will discuss some of the critiques of employee participation programs from the larger world of organizational scholarship. Finally, I will provide the labor perspective on employee participation programs and some reasons why
organized labor believes it is a better form of participation than management-sponsored programs.

**Overview of employee participation programs**

While they are often used in similar ways, the concepts of workplace democracy and employee participation programs differ in their overall nature, structure, and goals. Cheney (1998) offers the following definitions:

Workplace democracy generally refers to those principles and practices designed to engage and represent as many relevant individuals and groups as possible in the formulation, execution, and modification of work related activities... By contrast, employee participation programs are typically narrower in scope – organizationally sponsored systems that may or may not have democratization as their primary goal or outcome. (p. 16)

Cheney’s definition is important because of the very clear distinction drawn between workplace democracy and employee participation. Although these two concepts fall on the same continuum, the similarities stop there. True workplace democracy, representing as many employees as possible in the construction of work policies and future directions of an organization, is extremely rare, and as Cheney (1998) points out, could be a dying breed of organizational structure as global market pressures increase. Employee participation programs, on the other hand, are alive and well.

According to Parker and Slaughter (1994) the most recent trends in employee participation programs are traced back to the rise of Quality of Work Life (QWL) programs in the 1970s. These participatory programs were created under the assumption that a happy worker is a productive worker. If an organization could improve the work life of employees, the employees would in turn engage their tasks and bottom-line...
benefits would follow. Along with increased attention to human needs and increased productivity, Heller et al. (1998) highlight several other key motivating factors explaining the popularity and endurance of employee participation programs. The authors argue ethical reasons, fad, management experimentation, legal regulation, and technological changes have all served as reasons for the development of employee participation. Stohl and Cheney (2001) add to these motivations disenchantment with bureaucracy, employee support, responses to corporate outsourcing, globalization, and commitment to democratic principles. As these motivations change and grow, so too do the structures and names of employee participation programs.

In the 1980s, employee participation evolved away from Mayo-like “creature comfort” (Parker & Slaughter, 1994) to programs which challenged employees as central to the improvement of work processes. QWL became Employee Involvement (EI) and Employee Participation, and the structures of quality circles (QC’s) and teams were implemented. Heller et. al (1998) point out that QC’s and Teams provided formalized attention to both workplace innovation and specific quality issues. Teams were encouraged to compete with each other and this competition was meant to increase efficiency throughout the organization.

The shift in the 1990s was toward Total Quality Management (TQM). TQM serves as an organization-wide commitment to quality that includes the most senior level executives and newest floor workers. TQM emphasized that the entire organization serves the needs and wants of the customer and therefore, TQM made an important move away from “productivity” and “efficiency” toward the less loaded term of “quality.” Productivity and efficiency are often achieved with cutbacks on personnel – “but no one
objects to quality" (Heller et al., 1998, p. 23). Zbaracki (1998) found that TQM is often implemented by managers who have an overly optimistic view of how the programs work. There is a distinct difference between the "rhetoric and reality" of TQM.

The 90s saw reengineering, lean production, downsizing, and outsourcing become popular terms for describing restructuring that emphasized the speed and efficiency of work (Cheney et al., 1998). These new terms hark back to Tayloristic notions of maximized efficiency in spite of their self-presentation as being progressive and enlightened. Despite which programs have been in place over the last 30 years, management, labor, and scholars on both sides of the management-labor divide have disputed the structure and extent of employee participation.

Critiques of employee participation programs

Numerous organizational scholars and labor advocates have paid considerable attention to the inconsistencies and concertive structures of management sponsored employee participation programs. Critiques of participation programs can be of two general types. First, the critique can focus on the problems of specific programs in specific contexts. Second, critiques can regard participation in general and locate the obstacles and contradictions that are a part of the fundamental nature of employee participation. Because this research is concerned with the rhetorical construction and battle over concepts like "participation," I will limit my discussion to the latter of the two critiques.

Heller et al. (1998) devote a chapter to the theoretical and empirical "dark side" of organizational participation. Their critique centers on five theoretical obstacles to
participatory sharing of power in organizations. First, the authors argue that the vast majority of large organizations were established with hierarchical structures and top-down communication flow. Traditionally, these structures are seen as the most efficient organizational structure and are also resistant to truly meaningful change. In other words, hierarchical bureaucratic structures are time and battle-tested and continue to dominate organizational life. Second, the authors suggest that a sense of dependency leads employees to thrive under top-down communication rather than empowerment models. This dependency is fostered in early life attachment to other social groups (family, school, church, etc.) and socializes employees to “go with the flow” rather than take advantages of leadership opportunities. Third, the perception that invitations to participate are inauthentic leads to voluntary non-participation. This phenomenon is similar to the neglect of feedback cards and suggestion boxes because “they won’t make a difference anyway.” Fourth, Heller et al. propose that all participation programs require a certain amount of preparation and training in order to understand the ultimate goals of the program. Lack of competence in the program undermines the very nature of participation. Finally, economics theory explains lack of participation based on “human motivation and the high cost and low benefit of a democratic dialogue” (p. 159). It takes a lot of energy to adequately contribute to organizational participation and without immediately apparent results, participation is sure to subside. The obstacles proposed by Heller et al. explain why managers and employees often resist participation programs. Further research indicates that participatory programs ultimately create boundaries that limit employee participation.
Stohl and Cheney (2001) discuss the ironies and paradoxes inherent in current forms of employee participation. The authors discuss four general types of participatory paradoxes—the paradox of structure, the paradox of agency, the paradox of identity and the paradox of power—that occur in both management-sponsored programs and labor unions alike. (see Stohl & Cheney, 2001, for an in-depth discussion of subsets within each paradox type). In general, the paradox of structure holds that participatory structures “are set up to enhance participation by establishing rules that define and limit the kinds of participation/communication that can occur” (p. 361). Because they are instituted by controlling groups, participation programs will reflect the type of participation that the architect wants.

The paradox of agency suggests that individuals engaged in participation programs are placed in a bind between their own activity, responsibility, and opinions and those of the larger groups. The employee may be encouraged to act as an individual and may take on more individual responsibility, but is ultimately judged as one member of a larger group.

The paradox of identity describes the strains that exist when an individual’s sense of being is managed by membership in participatory group. The individual is pulled between two identities with differing “baggage.” Stohl and Cheney (2001) write “these paradoxes suggest that in participatory systems individual needs and self-management are powerfully managed by the group and adherence to organizational goals” (p. 379).

The paradox of power describes the tensions that exist between the employees, participatory groups, and larger organization. While participation is often cloaked in terms of “empowerment,” it is often suggested that participatory programs ultimately
limit the amount power individuals and groups have by proscribing the very ways they exert influence in the organization.

The four general types of participatory paradoxes described by Stohl and Cheney reveal the problematic reality that participation programs ultimately limit the extent to which individual employees are empowered to control their work lives. *For the present study, maybe the most relevant of Stohl and Cheney's conclusions is that “participation is also a perceptual and political matter: its very meaning can be controlled by a dominant group; its prevailing interpretation can change over time; and it may be understood quite differently in various quarters of the organization”* (p. 358, emphasis added). I will now discuss how one group, organized labor, has interpreted management sponsored “participation.”

**Employee participation programs – A labor perspective**

An accurate description of the union perspective on employee participation programs must include voices of both support and dissent. In general, it appears as if union leadership are more likely to support management sponsored participation programs than are rank and file members. In 1995, the heads of major American unions decided to endorse organizationally sponsored participation structures. *The belief of the union leaders was that many employee participation programs increase the possibility of democratization at work. The condition of official union support was made clear though – “workplace democracy programs take place within the larger structural context of unionization”* (Cheney et al., 1998, p. 58, emphasis mine). According to labor leaders, participation and other attempts at democratization are not substitutes for unions and
collective bargaining power. Rather, they must be treated as extensions to the union model that guarantees certain worker rights. Despite this official endorsement, resistance to such programs has been highly publicized.

*Often, the very idea of “management sponsorship” signals a red flag to organized labor.* Some scholars contend that management sponsored employee participation programs are nothing more than attempts to dissuade union activity and break up structures that unify workers (Brody, 1992; Fantasia, Clawson, & Graham, 1988; Grenier, 1988; Parker, 1985; Slaughter, 1983). The skepticism of such scholars is grounded in the belief that management and labor exist in a state of opposition. This state, and subsequent attempts to voice opposition, acts as a balance of power within the organization. As Cheney et al. (1998) summarize: “Can any non-oppositional, non-pluralistic system of governance avoid the traps of co-optation and the silencing of important minority voices?” (p. 71).

This cynicism toward management sponsorship of programs has been professed in a set of union “guides” to employee participation. Parker (1985) wrote the first of these guides in response to the growth of QWL programs in the United States. Parker argues that QWL is designed to lower labor defenses and break down the solidarity of unions. QWL literature cultivates a neutral image for the programs without favoring management or labor. There is only one set of “company interests” and those interests are in direct opposition to competitors. For instance, a member of UAW working for GM will be set in competition with other UAW members working for Ford. Parker reminds the workers that solidarity occurs within the union and not within the company that one works for, no matter what the QWL program promises.
Parker and Slaughter (1988) extend Parker's previous work with a guide to the burgeoning "team concept" in the auto manufacturing industry. For management, an effective team concept hinges on employees accepting the assumption that all workers within a plant are interchangeable and can move freely from task to task. The term "team" conjures up images of a committed group working together toward a common goal, much like a football team or design team. But the authors are very clear that organized labor must be aware of the reality of the team concept. The role of interchangeability decreases former job classifications and increases management control to assign workers to specific tasks. Interchangeability also challenges seniority, a major perk in union shops. Workers participate in creating more work for themselves by taking on the responsibilities previously reserved for supervisors. This added work and responsibility is not accompanied by an increase in authority or financial compensation.

In their analysis of the team concept in the auto industry, Parker and Slaughter (1988) introduce the concept of "management-by-stress." Management-by-stress is used to describe the team concept as it was introduced at the New United Motors Manufacturing Inc. (NUMMI). The "team" at NUMMI exerted stress on all parts of the manufacturing process — from the speed up of employee work to the "just-in-time" method of production. Management-by-stress tightens all sections of the process and allows management to locate weak points that are either adapted or cut out of the process all together. Team members are stressed as well because the "weak link" lets down the "team." The implication for labor was clear — perform or be replaced.

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7 Parker and Slaughter (1988) point out the irony of the use of "team" to describe interchangeable parts working together: "the main place in our language where 'team' implies interchangeable members is where it refers to a team of horses — beasts of burden of equal capabilities, yoked together to pull for a common end (determined by the person holding the whip)."
Parker and Slaughter (1994) provide the most comprehensive union guide to participation programs and reengineering in *Working Smart*. The authors show how participation programs are designed to fulfill Maslow's (1965) hierarchy of needs for each employee and result in a win-win attitude for management and labor. The various types of participation programs are analyzed in the form of case studies including NUMMI, Saturn cars, US West, government employees, hospital settings, as well as examples of participation in other countries. All of these examples illustrate the considerable shortcomings of participatory programs to truly empower workers. In another work, Parker (1993) provides summary advice to unions considering management sponsored participation programs; "There are no competitive, market, or technological imperatives driving management to offer dignity and democracy on the job. Workers who aspire to decent working conditions still need a union that can organize and fight for them" (p. 274). Parker's advice leads us to investigate why organized labor touts union representation, one of many types of participation program, as superior to other types of employee participation.

The AFL-CIO web site professes that unions protect the following advantages and benefits over unorganized labor: higher wages, better benefits including health coverage and pension plans, more job security, and an increase in productivity (Why Join Unions, 2000). The majority of these claims are supported by data from organizations and publications including the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The report of these benefits begs for an explanation of exactly how unions lead to higher wages and other benefits and constitute improvements to other types of participation. Two explanations seem readily apparent. First, unions are conceived of as organizations that members associate with
voluntarily. Whereas management sponsored programs are worked into preexisting organizational structures in a top-down matter, unions are thought to originate on the shop floor, bottom-up. Second, union representation is empowered by the activity of collective bargaining. Unions provide internal communication channels that allow for either direct or representative participation within the union structure. In theory, all union members have some say in the bargaining and negotiation that takes place between the union and management. The power of collective bargaining on the union side lies in the sheer number of workers that exist as members. Hence, a collection of truly dissatisfied workers can stop working and exact a considerable financial toll on the organization.

Comprehensive research by Freeman and Rogers (1999) found that 48% of union members feel unions help secure better pay and working conditions. This finding is tempered by the fact that only 11% of workers feel unions provide an improved say in the workplace. This result is consistent with the labor emphasis on gaining “voice” that will be discussed later in data analysis.

Heller et al. (1998) cast some doubt on the democratic, representative nature of unions as a participatory structure though. They argue that unions can only be truly influential participatory organizations if they are democratic. Following this claim, the authors expose some of the shortcomings of unions as democratic organizations including the possibility of oligarchy within union leadership, member apathy, a reliance on informal communication to stay informed of union activity, and the lack of effective collective bargaining.
Summary

There is considerable debate over the motivations, processes, and results of management-sponsored employee participation programs. Employee participation became popular in the 1970s as companies sought to improve efficiency by making workers more comfortable in the workplace. Soon these efforts shifted to involving workers in more substantive decisions about how to increase productivity and efficiency. Organized labor often perceives management-sponsorship of participation as a veiled attempt to exert more control over workers. At the same time, because union representation is voluntary and includes the right to collective bargain, organized labor considers it the most effective means to guarantee authentic employee participation. The whole of these observances about the influence of unions to secure authentic employee participation will ultimately be borne out in two supplementary questions that result from this bias. of this study: 1) what values and programs are used by management to argue against union representation, and 2) why does union representation constitute an improvement over other forms of employee participation? I will now provide a theoretical orientation to certain functions of organizational rhetoric relevant to management–labor disputes.
CHAPTER FOUR: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK – THEORETICAL PREMISES FOR A STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES AND VALUES-RELATED DISCOURSE

Two related theoretical premises inform this research. *First is the premise that organizations have become a major conveyor and definer of value-related terms. This premise is supported by the value inversion that has occurred as organizations have displaced individuals as the fundamental unit of society.* Scott and Hart (1979) describe a “cultural mutation” that includes the rise to preeminence of organizational values as part of the “organizational imperative” (p. 30). The organizational imperative is founded on two premises: 1) “whatever is good for the individual can only come from the modern organization,” 2) “all behavior must enhance the health of such organizations” (p. 30). While the organizational imperative has received much critical attention, it is worth consideration for one of its underlying assumptions – public values are profoundly shaped by organizational messages and organizational interest.

The second guiding premise of this research is the observation that *"the contemporary bureaucratic organization is fundamentally a rhetorical enterprise. The organization seeks to establish or reinforce certain value premises in the minds of its audiences so that the members of the audience will make decisions in accord with the preferences of the controlling members of the organization”* (Cheney, 1991, p. 8, emphasis mine). Most socially responsible companies and labor unions are rhetorical enterprises as described by Cheney. As such, both socially responsible businesses and labor unions commit resources to the creation and dissemination of value-laden, organizational messages to a multitude of audiences. In fact, it is plausible that these messages will be similar in content. For instance, the mission statements of Ben and
Jerry’s Homemade, Inc. and the AFL-CIO would appear to have similar agendas in support of workers. The Ben and Jerry’s mission revolves around three interrelated parts: product, economic, and society. The statement of mission says, “Underlying the mission of Ben and Jerry’s is the determination to seek new & creative ways of addressing all three parts, while holding deep respect for individual inside and outside the Company and for the communities of which they are part” (Statement of Mission, 2000, emphasis mine). A statement from the AFL-CIO suggests, “In the AFL-CIO, workers and unions find the opportunity to combine strength and to work together to improve the lives of America’s working families, bring fairness and dignity to the workplace and secure social and economic equity in our nation (This is the AFL-CIO, 2000). Holding deep respect for individuals inside the Company and bringing fairness and dignity to the workplace may seem to be compatible goals, but what happens when these messages collide – whose definitions of respect, fairness and dignity are “correct?” The ambiguity of value-terms allows for manipulation of the meaning of values to suit organizational interest.

In their analysis of business process outsourcing (BPO) programs, Zorn, Christensen, and Cheney (1999) provide a clear example of how values can be manipulated for the “good” of an organization: “Price Waterhouse Coopers, for example, touts its program as a ‘win-win proposition for both the organization and its employees – and it really empowers employees.’ Yet, the firm defines it as the ‘long-term contracting of a company’s noncore business processes to an outside service provider.’ Someone may be getting empowered, but someone is also losing a job in that equation” (p.32). The BPO program is grounded in the value of empowerment, but Zorn et al. clarify that
empowerment is narrowly defined and includes equal, if not more, dismissal of employees. *Value terms are thus vague but necessary means of bringing certain ideas and groups together.* *Within the range of their ambiguity, though, we find multiple practical meanings.*

In the case of labor attempts to organize within socially responsible companies, the tension consists of labor battles to reclaim workplace concepts like "empowerment," "democracy," and "participation." This tension arises because of the inherent ambiguity of language. *Borrowing from Burke (1950/1969), this research is not concerned with the impossible task of removing the ambiguity surrounding these terms, but rather seeks to address "those spots where ambiguities necessarily arise."* It is assumed that the labor-management relationship constitutes a "spot" where such ambiguity is present and should be addressed.

Within management and labor discourse and material action, attempts are often made to establish certain meanings for these terms and subordinate all other meanings for the good of the organization. In essence then, terminological battles take place between dominant and subordinate meanings of workplace values. Cheney (in press) concludes, "Such battles over terminology and labels have important practical consequences not only in terms of attitude change but also with respect to decision and policy making" (p. 3). For organized labor, the results of such terminological battles can range from the improvement of working conditions and employee empowerment to management oppression of labor interest.
Summary

I have suggested that two important theoretical premises provide a theoretical background for this research. First, a “value inversion” has displaced the individual as the fundamental unit of society and made individuals and society increasingly reliant on organizations to tell them how to think and act. Related to this is the idea that organizations are rhetorical enterprises that attempt to influence opinion and behavior in support of organizational interest. Socially responsible companies and labor unions both engage in rhetorical practices that seek to establish value premises that support a larger organizational interest. At times, these “rhetorics” clash and terminological battles ensue over which organization’s definition of key value terms and concepts will take hold. The ultimate results of these terminological battles will have lasting effects on the quality of work life for workers employed by avowed socially responsible companies.
CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY AND PREVIOUS RELEVANT ANALYSES

The methodology employed in this research includes textual analysis and select interviews conducted with socially responsible company and labor advocates. This dual method aims to identify specific socially responsible and labor values while providing more general socially responsible and labor perspectives on the role of organizational values, employee participation, and union representation. This discussion of methodology includes four sections. First, previous analyses relevant to the study are briefly reviewed to establish a discursive—material approach to the research. Second, a discussion of the importance of research on values and value-related discourse is provided. Third, guiding research questions are included. Fourth, a research table that structures the methodology is supplied.

Previous Relevant Analyses

The study of management—labor battles within the socially responsible company and labor union context requires attention to two distinct types of data—discursive and material activity. These two types of activity are necessary in order to understand that the management—labor relationship occurs on both discursive and material planes. Some examples will illustrate this point.

The power of discourse is clear in Featherstone’s (2000) treatment of a labor dispute within Ben and Jerry’s Homemade Ice Cream. After a long period of negotiations for better overtime wages, maintenance workers at Ben and Jerry’s approached the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers’ (IBEW) local and petitioned for representation. Ben and Jerry’s fought the campaign for representation and the campaign
ended up before the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The workers finally won representation, but some of the company's union-blocking techniques were discursive in nature. Featherstone (2000) points out that Ben and Jerry's utilized its socially responsible image as ammunition against the workers. Ben and Jerry's engaged primarily in a discursive battle with organizing employees by arguing that they provided better than average benefits including free ice cream and health club memberships. The company also reasoned that maintenance workers should not organize without including employees from other departments – an apparent support for the "democratic workplace" (Featherstone, 2000). Such a strategy consisted of patterns of talk about the type of company Ben and Jerry's is and relied on logical argument to dissuade employee organization. While the Ben and Jerry's example shows how discursive argument can create a formidable obstacle to organized labor, it is necessary to recognize that material activity exists apart from such discourse.

Stabile (2000) applies discursive and material analyses to the context of companies expressing a socially responsible image. Stabile's method of inquiry in her study of Nike's rhetorical image management focuses on the "visible" and "invisible" realms of corporate activity. Stabiles writes, "the success of the rhetoric of social responsibility depends on the management of visible contradictions and controversies, and maintenance of a number of invisible contradictions and controversies" (p. 187). Her analysis strikes at the root of Marxist, critical approaches to external, organizational communication research; "unless our goal as critics is to contribute to their market research and to add further sophistication to their advertising techniques, it might be more...effective for us to concentrate on making visible those practices and realities that
are routinely kept out of sight” (p. 200). The “visible” contradictions discussed by Stabiles include the construction of a “socially responsible” image for Nike. The construction of such an image presents the image and identity that Nike would like consumers to possess. The “invisible” realm of Nike is the questionable record of social justice marked by clothing production plants in underdeveloped countries. This record is rarely part of Nike’s voluntary public discourse. According to Stabiles the material reality of Nike production is covered by the discursive construction of the Nike image.

Cloud (1994) provides a similar point in her analysis of the rhetoric involved in the news coverage of the Persian Gulf War. She concludes “we ought not sacrifice the notions of practical truth, bodily reality, and material oppression to the tendency to render all experience discursive, as if no one went hungry or died in war. To say that hunger and war are rhetorical is to state the obvious; to suggest that rhetoric is all they are is to leave critique behind” (p. 159). To adapt Cloud’s argument to the present study, to say that an industrial plant that locks its union employees out is only a rhetorical act is to ignore management power and prerogative that exerts enormous influence over worker livelihood. When an employee can not enter a plant due to a locked gate, the material consequences are immediate. Locked gates mean no work, no work means no wages, and no wages could mean an inability to pay a mortgage or provide food. But such an act includes a clear symbolic aspect as well. The locked gate symbolizes management power and the willingness to exact a significant toll on workers’ quality of life. The preparation for the locked gate was discursive as well as management engaged in a process that lead to the decision that a locked gate represents the management stance on the labor dispute. The example of the locked gate indicates the considerable overlap between discursive and
material activity. For the purposes of this research, values and value-related discourse will be the primary concern. However, material conditions and actions cannot be ignored, and serve as an important area for future research.

Values and Value-related Discourse

For the purposes of this research, values are understood as "things treated as important and/or basic by individuals or groups" (Cheney & Vibbert, 1987, p. 175). Values are considered "good" things to have and value-led actions are usually admirable. But values are also abstractions that only have meaning within the specific context they are used. In given circumstances, value terms can be both uniting and divisive, and can motivate action or confuse the listener (Cheney, in press). The patterns of talk that surround values and value terms are of special importance in understanding how values function as persuasive devices.

The term "discourse" refers to board patterns of communication that create "'orbits' or 'constellations' around key symbols" (Cheney, in press). Discourse can provide context and information concerning individual communicative events. The context and information provided in discursive analysis lead to more accurate understandings of the meanings and functions of communication. For example, consider contemporary American public discourses on technology and its features of inevitability, progress, and even salvation.

Values and value-related discourse have a deep impact on human behavior for a number of reasons (Cheney, 1999). Value terms are powerful tools in attracting attention to an individual or organization, creating a positive image for an individual or
organization, and influencing behavior in support of the interests of that individual or organization. A recent review of literature (Cheney, in press) reveals at least 21 different organizational uses of value-terms, including values as a hierarchy of commitments, the advocacy of specific values, the celebration of simply having values, the imitation of values, the tradition of values, and values as emotionally charged labels. These uses reveal that values are highly ambiguous and can be manipulated to serve an organization in given situations. This manipulation, and consequent struggles over the meanings of certain values, can have profound effects on human action and livelihood. Further, the sheer number of organizational uses of values has led to “a flooding of the market” (Cheney, 1999) that significantly reduces the attention paid to values despite the impact these terms and statements have on human behavior. Cheney’s (in press) catalogue of the organizational uses of values provides a useful theoretical model to assist in leaping from organizational messages to organizational motivation and interest (see Cheney and Frenette, 1993).

As they relate to the present research, values are most readily understood as “sites of resistance.” As sites of resistance, values are “continually in flux and as subject to strategic as well as unknowing transformation and appropriations” (Cheney, in press, p. 11). To extend Cheney’s conceptualization, we see that values provide terminological battlegrounds between competing organizations and competing interests within an organization.
Research Questions

The present research is unique based on its focus on values and value-related discourse within the relationship of socially responsible companies and labor unions. In effect, strong value commitments drive a considerable amount of the activity of both these types of organizations. It is necessary to address the values and value-related discourse of both types of organizations and identify spots where values and value-related discourse converge and diverge.

The present research is organized around key aspects of a general, guiding research question: What rhetorical clashes are evident between key messages about values by avowed socially responsible companies and organized labor’s insistence on greater representation and participation within such companies? Several other questions are suggested by the main research question and reveal at least five aspects that must be addressed. From an empirical-interpretive perspective, (1) what are the values used by socially responsible companies to represent their views of themselves as employers and of (2) what values represent the labor insistence on union representation as a form of employee participation? From a more critical perspective, (3) what role do these values and value-related discourse play in creating the argument that labor unions are not appropriate for socially responsible companies, and (4) how are these values used to argue that unions are superior to other forms of employee participation? (5) Finally, what role does material activity play in disputes between socially responsible companies

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8 The empirical-interpretative perspective is used to maintain “empirical integrity.” Organizational values are first presented verbatim w/o interpretation. A common sense rationale is then provided to offer a general understanding of how management uses, or might use, values.

9 Attention must also be given to the possible role of values and value-related discourse in arguing that unions are inappropriate in socially responsible companies. For that reason, question three must also be
and labor unions. I will now discuss the methodology in terms of five aspects of the research question that were addressed. Within each aspect of research I will describe sources of data to used, the guiding methodological perspective, and the means of data analysis (see Research Table). *Results of the data analysis are included within the chapters that deal explicitly with each aspect of the research.* My discussion will move linearly across the table dealing with data sources and analysis of each aspect of the research question. Methods of data collection are described within the discussion of each of the data sources.

phrased "what role could values and value related discourse play in the argument that labor unions are inappropriate in socially responsible companies?"
# Research Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of Research Question to be Addressed</th>
<th>Data Sources (primary and secondary)</th>
<th>Guiding Methodological Perspective/ Focus</th>
<th>Specific Means of Data Analysis</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 -- Case examples and broader trends in the socially responsible company – labor relationship.</td>
<td>Consists of news and editorial articles from popular press.</td>
<td>Focus on broad characteristics of trends (etc.) and isolation of specific relevant cases.</td>
<td>Introductory analysis of trends and cases to establish the research as timely and significant.</td>
<td>Labor disputes at Ben and Jerry's, Powell's Books and Border's Books as described by Featherstone (2000) and other sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 -- Corporate perspective – especially by avowed BSR companies on values, employee participation, and labor.</td>
<td>Consists of corporate documents: web sites, mission statements, annual reports.</td>
<td>Two level analysis: 1) Interpretive approach to corporate perception of what company 'X' is like. 2) Critical approach to how perception is used/can be used to argue that unions are not appropriate for company 'X'.</td>
<td>Isolate key value terms, value statements and values-related discourse used by socially responsible companies to describe themselves. Critique these values, value statements and values-related discourse and their function in arguing against labor unions.</td>
<td>1) E.g. – the value term &quot;teamwork&quot; may be used to describe a company's unity of mission. 2) &quot;Teamwork&quot; may also be used in direct opposition to other forms of participation including union representation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3 -- Union perspective – by labor organizations, labor activists, etc.</td>
<td>Consists of union documents: speeches, press releases, description of programs and campaigns secondary interviews, etc.</td>
<td>Two level analysis: 1) Interpretive approach concerning the labor perception that union representation constitutes the best form of employee participation. 2) Critical approach concerning why unions</td>
<td>Isolate key values, value statements and values-related discourse that are used to in support of union representation as a form of employee participation. Critique values, value statements and value-related</td>
<td>1) E.g. – Unions provide ‘voice’ in organizational decision making. 2) ‘Voice” can take many forms and does not require the adversarial relationship inherent in a union.</td>
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</table>
Aspect #1 of Research Question

The first aspect of the research question established some case examples and broader trends of management — labor tension in relationships between socially responsible companies and labor unions. This aspect is obviously important to answer the “why bother” question required of all research.

Data Sources

The data sources relevant to the first aspect of the research question take the form of news and editorial articles from the popular press. News and editorial articles from the
popular press about labor disputes within socially responsible companies reveal that these disputes are "out there" and are warranted as objects of study. The popular press data was gathered primarily from broad level database searches focusing on labor disputes inside well-known socially responsible companies have already been undertaken. These searches resulted in columns from the Los Angeles Times, The Oregonian, The Nation, Canadian Dimension, Forbes, The San Francisco Chronicle, The Seattle Times, and The Dallas Morning News.

Means of Data Analysis

The popular press data sources were analyzed to introduce broad characteristics of trends and to isolate specific cases relevant to the socially responsible company and labor union relationship. As such, these data were not analyzed in great detail, but were used to reveal broad-level patterns demonstrating that organizing attempts within socially responsible companies have been met with significant levels of management resistance.

Aspect #2 of Research Question

The second aspect of the research question to be addressed limited the scope of the research to the official corporate perspectives of avowed BSR companies on values, employee participation, and labor. Within this aspect, an attempt is made to understand recurring values of socially responsible companies. Special attention was given to values considered indicative of the organization's view of itself as an employer.

Data Sources

The data set for the second aspect of the research question consisted of texts that represent formal, external communication of socially responsible companies. Companies will be selected based on their membership in the organization Business for Social
Responsibility. The organization is a dues-based membership association that counts a varied range of companies as members. Membership in BSR was inferred to represent that these companies commit to some level of socially responsible business practice. Texts that provide general statements about company values, and more specific statements about values that employees may be expected to identify with were gathered. These texts were gathered mostly from company web sites and consisted of company mission statements, statements of company history, speeches, press releases, descriptions of work environment, and other organizational descriptions.

Means of Data Analysis

The analysis of the formal communication of socially responsible companies took place on two levels. Because the primary foci of this study are the values-related, discursive battles or potential clashes between socially responsible and labor unions, the first level of analysis attempted to represent the company perspectives on the values that they publicly profess. The units of analysis were explicit value terms, value statements, and value-related discourse. Again, the definition of values provided by Cheney and Vibbert (1987; see Cheney and Frenette, 1993 also) -- "things treated as important and/or basic by individuals or groups" (p. 175) -- will be used to identify value-terms. The key to this first level of analysis is "to capture well the actual meanings held by participants" (Cheney, in press, p. 34). Therefore, such analysis allowed for an empirical concern for the values explicitly and literally expressed in the texts. This analysis provided an "insider's view" representing an organizational understanding of key values.

The goal of this analysis was to discover a representative "rhetoric of social responsibility" concerning employment philosophies and policies. In other words, the
analysis of key value-terms, value-statements, and value-related discourse determines general patterns apparent in statements about employment made by socially responsible companies.

The second level of analysis turned a more critical eye to organizational value-related discourse. The values of socially responsible companies were construed as resistant to union representation. This stance was motivated by the assumption that the power in the management-labor relationship is tipped to management and a more equal balance of that power is necessary to achieve meaningful workplace empowerment for non-management employees. The stance draws from Deetz's (1992) concept of "managerialism" that privileges management interest and ignites management resistance when that privilege is challenged by other workplace factions. Cheney's (in press) three hallmarks of critique were also helpful here as the analysis was guided by a concern for values-based assumptions, a concern for power, and a constant questioning of assumptions.

Aspect #3 of Research Question

The third major aspect of the research question addressed the union perspective on the importance of an organized workforce. In other words, this aspect attempted to locate the values, value statements and value-related discourse that portray the union perspective on the importance of union representation in the workplace. The data sources and means of analysis were similar to that employed in aspect #2 of the research question.
Data Sources

Formal union communication took the form of general statements about organized labor provided by the AFL-CIO. As such, labor texts that made general statements about the nature of organized labor, labor values, the labor perspective on specific issues, and history of unions were gathered. Speeches given by the executive council of the AFL-CIO were overwhelmingly used due to richness of language and inclusion of values and values-related discourse. Descriptions of AFL-CIO programs and campaigns were also useful because they often included values-based rationales for labor activity. The majority of labor documents were gathered from the AFL-CIO web site.

Means of Data Analysis

The means of analysis for union documents mirrored the analysis of documents from socially responsible companies. The units of analysis were value terms, value statements, and values-related discourse. The analysis occurred on both the interpretive and critical levels. The first level of analysis attempted to represent the union perspective on the importance of an organized workforce. That is, what values are representative of the union perspective of why union representation so important?

The second, more critical level of analysis challenged the labor perspective as narrowly focused on special interests that failed to account for management attempts to act in the best interest of all stakeholders. The critical stance borrowed from a perception of labor as adversarial and reliant of conflict to accomplish goals that rarely benefits entire organizations.
Aspect #4 of Research Question

The fourth aspect of the research question supplements information provided in the popular press and textual analysis. Interviews were useful in gathering extended discourse on the issues of organizational values, employee participation, and union representation. Interviewees varied considerably in their ability to talk about specific issues, but each contributed to discourse in a unique way.

Data Sources

Interviews were conducted with personnel from both sides of the socially responsible company – labor divide. Interviewees were asked questions that expanded certain notions gathered from the organizational texts of both socially responsible companies and labor unions. Due to time issues and unwillingness to be interviewed, only two interviews were conducted with management/ socially responsible advocates. For the sake of evenhandedness, two interviews were conducted with labor advocates as well. More detailed information about the interviewees are included in the analysis of the interviews and the guiding interview questions are included in Appendix A.

Means of Data Analysis

Interviews served as supplemental data that expands the "orbit" of values-related discourse of socially responsible companies and labor unions. Interviews were analyzed for similar content and organized accordingly. Interviews provided extended dialogue on company values that allowed for a clearer understanding of socially responsible companies’ attitudes toward organized labor and employee participation in general. From the labor perspective
Aspect #5 of Research Question

The final aspect of the original research proposal was attention to the material activity involved in disputes between socially responsible companies and labor unions. Material activity required timely labor disputes within socially responsible companies. Unfortunately, the most publicized such dispute occurred within United Airlines at a time too late for inclusion in this research. The lack of timely disputes in which material activity played a significant role necessitates that the present research maintain an exclusively discursive focus.
CHAPTER SIX: CASE EXAMPLES AND PATTERNS OF DISPUTES BETWEEN SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE COMPANIES AND LABOR UNIONS

The first aspect of the research to be addressed centers on some isolated cases and broad patterns of disputes between socially responsible companies and labor unions. This level of analysis will locate examples of labor disputes within socially responsible companies publicized in popular press sources such as newspapers and magazines. The sources for these cases hold the same pro-labor bias discussed earlier. While management-centered sources were searched, they failed to address the labor discontent within the workplace. This level is important for at least three reasons. First, it is important to demonstrate that contested attempts to organize within socially responsible companies is not an isolated phenomenon. Second, it is important to establish any broad level patterns or trends that are apparent within the context being studied. These patterns and trends will guide “what to look for” in other levels of analysis. Third, it is important to establish that this research is timely. That is, disputes between socially responsible companies and labor unions have occurred both in the past and recently, and may grow as more companies claim social responsibility and unions strive to increase the number of organized workers inside these companies.

At this point, it is important to reiterate that I am only interested in disputes between workers and management in for-profit corporations. Carl Botan (2000), professor of communication studies at Purdue University, pointed out the argument that organized labor is inappropriate for “socially responsible” organizations like hospitals, police departments, and schools is nothing new. Opponents of an organized workforce argue that the nature of public service inherent in these organizations necessitates a non-adversarial work structure that supports a larger public interest. It is clear that the public
would suffer tremendously if many of these types of organizations became mired in labor disputes that led to strikes or lockouts. With this in mind, I turn to a chronological discussion of attempts to organize the workforce within socially responsible companies.

Case studies

**Esprit de Corps**

The first attempt to organize within a contemporary socially responsible company turned up in this research occurred in an Esprit clothing manufacturing plant in 1972. Esprit was founded in 1968 and quickly grew to a worldwide clothing retailer. Esprit has developed environmentally friendly, organic clothing lines and was a forerunner in utilizing its advertising and public relations efforts to combat stereotypes about AIDS. After the company opened a garment manufacturing plant in San Francisco, the workers attempted to organize. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled that Esprit used threats, harassment, and intimidation to block the union. Ultimately, the shop was closed down. The NLRB was highly critical of Esprit's then owner Doug Tompkins' "thread of paternalism" that influenced his decision to shut the plant down (Udesky, 1994 A).

Tompkins' "thread of paternalism" offers an engaging perspective with which to view the relationship between socially responsible businesses and labor. The idea of corporate paternalism can be traced back to the robber barons that engaged in large-scale philanthropy and stewardship in response to anti-monopoly legislation. Many robber barons provided housing and other services to employees that were working long hours in their factories. It is understood that the conditions of such housing and work were often times questionable at best, but it is important to establish a history of companies'
providing for employees. The motivations and results of such provisions can be interpreted as having both positive and negative effects on the well-being of the providing organization as well as employees.

The “bright side” of corporate paternalism, as practiced by the robber barons and other companies, consists of a genuine attitude of caring for employee well-being. A quintessential paternal situation in a workplace would borrow heavily from the idea of company as family. The images of a “big family” are often conjured up with owners or chief executives at the top of the family hierarchy. These parental figures provide for the rest of the company out of the goodness of their hearts and because they “know best.” Employees, the younger, less experienced family members, respond to the provisions of the owner or manager with a sense of loyalty to the organization. Indeed, the use of family imagery and metaphor is an admirable and positive metaphor if the family (company) “includes a warm, wholesome, caring, mutually supportive set of interdependent relationships characterized by open and honest communication” (Eisenberg and Goodall, 1997, p. 157). Unfortunately, not all families hold up to this description, and the application of the family metaphor to for-profit corporations can conceal power struggles, competing interests, scarce resources, and major obstacles to effective communication.

The darker side of paternalism provides a marked contradiction to a healthy family environment in which members are provided for by a wise and benevolent leader. Paternal leaders provide for employees for self-centered reasons that placate employees and increase the power and influence waged over employee activity. In such a situation, “loyalty” is replaced with “obedience” and employees are expected to toe the company
Aronoff and Ward (1993) suggest that “implicit in paternalism is the idea that ‘I’ll take care of you and your family if you will obey me and respond to my wishes’” (p. 61).

It appears as if the Esprit case is representative of the negative aspects of corporate paternalism that requires employees to be gracious for all the favors that have been done for them. The NLRB criticized Tompkins for closing his plant due to “perceived ingratitude” on the part of employees. The NLRB supported their claims by highlighting some of Tompkins’ own attitudes toward the plant. Tompkins referred to the plant as a “distinctive experiment,” “a sort of model sewing shop in the social sense of the words.” These statements seem to imply that not only did Tompkins have no obligation to open the shop, but that his actions should be commended for his willingness to improve upon the standard contract-model for clothing manufacturing. Udesky (1994) reports that in a six-month period, four garment shops working under contract with Esprit were raided or busted for illegal labor practices. One of these shops owed $127,000 in back wages and paid $.75 cents under the federal minimum wage with no overtime pay. In response to criticism of such practices, an Esprit spokesman said, “The bottom line is Esprit has to pay its own workers a fair wage. Do you think a socially responsible business would survive if it would pay twice as much to its contractor?” (Udesky, 1994, p. 667). It seems the message is anything provided to employees above the market-driven conditions and wages is to be considered a gift that employees should be happy to receive. When Esprit workers legally decided to organize in order to protect and possibly improve their work conditions, the corporate response was to pull back the gift and “use contract workers to disclaim responsibility for low wages and lousy conditions” (Udesky,
Espirit's paternalism shows that some companies are unwilling to accept employee dissatisfaction because the employer knows best.

**General Motors and Ford Motor Company**

Automobile industry cases from the 1980s show the labor reaction when traditional management–labor relationships are upset with more progressive employment participation programs. Tensions arose within the automobile industry as management-sponsored employee participation programs were instituted to complement the representation of the United Auto Workers (UAW). While not traditionally perceived as progressive, socially responsible businesses, General Motors and Ford Motor Company are both members of Businesses for Social Responsibility and claim certain philanthropic and employee programs that have improved labor relations within the auto industry. By introducing new structures on the plant floor, automobile makers sparked the attention of labor advocates who perceived the structures as limiting to union power and the influence of collective bargaining and grievance procedures.

Cases from the automobile industry are important because of the introduction of team concept as an alternative to management–labor structures. GM implemented various versions of a “team concept” in joint ventures and new manufacturing plants. Union members were largely divided on the new teams as some members gained influence and others felt alienated from their work. Parker and Slaughter (1988) suggest that the implementation of the team concept heightened the stress on employees and weakened the power of unions. Union members became aware that team leaders were recognized more quickly than union representatives and began to use team channels to give input. Similarly, the grievance procedure lacked power as workers were advised to
subordinate individual rights for the good of the team. While the team system has been successfully integrated in the automobile industry, it exists only within the greater protection provided by union representation.

**Whole Foods Market**

Incidents of anti-unionism within a "socially responsible" company are also evident in the early 1990s between Whole Foods Market and two local unions in Berkley, California. Whole Foods Market is a natural foods supermarket chain that conducts business under the motto "Whole Foods, Whole People, Whole Planet." The company was awarded the 12th Annual Corporate Citizenship Award by Business Ethics magazine "for a broad-based commitment to customer, stockholder, employee, community, and environmental service" (Business Ethics, p. 14). Whole Food founder John Mackey says, "One of keys to understanding this company is that the people who started didn’t know how they were supposed to do it. This is the way our culture has developed."

Two things are of particular interest in the Whole Foods case. First is the rationalization that unions are not needed at Whole Foods because of a Japanese-inspired team management system. At Whole Foods, each team is responsible for its own hiring, firing, and training. Each team member goes through a three-day trial and must be voted into the team by existing members. The teams also enjoy open access to financial statements including the right to know all salaries; even executive salaries that are capped at ten times the average of all full-time team members. In an essay entitled "Beyond Unions," Mackey describes the company’s team system "in which management and labor work together as partners – with openness, trust, community, shared purpose, joy, and love – to fulfill their common goal of serving the customer’s needs and desires." Mackey
continues, “I believe each of us has a higher purpose to our lives, a deeper reason for being here. When we are actively fulfilling this personal higher purpose ... life becomes an exciting adventure for us! Whole Foods Market enables many of our Team Members to fulfill their higher purpose of helping make the world a better place” (Kauffman, 1991, p 295). The question begged by “Beyond Unions” is whether, in some way, a union system fails to enable individuals to fulfill their “higher purpose” and take part in an “exciting adventure.” Kauffman reveals that despite the promises of personal fulfillment and positive impacts on the world, the Whole Foods Berkley store paid its employees an average of $1 to $5 less than other stores, had a vastly inferior health plan, and overstated the amount of employee ownership of company stock.

The second interesting element of the Whole Foods case is the level of public disdain that the Whole Foods upper echelon feels toward unions. Lubove (1998) writes, “Mackey feels about the labor unions the same way they feel about him. Which is to say he considers them an abomination, a stain on the national escutcheon” (p. 14). Mackey reveals his feelings about unions in both “Beyond Unions” and in personal interviews. In “Beyond Unions” he writes, “Unions are not part of the solution at Whole Foods Market. Rather, they are part of the problem, stuck in the old paradigm that all employees are weak and powerless, and that all employers are greedy and exploitative, interested only in profits and self-aggrandizement.” (Lubove, 1998, p. 14). Mackey becomes more caustic in person, “Basically, labor unions don’t create value. Fundamentally, they’re parasites. They feed on union dues” (Lubove, 1998, p. 14). Mackey’s anti-unionism is motivated

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10 Kauffman’s article was written in 1991. At that time, children and dependents of Whole Foods employees did not receive health benefits until the employee worked for the company for five years. The City of Berkeley’s Commission on Labor suggested the possibility that the store practiced preferential hiring of young whites under the idea that they were less likely to agitate for work improvements. The
by a type of new age, free-market capitalism. The two articles referenced in this analysis use similar titles to introduce their topics: “New age meets new right,” and “New Age capitalist.” The tension between new age, responsible business and a “competition cures all” economic perspective seems to be at the heart of some conflicts between labor unions and socially responsible business. As a United Food & Commercial Workers (UFCW) representative said, “From our perspective, Whole Foods is a whole sham. They’re claiming enlightenment in regards to nutrition and good health and practicing Cro-Magnonism [in regards] to rights of employees to establish a union” (Lubove, 1998, p. 14). The Whole Foods case is evidence that despite well-meaning employers, labor and management often disagree on what is best for employees.

**Border’s Books**

Another publicized example shows that a progressive social image does not always translate into straightforward relationships between employers and employees. Borders Books, an Ann Arbor, Michigan based book retailer, has fought organizing campaigns in a number of stores. Featherstone and Gordon (1997) argue that “Borders manipulates its hippie image and uses new-age obfuscations to derail union efforts. At stores all over the country, executives flown in from the Ann Arbor headquarters hold small, mandatory ‘open dialogues’ where they insist that unions are ‘out of date’ and ‘divisive’ and will disrupt the ‘Borders culture.’ Unions – fine for other companies – are a betrayal of the Borders family” (p. 6). Introduction of the Borders culture and family into an anti-organizing campaign smacks of the thread of paternalism apparent in the Esprit case discussed earlier. The argument seems to progress along the following lines:

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company claimed that workers owned more than 50% of the company’s stock. Figures later revealed that the vast majority of stock was owned by the CEO and other executives.
Borders has a culture that is of a nature similar to that of a “family.” Loyalty to that family is important and unions are damaging to the family fabric. The underlying assumption of this line of reasoning is that Borders truly is an enlightened place of employment differing in some way from a bureaucratic, hierarchical structure with vast space between management and lower level employees. Featherstone and Gordon suggest otherwise by pointing out that in 1997, the company had not raised wages in five years despite a 53% increase in company profits the year before.

It is also apparent that Borders is willing to go lengths to support their anti-union stance. Michael Moore (1996) writes about being banned from Borders for inviting (with management approval) picketers inside a store in which he was under contract to do a book signing. Moore refused to cross the line of picketers outside of Borders that had gathered in support of a lady that had been fired after a failed organizing drive within the store. Despite a successful signing, when Moore arrived at the next leg of his tour he was greeted by Borders’ executives who told him he would not be allowed to give his presentation because “the commotion [he had] caused in Philly raised security concerns” (p. 10). More than that, it would appear that Borders felt threatened by Moore’s pro-union actions and needed to “protect” their employees from any exposure to union sympathizers. The Moore case is even more interesting in light of Featherstone’s (2000) observations. She writes, “In numerous public statements, Border’s officials praised the noble history of the union movement, but insisted either unions were irrelevant to the contemporary workplace, or ‘inappropriate for Borders’” (p. 11). One has to wonder where the slippery slope at Borders will end. They have publicly praised unions while contesting organizing drives, and have banned a union sympathizer from speaking at their
stores while continuing to sell his book. There certainly appear to be some major inconsistencies between the rhetoric and reality of Border’s position on unions.

**Starbucks Coffee**

Another case example comes from a successful organizing drive within a Canadian Starbucks’ Coffee store. The case is important because it can be analyzed from at least two different perspectives that are important to the present study. First, the case can be analyzed in terms of the challenges posed to service-sector employees that are attempting to organize. Second, it offers an opportunity to analyze the challenges specific to organizing employees in a “socially responsible,” service-sector organization.

Starbucks has been widely recognized as a leader in socially responsible retailing and lauded for its employment practices. Starbucks has been named one of the 100 Best Corporate Citizens by *Business Ethics* magazine, one of the 100 Best Companies to Work For by *Forbes*, and has received Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Conscience Awards. Employees at 10 Vancouver stores won a collective agreement in August 1997. The organizing drive was motivated by the implementation of the Starbucks Labor Scheduling (SLS) system that created worker schedules while attempting to minimize costs. The SLS system resulted in an increase in hours for part-time workers that worked for a lower hourly wage than full-timers. Murdock (1997) cites a Canadian Auto Workers’ (CAW – the union that represented the organizing employees at Starbucks) report on the shift to a more “flexible” workforce indicative of the Starbucks’ scheduling system; “the paper analyzes the corporate rhetoric this way: With part-time workers, the greater use of overtime, contingent workers, contract workers, the so-called ‘self-employed’ and seasonal workers, business now enjoys what could be called a just-in-time
workforce" (p. 10). Such scheduling puts workers at a disadvantage by allowing only minimal control over their hours of work and limited rewards for seniority in the workplace. Murdock argues that service sector employers Starbucks and Borders are able to minimize the importance of seniority by "convincing workers that such jobs are transient, stopgap measures before they move on to better things" (p. 10). Starbuck’s combines a progressive image with the transient nature of service employment to argue persuasively that unions are not appropriate for their employees.

**Noah’s Bagels**

In early 1998, workers at Noah’s Bagels began bargaining with management for a union contract. The negotiations were seemingly less publicized than some of the other cases reported here as a search of newspaper and magazine articles resulted in only a small piece from *The San Francisco Chronicle*. Noah’s Bagels is a bagel/deli with franchises in California, Oregon, and Washington state. The Noah’s Mission Statement includes, “To create a fun, supportive and fair work environment; To provide friendly, personal services to our customers; To ensure the highest standard of product quality; To be fair, honest and considerate in our relationships with our suppliers; To be an active force in the communities where we do business; and To be the best bagel company in America.” The worker dispute arose around the idea of a “fair” environment as management offered an unacceptable, contractual starting wage and a health and dental policy that was too expensive for the worker. Workers were apparently asking for a starting hourly wage of between $7 and $8 as opposed to the $5.95 the company was offering. Although less detailed than some of the other examples, the Noah’s case
highlights the differing definitions that organizational audiences can attach to ambiguous terms.

**Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream**

Two cases discussed earlier also provide insight into the battles between socially responsible companies and labor unions. In January, 1999 maintenance workers from Ben and Jerry's St. Alban's, Vermont plant won a union election 11-8. Ben and Jerry's is a pioneer and leader in the American movement for corporate social responsibility. The company adheres to a strict environmental policy that defines both product ingredients and production methods. The company treats its employees to paid family leave, health club memberships and three free pints of ice cream or yogurt products each day. The company founders also started the Ben and Jerry's Foundation to provide financial support to organizations that seek to promote social change. Maintenance workers became upset about the way overtime was paid, with increased payments made only after a 40-hour week had been filled regardless of daily hours.

The Ben and Jerry's response to the unionizing drive included two strategies. First, the company utilized its socially responsible image and reminded employees of all the benefits they enjoy within such a progressive company. Second, the company stressed that maintenance workers were interested in undemocratic goals by seeking to organize for themselves without regard for the other plant employees. Lee Holden, company spokesman, told *The Seattle Times*, “All of our employees have traditionally worked together as a fully integrated team at each site, and we feel all the employees at the St. Alban's site have the right to join a union by secret ballot” (1999, p. 1). This statement positions Ben and Jerry's in support of the idea of organizing, but reveals an
organizational interest, namely organizational democracy, that supercedes the right of 19 workers to join a union.

**Powell’s Books**

Another example provides more detail to the Powell’s Books case in Portland, Oregon. Workers at Powell’s Books instituted an organizing drive after the bookstore restructured departments to improve the efficiency of the store. Traditionally, workers were considered experts within a certain department and relied heavily on their own knowledge of their section to provide turnaround to clients. When a more systematic, computer inventory was introduced, workers sought out a union for representation. The Powell’s reaction was that every employee “made some sacrifices to be in the book business” because “there was something special about this place” (1999, p. 38). Company founder, Michael Powell admits, “Let’s be honest, I believed then and I believe now that a union is not in the best interest of the company...My view is that it makes communication very difficult” (Fortune, 1999, p. 38). Powell’s organizers obviously present a very different perspective in suggesting that progressive organizations like Powell’s are the very places were organizing drives should be most acceptable. Originally outnumbered by large chain bookstores, Powell’s would appear to be the perfect place for employees to maintain a sense of empowerment. Organizer Ian McCullough explains the irony, “It’s deliciously ironic that a liberal, independent bookstore like Powell’s, battling the big chains, would not understand the same impulse among its employees” (Fortune, p. 38, emphasis added).
A final example comes from organizing attempts by meat cutters at Wal-Mart superstores in Texas. Although Wal-Mart does not have a particularly strong image of social responsibility, the organization is a member of BSR. Meat cutters at Wal-Mart's Jacksonville, Texas store voted 7-3 in favor of a union in March, 2000. The Jacksonville store was the first to win a union vote, although organizing attempts were taking place at least 20 other Wal-Mart stores. Soon after the vote Wal-Mart decided to close the meat cutting operations at all Wal-Mart stores. The decision was supported by a move to sell only pre-packaged meat at the stores. Spokesperson Jessica Moser said, “Our decision to expand case-ready meat has nothing to do with what went on in Jacksonville. Prepackaged meat has a better appearance and longer shelf life” (Koenig, 2000, p. 1). The pro-union vote followed a campaign in which Wal-Mart argued that all 300 employees at the Jacksonville store should have voted, and that traditionally Wal-Mart employees have chosen to refuse union representation. Moser stated, “You have seven our of 915,000 associates that have voted to unionize. Our associates for 38 years have said we don’t want or need union representation” (The Dallas Morning News, March 14 2000p. 2). Koenig provides a different spin on the wishes of Wal-Mart employees. He writes, “Wal-Mart’s opposition to unions in its stores is legendary in business circles. The company has even barred charities from its stores during the holiday season because it feared the food and commercial workers would use the policy to get inside and conduct organizing campaigns” (p. 2). Wal-Mart’s apparent support for workplace democracy and the interests of the customer take priority over the narrow interests advanced by the meat cutters.
Patterns of disputes

Several key points and patterns arise out the analysis of organizing attempts within socially responsible companies. *First, the cases provided above reveal very few instances of illegal union-busting techniques on the part of socially responsible companies.* The companies cited above generally played within the rules of current labor laws. Following the law hardly seems a legitimate reason for corporate praise, but given lax labor laws and labor estimates that 90% of employers are involved in illegal practices at the outset of an organizing campaign, following the law is a start. Certain activities like the closing of shops at Esprit de Corps and Wal-Mart may seem ethically dubious, but usually fall within the legal rights of corporations when rationalized for reasons of increased business competition.

*Second, is the suggestion that unions are inappropriate for socially responsible companies.* Featherstone (2001) asserts that such claims of inappropriateness are psychologically powerful because they imply that companies exist where unions are appropriate. Workers within socially responsible companies can come to believe that their employers are more worker-friendly than other companies in which unions are required to protect employees from management. The justifications for claims of inappropriateness are varied, and are certainly not specific to socially responsible companies. But certain similarities are apparent as companies invoke “organizational culture” and similar concepts in order to position the organization above (or in the case of Whole Foods, “beyond”) the scope of unions. Esprit is an organization that undertakes

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11 Swartz (2000) reports that Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos “says he favors unions, just not at his firm. ‘We don’t need them,’” (p. 1B).
“model” manufacturing practices, Whole Foods aids team members in fulfilling a “higher purpose,” and Borders has a distinct “culture” to which unions could be divisive.

Whether it is family, culture, or other concepts, there is an underlying theme that these socially responsible organizations are fundamentally different from organizations within which unions are more appropriate and less destructive to the nature of the organization.

The number of labor disputes within socially responsible companies indicates that these companies perceive of themselves as placed that have evolved—to borrow from John Mackey—beyond unions. Socially responsible businesses have attempted to improve the way that for-profit business operates. They have sought to create organizations that provide collaborative, collegial environments. Unions are by their nature adversarial and opposed as such. To the extent that socially responsible businesses aim to minimize conflict then, their critiques of labor unions are justified.

One of the central arguments from socially responsible employers against unions comes in the shape of alternative employee participation structures that are perceived as improvements over the union structure. Commitments to teams and teamwork can be based on actual workplace structures or can be interpreted as generally “working together.” Whole Foods relies on a “team concept” that makes unions expendable. The organization structures its employees in teams that handle certain responsibilities usually reserved for management. By shifting the traditional management–labor hierarchy, unions become expendable. There is no need for the protection and security provided by a union when workers can be assured that the team has every member’s best interest in mind. Ben and Jerry’s invoked the concept of team to argue that each company plant is a self-autonomous unit that works together. Having union representation that does not
include the entire team is deeply divisive. While understanding the organizational cultures and structures of socially responsible companies is not the primary focus of this study, analysis of key values and values-related discourse reveal that conceptions of organizational culture are a major factor in how socially responsible companies view themselves and how that view is resistant to a unionized workforce.

A final pattern comes from the cases of Ben and Jerry’s and Wal-Mart. Both of these companies argued that all of their employees should be granted the vote for union representation. In both cases only small numbers of employees actually voted in the union certification election. Featherstone (2000) has pointed out that such apparent respect for workplace democracy is disingenuous. Union votes often focus only on specific trades when attempting to gain footing in a specific organization. Organizers are aware that many workers are skeptical of union representation and that companies can launch successful anti-union campaigns that capitalize on such skepticism. Organizations understand that pro-union attitudes can be stronger within certain trades, and anti-union employees can be used to dilute the union vote. Competition for union votes is fierce, and management has considerably more access to employees than unions. Therefore small numbers of workers are often targeted in hopes that union support will grow. Corporate claims that every worker should be solicited to vote in a union election does not often hold up within organizations that consist of several skilled trades or work functions.

The examples provided by the cases of Esprit de Corp, General Motors, Whole Foods Market, Borders Books, Starbucks, Noah’s Bagels, Ben and Jerry’s, Powell’s and Wal-Mart provide the impetus to study some of the rhetorical techniques available to
both management and labor in organizing disputes. An appropriate focus for such a rhetorical analysis are the values and values-related discourse of these organizations.

*Socially responsible businesses and labor unions are values-driven organizations that often rely on public value commitments in order to secure public advocacy for their values. For that reason, this rhetorical analysis can center on understanding values from both a management (i.e. socially responsible, corporate) and labor perspective, and can illuminate conceivable areas of contestation between the management and labor perspectives.*
CHAPTER SEVEN: CSR PERSPECTIVE ON VALUES

Corporate messages

The second aspect of the research to be addressed is concerned with the corporate perspective, especially by avowed BSR companies, on values. In other words, it is necessary to understand what socially responsible companies say is important to them. For this analysis, the corporate voice comes from corporate documents such as mission statements and employment statements made in annual reports and web sites. It is suggested that because these documents are made available to a wide range of audiences, they can be considered representative of an “official” corporate perspective. A common criticism of this type of analysis is that such corporate documents fail to capture authentic values that influence corporate action. As Cheney and Frenette (1993) point out, this problem is similar to that posed in judging the sincerity and authenticity of any message (e.g. attempting to assess a friend’s trustworthiness). The justification for the use of corporate documents borrows from a premise provided by the authors: “what corporate rhetoric say becomes part of the larger ‘conversation’ that is society; corporate messages become part of the larger text that is culture. Through their tremendous size, reach, and resources, major corporations cultivate and reinforce particular values; corporations legitimate themselves and the social order” (p. 69).

Socially responsible company messages

Corporate messages appear to take on increasing importance for avowed CSR companies. BSR offers several key strategies companies can utilize to implement socially responsible practices. The first of these steps, titled “Mission, Vision and Values...
Statements," states that "If CSR is to be regarded as an integral part of the business
decision-making, it merits a prominent place in a company’s core mission, vision and
values documents...[These documents] provide insight into a company’s values, culture
and strategies for achieving its aims." The second strategy, "Cultural Values," advises
"...there must be a commitment to close the gap between what the company says it
stands for and the reality of its actual performance. Goals and aspirations should be
ambitious, but care should be exercised so the company says what it means and means
what is says." Taken together, these two steps preemptively address the problems of
importance and sincerity that surround the analysis of corporate documents. According
to BSR a truly responsible company should make documented commitments to guiding
values and should strive to act in accordance with those values. British
Telecommunications' (BT) "Social Report" serves as a model for a public commitment to
a set of core values. The report’s "principal aim is to communicate – to our own people
and to those other constituencies with an interest in what we do – how we are tackling
our social responsibilities." The organization understands that a commitment to social
responsibility invites expectations and criticism and that achieving "responsible" goals
requires a thoughtful, measured approach: "Here at BT, we’ve realized that if we’re
serious about our commitment, we need to proceed carefully, step-by-step. We need to
avoid grandiose claims or declarations which cannot be backed up by evidence – or
which could not realistically be followed through by action. This is about the things we
actually do, not about any spin we might put on our aspirations" (emphasis added). As
the implementation steps recommended by BSR show, one of the things that BT and
other socially responsible companies frequently do is make value commitments.
Organizational uses of values

The emphasis on values professed by BSR is indicative of trends in broader level organizational uses of values. Cheney (in press) argues,

Values are all the rage in today’s organizations. They are centerpieces of mission statements. They are seen in terms of positioning a company in its market. They are employed as inspirational tools. They are widely seen as lacking and therefore in need of promotion and earnest quests. Values are also framed in strategic terms thus linking the notion of (‘added value’) to the promotion and perhaps internalization of stakeholders, including employees. (p. 7-8)

Quick surveys of the content of corporate marketing, public relations, and advertising materials certainly support Cheney’s claim. In line with values being widespread, they are also widely varied. Organizational values and value commitments are as varied as the organizations that hold them. The values of socially responsible companies drive a number of responsibilities that include the environment (e.g. recycling, sustainable development), community (e.g., philanthropy, volunteerism), and human rights (e.g. fair trade, production issues).

Socially responsible company values

Documents from forty-four companies were analyzed for values, value statements, and value commitments. The vast majority of these documents were gathered from company web sites. The companies, displayed on the BSR web site, constitute a sample of socially responsible companies. The representative list includes large and small companies with differing degrees of responsibility and company-centered discourse. The goal of this level of analysis is not to provide an exhaustive list of values espoused by socially responsible companies, but to present values believed to be representative of companies that publicly claim social responsibility. Some companies claim broad level
environmental and social responsibilities without reference to specific activities while others support their claims with full-length social audits and reports. Some companies claim specific values while others claim to be guided by values without reference to specific value terms. *An attempt is made here to examine those values and values oriented premises that employees may be expected to identity with.* This interpretive twist borrows from Burke's (1969) conception of identification as a part of rhetoric. *As Cheney and Frenette (1993) point out, “the identifying employee is likely to accept the various premises, factual and value-oriented, of his or her employer”* (p. 52, emphasis added). A similar point is made by Tate (1999): "The conveyance of corporate values not only reduces ambiguity about expected behavior, but more importantly, it rhetorically positions employees to respond with increased commitment to both organizations and fellow employees" (p. 100). *In terms of the research question, this analysis will attempt to describe the values used by socially responsible companies to represent themselves as employers. The analysis includes a “common sense,” interpretive rationale for each of the value commitments made (i.e. what reasons can audiences reasonably posit for corporate commitments to specific values).* Such a rationale is similar to the “naïve interpretation” suggested by Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1982) as a way of gaining clear insight into why certain things are said and done in organizations. The rationale forces further dialogue and clarification of corporate values and employee identification with them. It is recognized that value terms are highly ambiguous and contain a multiplicity of meanings. The interpretations and critiques that follow are an initial step in clarifying how and why organizations use values.
The number of companies that expressed each value is included as well as the percentage of companies (out of 46) that expressed the value. The relatively low percentages are probably due to the variance in value commitments that companies make. The sample of companies varies in size and industry, in fact, one of the only linkages across the companies is membership in BSR.

*Culture (13 – 28%)*

A preliminary step in this analysis is to address a recurring term that, while not a value in itself, is consistently said to include values – culture. In their research, Deal and Kennedy (1982) found that corporate cultures consist of a business environment, values, heroes, rites and rituals, and a cultural network. The authors write, “Companies that have cultivated their individual identities by shaping values, making heroes, spelling out rites and rituals, and acknowledging cultural networks have an edge” (p. 15). This culturally driven edge consists of an established set of informal rules that guide employee behavior and a sense of corporate identity that helps employees feel good about their jobs and consequently, work harder. Management can manipulate cultural characteristics and cues to improve employee morale and productivity. An example helps illustrate the power of cultural cues. In communicating the hard working attitude of its employees, a public affairs company includes the following information on their web site:

Every month, we fight headaches (so you don't have to) with more than 350 Advils kept at our front desk - on top of individual stashes of Tylenol and Advil...Everyday, we run up and down our stairs enough times to climb to the top of the Sears Tower FIVE TIMES (yes, that's almost 12,000 steps)....We go through 20 pounds of coffee a month (and we're not counting the trips to the Starbucks and the Gloria Jean's around the corner!)....And how's this for dedication? Every week, staffers skip more than 50 meals because they're too busy working on client projects, and end up eating another 100 at their desks! (Staff Profile, 2001)
This description accurately depicts a culture where every effort is made to serve client needs and where work-life balance is addressed by making work one’s life. Such a message is intended to assure clients that their needs will be met but also serves as a message of commitment and pride for employees.

While not specifically thought of as a value in itself, companies often invoke the notion of culture and describe a set of distinctive characteristics like rules or values that constitute the culture. Culture, and similar concepts like atmosphere, work climate, and work environment, describe the “way things are” and provide an image of life within an organization. The following are representative examples of organizational expressions of culture:

- “We commit to creating a work environment of mutual trust and respect, in which diversity and inclusion are valued; and where everyone who works for BP is helped to develop their capabilities in a culture of innovation...” (BP Amoco)

- “Employment at Calvert offers more than just traditional rewards. Our culture is characterized by a shared sense of commitment to our mission, our customers, our fellow employees, and our communities” (Calvert)

- “These rules are core to the hp culture and behaviors that drive hp. They create an environment where people’s hearts and minds are fully engaged, where strategy is enabling and where great aspirations are powered by the desires of people to do something worthwhile” (Hewlett Packard)

- “We have created an environment that encourages a free and open exchange of ideas. Insights move rapidly from cube to corner office, from expert to intern. The team dynamic at Merrill is fundamental to our culture. Teamwork is one of our core Principles and we see our ability to live by those Principles as a key factor in our own impressive success story” (Merrill Lynch)

- “These people principles reflect McDonald’s values and describe the culture we embrace – Respect and Recognition, Values and Leadership Behaviors, Competitive Pay and Benefits, Learning, Development and Personal Growth, Resources to Get the Job Done (McDonald’s)
• “Our employees are active participants in creating the dynamic culture that binds Schwab together. Schwab aims to foster a culture based on the values of growth, adaptability and innovation. It is a culture that helps us attract, retain and challenge the most talented minds in the industry” (Charles Schwab)

• “The following list of core values reflects what is truly important to us as an organization. These are not values that change from time to time, situation to situation, or person to person, but rather they are the underpinning of our corporate culture” (Whole Foods)

• “With a corporate culture built around the personal interests, values and philosophies of our founders, Yvon Chouinard and his wife Malinda, it only follows that a job at Patagonia would offer a human balance of work, play and family time (Patagonia)

It is difficult to provide a single, inclusive rationale for corporate invocations of culture. The possibility, raised by Deal and Kennedy (1982), that culture is a competitive advantage is compelling. Companies raise the perception that their culture marks an improvement over companies with “weak” or “no” culture. The notion of culture itself is problematic though without reference to the characteristics that make up the culture. To continue in the line of Deal and Kennedy (1982) then, we turn attention to values that “form the heart of corporate culture” (p. 14).

Customer/ client (25 - 54%)

Despite the multitude of values used by socially responsible companies, several values recur. The first of these values – in no specific order – is the commitment to the customer/client. Often times, companies make a direct statement explaining that customers are the primary value of the company:

• “We put our customers first” (British Telecommunications)

• “Our Customers: They are the most important shareholders in our business and the lifeblood of our business” (Whole Foods)
Our clients are the driving force behind what we do, and their interests must always come first” (Merrill Lynch)

“Placing the interests of clients and customers first” (American Express)

“The customer is Job 1” (Ford)

“The customer defines a job well done” (Hewlett Packard)

The rationale for valuing customers/clients for for-profit corporations is clear: these corporations would cease to exist if customers stopped purchasing their goods and/or services. The basic subsistence of the modern corporation hinges on providing a good or service for which others are willing to pay or trade. While the customer/client is a value in itself for companies, the value of service is used to show that a company is in a subservient position to satisfy the needs of their clients:

- “Service for our customers” (Wal-Mart)
- “To serve our customers by providing safe, effective, innovative, natural products of high quality” (Tom’s of Maine)
- “Be fair, empathetic, and responsive in serving our customers” (Charles Schwab)

The term “customer service” combines two values and leads to the creation of a new value that almost renders either “customer” or “service” obsolete by themselves. Whole Foods provides a description of why serving customers is so important:

- “We go to extraordinary lengths to satisfy and delight our customers. We want to meet or exceed their expectations on every shopping trip. We know that by doing so we turn customers into advocates for our business. Advocates do more than shop with us, they talk about Whole Foods, to their friends and others. We want to serve our customers competently, efficiently, knowledgeably, and with flair.”

Diversity (18 – 41%)
The second recurrent value of the socially responsible companies sampled here is a commitment to diversity. The amount of corporate commitments to diversity has placed the term in a tenuous position between organizational value and organizational buzzword. While judging the sincerity of corporate commitments to diversity is difficult, it is certain that many companies, especially larger, global enterprises, have recognized the profitability involved in employing a diverse workforce:

- “At GM, the commitment to diversity is much more than a human issue, it also makes good business sense...our diversity is our strength.” (General Motors)

Diversity is usually used with regards to people and their attributes, especially talent:

- “To create a work environment that encourages professionalism, growth, and diversity.” (Bright Horizons)

- We value diversity and recognize that a successful company welcomes people who have different talents.” (British Telecommunications)

- “Calvert Group’s diverse workforce is comprised of individuals who bring innovation, excellence, and strength of character to their endeavors.” (Calvert)

- “We commit to creating a work environment of mutual trust and respect, in which diversity and inclusion are valued,” or “we will deploy a diversity of talent, background and perspective within BP’s workforce to build innovative, high-performance teams.” (BP Amoco)

- “Diversity of Cultures, People, and Ideas: Making Merrill Lynch the Best Place to Work.” (Merrill Lynch)

- “Honest Tea is an equal opportunity employer and values the diversity of its employees.” (Honest Tea)

- “To recognize, encourage, and seek a diversity of gifts and perspectives in our worklife.” (Tom’s of Maine)

The rationale for valuing diversity is clearly stated on Ford’s web site. Ford expresses both the requisite and advantageous nature of diversity:
- "Valuing diversity...we recognize that diversity is not only a reality of our global nature, it’s a distinct advantage, and one that we value and embrace, diversity broadens our range of talents and stimulates our creativity, adding to the appeal of our products essentially in new and emerging markets." The statement continues by tying diversity into Ford’s number one goal, serving the customer: “Our understanding of diversity helps us serve our customers better." (Ford)

Organizational diversity expands the talent pool from which an organization can draw. As Ford suggests, diversity also helps an organization maintain flexibility and adaptability in changing work environments. Unstated in the valuing of diversity is an appreciation for heterogeneity, and while diversity is important, a more fundamental respect for individuals is also found among socially responsible value commitments.

**Respect (18 – 39%)**

*The third recurring value commitment is respect.* As a value, respect is highly ambiguous without reference to a specified object. In general, the companies studied focus respect on people, whether customers or employees:

- “Treating People Fairly and with Respect...we respect each other.” (British Telecommunications)
- “Treating our People with respect and dignity.” (American Express)
- “Respect and empower your fellow employee and the power of teamwork.” (Charles Schwab)
- “To respect, value, and serve not only our customers, but also co-workers, owners, agents, suppliers, and out community.” (Tom’s of Maine)
- “Respect and Recognition – Employees are respected and valued.” (McDonald’s)
- “…we treat people with respect.” (Gap)
- “Provide a great work environment and treat each other with respect and dignity.” (Starbucks)
More specific than respect for employees, customers, or other stakeholders is a respect for the “individual:”

- “Valuing and respecting each individual simply because it makes good sense.” (Ford)
- “We respect the dignity of each individual, whether an employee, shareholder, or member of the public” (Merrill Lynch)
- “respect for the individual” (Hewlett Packard)
- “Respect for the individual” (Wal-Mart)
- “Working in harmony and with respect for the human spirit” (Fetzer Vineyards)
- “…while holding deep respect for individuals inside and outside the Company…” (Ben and Jerry’s)
- “a respect for the individual and for the diversity of mankind” (BP Amoco)

The emphasis on respecting the individual is not totally surprising given the majority of companies sampled were founded in the individualistic culture of the United States. Unlike diversity, which is justified by an expansion of the talent pool, respect is often given no rationale besides, “Valuing and respecting each individual simply makes good sense” (Ford).

Teams/ Teamwork (14 – 30%)

One of the central concerns of any organization is to coordinate activities in the direction of a common goal. In the case of many socially responsible companies, this coordination comes in the form of teams. Teams come in many different structures and with varying degrees of hierarchical control and oversight, but in general are believed to involve less intrusive management control and increased creativity and productivity:
• “we work as one team” (British Telecommunications)

• “Teamwork – from the smallest unit to the enterprise as a whole.” (American Express)

• “HP set of core values: teamwork...we find that well-managed, diverse work teams can outperform homogenous teams in quantity, creativity, and quality.” (Hewlett Packard)

• “We expect teamwork throughout the company and reward it. It is great teams that win, not loose affiliations of star players.” (Merrill Lynch)

• “Employees are recognized formally for...teamwork.” (McDonald’s)

• “To acknowledge the value of each person’s contribution to our goals and to foster teamwork in our tasks.” (Tom’s of Maine)

• “respect and reinforce your fellow employees and the power of team work.” (Charles Schwab)

The rationale underlying the persistent commitment to teams is at least threefold. First, many of these companies are organized in team structures. To value teams is to value the structure of the organization. Second, teams are valued because they work with a common focus and for common goals. These goals allow the teams to supercede individual differences and empower the team to achieve outcomes greater than individual efforts alone. Third, teams reorganize decision-making and power to the employees closest to the work. As Aubrey and Felkins (1988) summarize, “Active employee participation and involvement in the decision-making process can increase commitment and accomplishment...A crucial premise is that the individual who is doing the job is the expert and knows best how the process could be improved” (p.1). Teams foster goodwill by recognizing the abilities of employees and empowering team members to make decisions about their tasks.
Socially responsible values – A labor perspective

The second level of analysis of socially responsible values moves from an interpretive level to a more critical level. As noted previously, one assumption of a critical analytical approach is that organizations are sites of material and linguistic power struggles. A critical approach can expose dominant ideologies and power imbalances by providing alternative perspectives to the material and linguistic artifacts of an organization. For instance, a memo that announces an organizational restructuring plan will be met with varying responses from management and lower levels of employees. Similarly, commitment to certain organizational values may provoke employees to question exactly in whose values the organization believes.

For this analysis, the critical approach will take the form of a labor perspective to management-sponsored values. Such a labor perspective is greatly inferential due to a noticeable lack of communication research from the viewpoint of organized labor. As Hansen-Horn and Vasquez (1997) suggest, “It should be generally apparent that the field of communication has invested very little effort in the pursuit of legitimate labor perspectives in its primary literary discourse” (p. 188). It is proposed here that labor perspectives\(^\text{1}\) function as direct, critical opposites to managerial perspectives of the organization. Specifically, the labor perspective presumes that organizational power rests with management and that management and labor interests are often incompatible. In fact, it could be argued that the majority of labor activity is aimed at re-aligning power and increasing the amount of influence that workers wage over the conditions of their work. As “sites of resistance,” (Cheney, in press, p. 11) management-sponsored,

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\(^{1}\)Hansen-Horn and Vasquez (1997) point out that no single “labor perspective” exists due to the diversity and vastness of labor movements.
organizational values are ripe for interpretation from the labor perspective. Specifically, each "socially responsible" value interpreted above can be understood as a loaded term by which management attempts to dissuade union activity and argue against organized labor.
Culture

The management perspective views culture as a set of values, rituals, myths and other factors that help define the organization and describe a general organizational environment. Culture is considered “good” because it indicates coordinated activity and improves organizational outcomes like effectiveness and productivity. The labor perspective, though, may view culture as a management tactic used to minimize labor dissent. Such labor skepticism could be fueled by management attempts to “create” or “change” cultures in support of management objectives. Waldman (1987) reports, “Corporate America has launched one of the most concerted efforts ever to change the attitudes and values of workers...dozens of major US companies are actively involved in training designed to foster teamwork, company loyalty and self esteem” (p. 19). These attempts are the result of the management perspective that organizational cultures are variables that can be manipulated to improve organizational productivity. Tate’s (1997) study of Fred Meyer company newsletters supports the suggestion that management often attempts to target certain values and images to employees in order to foster a culture and improve employee commitment to the organization. The company newsletter was used as a tool to flood messages of company loyalty and success stories with the intent of improving organizational commitment.

Labor distrust of organizational commitments to culture could take a number of forms. First, culture can be invoked as a way to block initial organizing drives. Featherstone (1998) argues that labor unions were deemed “disruptive” to the organizational culture at Borders despite public praise for the history of the union movement. Apparently, Borders’ culture is different than, and tacitly better than,
organizational cultures that require organized labor. Organizational cultures marked by a amiable atmosphere or fast-paced technological advances may argue against labor as adversarial or slow-moving bureaucracies that strain relationships or hinder the ability to stay competitive within innovative markets. *From a labor perspective, if unions are disruptive to culture, then the culture must be addressed as the problem, not the union.*

Second, given that labor accepts that an organization has a certain culture, labor may not share the management attitude that cultures are changeable and malleable to a larger interest. Labor could perceive of organizational cultures as static realities that originate from the beginning of an organization. Organizational culture is created as the organization grows and is forced to make commitments to specific values. While this attitude recognizes that management might have an "ideal culture" in mind, it views culture as something that involves all members of an organization, not just top-level decision-makers. *In a sense, organizational culture is not granted from above but develops in the natural course of organizational evolution.* While organizational culture changes, it does so naturally and not as a result of management prerogative.

*Another line of labor reasoning may grant that organizational cultures can be changed to suit larger interests or goals, but refuses to grant management sole power in shaping that culture.* Labor may seek influence in the development of the culture. Such a line of reasoning is similar to that provided by management in favor of team based structures: If the ultimate goal of a strong culture is improved organizational output, shouldn't the workers expected to improve have a say in creating the most conducive culture? Hansen-Horn and Vasquez (1997) found evidence of a similar line of thought in the publications from the AFL-CIO Committee on the Evolution of Work. The
Committee concluded that “if the 1980s taught one lesson, it is that the task of
management is too important to be left to owners and their managers” (1994, p. 14). For
labor, the creation and/or manipulation of the culture in which they work requires their
involvement as well as the owners and managers of the organization.

The discussion of divergent views of culture leads to an interesting observation
about the socially responsible companies studied here. In their official communication, a
number of the companies make reference to humble beginnings that helped shape the
company. For example, HP has the “Rules of the Garage” that influenced the “HP Way;”
Patagonia has a “Dirtbag Culture” that spawned from the founders love of outdoor
activity; Nantucket Nectars’ origins consisted of a one-boat, floating convenience store;
Ben and Jerry first sold their ice cream out of a run down garage; and Whole Foods
culture was started by people that did not “know what they were doing.” Reference to
such humble beginnings provides an entrepreneurial, small-business feel to companies
that have since become establishments within their industry. The invocation of humble
beginnings also allows for comparison to companies perceived as establishments that
have seemingly always existed. These more established companies can also be used as
examples of organizations in which unions are more appropriate to the culture. Having a
strong culture, matched with an intriguing corporate story, allows management within
socially responsible companies to assume a position of superiority over other companies.
If employees do not like the way the company is managed, they can always work for
another company without the strong culture or grassroots origin.
Customer/client

From the management perspective, phrases such as "the customer is always right," "the customer defines a job well done" and "customer service" summarize the value placed on meeting the expectations of the people or organizations that purchase goods or services. Companies rely on customers for their existence and continue in existence only if customers or clients remain in need of their services. From a more critical labor perspective, the customer can be perceived as an excuse for ignoring the issues and concerns raised by employees. Management maintains the power to focus the organization's energies and can opt to dismiss worker claims by pointing to the cause of the organization's existence – the client. Because unions realign energy and seek to advance the interest of the worker, they hinder the ability of the organization to serve the needs of the client and ultimately minimize the competitiveness of the organization.

The response to such claims borrows from stakeholder theory and from the idea of treating each employee as customer. The labor perspective could argue that organizational vitality rests as much on the existence of satisfied employees as satisfied customers. The organization must not only value the customer but workers that perform the tasks that create the goods or services that are ultimately purchased by the customer. Under this line of thought the interests of employees are not deemed inferior to that of the customer, but rather seen as necessary to the fulfillment of tasks that allow the organization to maximize their service to the customer.

Diversity

From the management perspective, diversity is a competitive advantage that allows an organization to pull from a wide range of talents in order to accomplish
organizational goals. Makower (1995) summarizes "...more and more companies, recognizing that diversity means good business – not to mention fewer discrimination suits, union clashes, and equal employment regulatory actions – are setting aside time and resources to cultivate what they hope will be a more tolerant, cooperative, and productive workforce" (p. 50). The labor perspective on diversity questions the authenticity of management support of diversity in two ways. First, labor may argue that they are truly committed to diversity through efforts to increase the number of organized immigrant workers in a number of industries. By organizing immigrant workers and fighting for workplace improvements, labor can take a "talk is cheap" approach to organizational commitments to diversity. Labor can challenge management to hire greater numbers of immigrant workers and respect their right to form and join unions once employed by an organization.

Second, labor can argue that organizational commitments to diversity serve as a standard rhetorical device that detracts attention from the rights of organized labor. In writing about diversity and organizational advocacy, McPhail (1997) provides an insight adaptable to the labor perspective: "Although some businesses and organizations have sought to address these issues of human difference, few have attempted to explore the underlying assumptions which give rise to the discriminatory attitudes and practice that create the need to improve communication and interaction in the organizational arena" (p. 71). When adapted to the role of diversity in the management–labor relationship, McPhail's (1997) insight sparks images of a popular idea of rhetoric as empty speech or a linguistic covering of negative activity. From the critical, labor perspective management commitments to diversity are empty and lead to forms of tokenism – companies hire
diverse workforce without a plan to tap their range of talent. Labor itself provides more authentic commitments to diversity by fighting for worker voice and vibrant, empowered workforces.

*more cynical labor approach may perceive commitments to diversity as a preemptive selection of workers with a low likelihood to agitate for a union.* McDonald's Student Kit touts “Minorities and women make up more than 50 percent of our current workforce and McDonald's offers a number of leading-edge training programs on managing the changing workforce and career development for women and minorities” (Student Kit, p. 24). McDonald’s has also been recognized for its hiring practices regarding the disabled, senior citizens and teenagers. The hiring of these employees are categorized as “responsible” employment but also consist of traditionally passive populations with regards to labor activity. Selection and recruitment of a diverse workforce may limit labor agitation from both inside and outside the organization.

**Respect**

Management commitments to respect are ground in a common sense, golden rule philosophy about individuals. Respecting employees is the right thing to do because every individual has an inherent dignity and is worthy of respect. Such a philosophy has been restated in many different ways and takes on increased prominence in an American culture defined by individual rights and freedoms. The labor perspective on respect may make a distinction between genuine indications of respect and watered-down employee recognition. Organizational research has provided support to claims of employee recognition influencing performance, but respect requires more than adding an employee name to a newsletter or providing other ego boosts to employees. *Namely, labor focuses*
on "respecting work" that includes the dignity of workers, the tasks they perform, and their right to improve the conditions of their lives. Within a labor perspective, respect for the individual must never be overshadowed by the bottom-line and human concerns must maintain equal footing with market-driven concerns.

Teamwork

Like many of the other "socially responsible" values discussed here, teamwork allows for many different interpretations from a number of critical perspectives. From the management perspective, teams and teamwork empower employees and flatten the organization from a top-down hierarchy to an environment of collaboration and sharing. Teams succeed because employees manage themselves and work together to achieve goals that fail under more segmented structures. Parker and Slaughter (1988) provide the clearest example of a labor perspective on teams. The authors term the team concept "management-by-stress" which strains relationships more so than in traditional management–labor relationships. They write, "It is not teams themselves which are harmful to workers and unions, but the particular way the team concept has been defined and put into practice by management" (p. 54). In explaining the management uses of teams, the authors suggest, "Management’s version of the team concept is a union busting strategy that hinders, not help, the search for real solutions" (p. 54). According to authors, teams pacify unions by proliferating an image of cooperation. In reality, teams weaken the power of unions and limit opportunities for constructive dialogue between unions and management. Labor’s questioning of the authenticity of management-sponsored employee participation programs fuels labor’s insistence on union organizing as the most productive form of employee empowerment in the workplace.
The interpretive analysis conducted in this chapter reveals that socially responsible companies value organizational cultures, the customer/client, diversity, respect, and teams/teambwork. Taken together, these values portray socially responsible companies as amicable places of employment. Individual employees are valued and are provided the opportunity to work in collaboration with others for the successful completion of organizational goals.

The critical analysis of this chapter considers organizational values as potentially damaging to organizing attempts and the labor movement in general. From the labor perspective, organizational values can be used as inauthentic commitments that avoid the issue of union representation in the workplace. The following table summarizes socially responsible company values, representative quotes, and the interpretive, management and critical, labor perspectives on these values.
## Socially Responsible Company Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE</th>
<th>REPRESENTATIVE QUOTE</th>
<th>MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE</th>
<th>LABOR PERSPECTIVE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture* (13 – 28%)</td>
<td>“Our culture is characterized by a shared sense of commitment to our mission, customers, our fellow employees and our communities.” -Calvert Group</td>
<td>Culture is a competitive advantage that allows employees to be satisfied and productive.</td>
<td>Who defines the culture? Do not treat culture as a managerial variable that can be manipulated to increase productivity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Org. identity/Work climate/Environment</td>
<td>“Our employees are active participants in creating a dynamic culture that binds Schwab together...is a culture that helps us attract, retain, and challenge the most talented minds in this industry.” -Charles Schwab</td>
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<tr>
<td>Customer/Client (25 – 54%)</td>
<td>“Placing the interest of clients and customers first.” -American Express</td>
<td>The customer/client is the reason for our existence. Without the customer/client to purchase our goods and services, we have no business.</td>
<td>Treat the employee as an equal stakeholder because we understand the importance of the customer as well. Do not make the needs of the customer/client superior to certain internal needs that allow us to serve the customer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect (18 – 39%)</td>
<td>“To respect, value, and serve not only our customers, but also our co-workers, owners, agents, suppliers, and our community...” -Tom’s of Maine</td>
<td>Respect is a basic right that everyone is entitled to.</td>
<td>Respect is different than recognition. Authentic respect comes in the form of an openness to employee rights to organize.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“We respect the dignity of each individual, whether an employee, shareholder, or member of the public.” -Merrill Lynch</td>
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<td><strong>Diversity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teamwork</strong></td>
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| "Working together, drawing from our diverse talents and perspectives, we will stimulate new and creative opportunities for our business."
-BP Amoco | "We expect teamwork throughout the company and we reward it. It is great teams that win, not loose affiliations of star players."
-Merrill Lynch |
| "We foster a sense of community throughout our organization that respects a diversity of perspectives, opinions, talents and backgrounds."
-Herman Miller | "RIL, which incorporates Reebok brand, the Rockport Company, Ralph Lauren Footwear, and the Greg Norman Collection, it's seemingly difficult to distinguish between work and play. A place where your co-workers are your teammates and the game is driving our continued success."
-Reebok International Ltd. |
| A diverse range of talents is a competitive advantage. The more diverse we are, the more skill we have to serve the needs of the client. | Teamwork allows the organization to coordinate activity for the accomplishment of organizational goals. |
| We are more committed to diversity because we seek to protect everybody's workplace rights. | Teamwork is great if implemented within a union system. Unions remain the single best form of employee protection in the workplace. |
CHAPTER EIGHT: LABOR PERSPECTIVE ON VALUES

Values used as arguments for union representation in the workplace

The third aspect of this research addresses the union perspective on the importance of an organized workforce. Two paths of emphasis are possible for this analysis based on arguments used by labor to advocate an organized workforce. First, analysis could focus on the benefits unions provide for union members. These benefits have been discussed previously and will only be mentioned for review. The AFL-CIO cites research that union members enjoy higher wages, better benefits, and greater job stability than non-union workers in similar trades. Research is also cited that suggests unions have increased productivity in the manufacturing, construction, cement, hospital, and furniture industries (Union Difference, 2001). The importance of labor unions is often portrayed in "material" terms by emphasizing the material gains that workers receive from union membership. Analysis of union benefits could consist of a comparable set of work-life issues between union and non-union workers in similar trades. Salaries and benefit packages could be compared along with survey or questionnaire measures of employee satisfaction. While such an analysis is important, it is not the path selected for the present research.

The emphasis for this research avoids comparison between the material benefits of union and non-union employees and focuses on the values representative of a labor perspective. An attempt is made to discover the values and value statements used in argument for union representation in the workplace. The union perspective offers a comparison to the more "official," managerial perspective outlined in the previous section of analysis. One difficulty in attempting to represent a union perspective on
values, similar to that involved in identifying “socially responsible” values, is the range of trade and associated unions that make commitments to values. Unionized occupations range from unskilled labor to highly specialized technical engineers. The union perspective is further complicated by the number of social, economic, and political roles that various unions participate in. To address these difficulties, an initial step is to investigate broad level values expressed by the AFL-CIO in external, formal communication. This method seems valid given AFL-CIO President John Sweeney (2001, February 27) relayed “the labor movement’s view of our shared concerns” in a speech to the International Corporate Governance Network.

Preliminary labor value framework – Hansen-Horn and Vasquez (1997)

A preliminary framework for understanding union perspectives on values is provided by Hansen-Horn and Vasquez (1997). The researchers studied publications from the AFL-CIO Committee on the Evolution of Work in order to “provide a conceptual foundation for core values that construct the legitimacy of a labor perspective” (p. 199). By analyzing the core values of working for the nation and self, organizing for rights, changing the model of work, and the power of collective action, Hansen-Horn and Vasquez (1997) propose that union advocacy “can be understood as a voice and movement for increased opportunity for individual growth and advancement, improved representation and empowerment, the continued progress for humanized systems of working and more equitable and democratic processes for all workers” (p. 200). The values and themes provided by Hansen-Horn and Vasquez (1997) are
summarized in the following table and will be expanded by analysis of varied labor documents.

**LABOR PERSPECTIVE THEMES (HANSEN-HORN & VASQUEZ, 1997)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>LABOR ARGUMENTS</th>
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| Working for the Self and the Nation        | • Committee discourse includes all "workers."  
• Workers need to work to secure equality.  
• Inequality leads to "social unrest and political instability" (p. 195).  
• Without working, both individuals and the nation suffer. |
| Organizing for Rights                      | • Organizing for rights is tied to the notion of a pluralistic democracy where many interests compete.  
• Organizing for rights helps secure workplace protection, decent wages and working conditions, workplace democracy, equitable sharing of the wealth and a legitimate voice in the workplace (p. 196). |
| Changing the Model of Work                 | • A new model of work views workers as dignified individuals that contribute to profits and organizational competition.  
• This model welcomes true democracy and pluralism, invites mutual decision-making, endorses more equitable profit sharing, and discourages adversarial relations in the workplace (p. 197).  
• The goal of change is a movement of organized individuals, that form values that act in concert as a "force." |
| Power in Collective Action                 | • Conflict between labor and management is unavoidable, antagonism is not.  
• The act of management and the personnel of management are not the same—The act of management is too important a task to be left for management alone.  
• Collective action, in the form of union representation, "is the best available means for working (and non-working) people to express their individuality in the job and their desire to control their working lives (1985, p. 13).  
• The goal of such action is "to take wages out of competition and negotiate labor standards that temper the market with human values" (1994, p. 1). |

*Derived from a critical analysis of documents created by the AFL-CIO Committee on the Evolution of Work (1983, 1985, 1994).*
Labor values

Twenty-six labor documents were analyzed for the use of values and values statements. The majority of these documents were found on the AFL-CIO web site and contained external, formal communications (e.g. speeches, news releases, mission statement, descriptions of programs, etc.). Speeches and descriptions of programs were most helpful in the analysis as news releases were often targeted as responses to specific political, economic, or social activity (e.g. policy proposals, summits, conference findings, research polls). A critical-interpretive approach was taken in analyzing the documents by 1) attempting to understand an insider's view of labor values and 2) critiquing those values from a management perspective. Again, this critical approach borrows from a conception of management-labor relations as adversarial and unbalanced in power and the ability to influence organizational decision-making.

The starting point of the analysis is the AFL-CIO Mission and Goals (What We Stand for, 2000) statement: “The mission of the AFL-CIO is to improve the lives of working families – to bring economic justice to the workplace and social justice to our nation. To accomplish this we will build and change the American labor movement” (emphasis theirs). The mission is further explained around four central activities of the AFL-CIO: “We will build a broad movement of American workers by organizing into unions. We will build a strong political voice for workers in our nation. We will change our unions to provide a new voice to workers in a changing economy. We will change our labor movement by creating a new voice for workers in our communities.” The notions of the worker, organizing, change, and collective power advanced by Hansen-Horn and Vasquez are clearly expressed in the mission statement as are the values of
justice, working families, and voice. *As values central to the mission and future endeavors of the AFL-CIO, justice, working families, and voice provide prime areas for analysis of labor values. All of the representative quotations that follow were taken from speeches given by the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO.*

**Justice**

The labor emphasis on justice concerns correcting a number of economic and social injustices, and has become a common theme in at least three current labor campaigns.¹³ As Sweeney (January 5, 2001) suggests, economic and social injustice are not clearly distinct but exist together and influence each other: “In a very great sense, our national ‘wage and wealth gap’ and our ‘justice divide’ are one and the same – they are both giant wounds that have been open by a virulent new strain of social Darwinism that has taken hold of our country and we must close one if we are to close the other.” The consequences of economic and social injustice are most pronounced within the family structure and strain the bonds of families:

> Love. Redemption. Economic justice. Those are the values that also unite the family that gathered at this convention this week... We will win the victory because we share the belief that no worker should lack the kind of pay and benefits it takes to feed and house and love a family. We will because we believe that no family should go without good healthcare... We will win because we believe that no child should go without a good education and a first-class ticket to travel on the information super-highway. (Sweeney, August 16, 2000)

Sweeney makes it clear that economic justice (wages, benefits) is linked to social justice (education, healthcare) and even to the ability to love a family.

The joining of love with material provision is important because it opens the

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¹³ *Jobs with Justice, Justice for Janitors, and Campaign for Global Fairness.*

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way for the labor understanding of one of the biggest causes of injustice, the global growth by modern corporations that threatens workers.

According to the labor perspective, injustice is a result of corporate interests that are increasingly opposed to labor interests. Injustice occurs on social and economic levels and has become more pronounced as corporations continue to expand globally. The result is a “race to the bottom” by corporations seeking to influence political policy in their favor and produce goods and services within cheap labor markets. As corporations acquire greater wealth laborers struggle mightily for little gain or even the status quo. Sweeney (February 5, 2001) questions, “what will we do to prevent corporations from scavenging the world in search of cheaper and cheaper labor, destroying employment standards, public health and the environment as they go.” Corporate global expansion subjects workers to the will of companies attempting to improve bottom-line benefits. The harsh reality for workers is the inverse relationship that often exists between company profits and employee rights and opportunity. As corporations expand globally, so does the economic and social divide:

The resulting concentration of power and capital is astonishing. The fantastic fortunes of three billionaires alone are together larger than the combined GNP of all the least developed countries and their 60 million people. Of the 100 largest economies in the world, 49 are corporations. General Motors enjoys higher gross annual sales than Thailand’s entire national product. General Electric’s gross annual sales are larger than Poland’s GDP, and Wal-Mart sells more goods than Malaysia produces. Indeed, GE pays its CEO, Jack Welch, more than it pays 15,000 of its Mexican workers combined (November 13, 2000).
One goal of labor is to close the wealth gap that globalization seemingly intensifies and balance corporate growth with attention to the workers that create the goods. Labor stresses that the global economy brings mixed blessings that include great wealth and increased opportunities for some and poverty and loss of jobs to others.

In at least one instance, labor is compared to arguably the most famous story of injustice, the biblical story of Job. In speaking of the narrowly contested presidential election of November 7, 2000, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka (January 15, 2001) says, “I suspect we all now know how Job must have felt, when God allowed Satan to visit all manner of suffering and hardship upon him. Only instead of boils, we got Katherine Harris. Instead of the Devil stealing our cattle and our camel, Justices Rehnquist, Scalia...stole our votes and George Bush walked off with the election.” The Job metaphor stands as a reminder that labor has enemies and must remain persistent in its battles to be heard in political arenas. Trumka reminds the crowd that “Job didn’t suffer for ever – he was given seven sons and three daughters, fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels and a thousand yoke of oxen. Every man gave Job a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold and Job lived 140 years.” The departure from an image of Old Testament, divine justice comes when Trumka shifts imagery to the power of collective action as a force for change. He says, “We will sound our trumpets of equality and justice and freedom and those walls will come tumbling down because we are blue collar workers, white collar workers, new
Organizing and collective action are considered the key tools for workers to correct injustices and improve their lives. While the stress on collective action is not surprising, "working families" has taken on increased significance as a tool for justice. As Sweeney (April 25, 2000) suggests, "Each generation, it is said, must fight the struggle for justice anew and today, working families here in our country and around the world find themselves in a common struggle for basic decency in the new global economy."

**Working families**

*The idea of working families has become a powerful value for the current American labor movement.* The emphasis on working families is consistent with the more traditional "brother and sister" rhetoric of labor but also allows labor to focus on improved worker benefits as a primary goal of labor activity. While "brother and sister" remains a common form of public address for union leaders, it is significant that the first sentence of the AFL-CIO mission (What We Stand for, 2000) includes to "improve the lives of working families," and that Sweeney (February 5, 2001; April 22, 2000; September 7, 2000) often speaks on behalf of the working families of America. As a value, working families have become the nuclear element of labor union activity. Sweeney (April 25, 2000) states, "For our part, the American labor movement is working harder than ever to help working families in our country and around the world build political power and gain a voice in their workplaces, in their communities, in their governments and in the new global economy." The emphasis on working families raises
the stakes of labor dialogue by expanding the notion of who labor is fighting for. As Sweeney (February 5, 2001) tells the National Press Corps in regards to media coverage of George W. Bush's transition to the White House, “we want you to be writing about a few other ‘W’s,” working families, the wages they earn, the world economy where too few are prospering, and we are helping workers win a voice in their workplaces.” The labor movement is not limited to union members but to the families that rely on members as a source of livelihood.

By using the imagery of the family, labor is able to rationalize their activity in defense of certain political, economic, and social “rights” of families. Sweeney (October 19, 2000) tells the NLRB, “As you know we in the union movement are struggling mightily to restore the voice of those working families in our workplaces, our communities, our government and the new global economy, and our work depends a lot on your work.” The primary work of the labor movement is to improve the standard of living for union families. The fight for improvement is seen as an on-going battle due to unjust practices by companies and their political allies: Working families are under relentless attack, and the labor movement’s weapons of “hoes and rakes” are often powerless “against employers equipped with nuclear weapons and the will to use them” (Sweeney, October 19, 2000). Despite such “attacks,” a committed labor movement can make political and economic gains: “If we do our job in state legislative races, we’ll not only elevate working family concerns at that level, we can permanently restore the voices of working families at EVERY level” (Sweeney, July 16, 2000).

The centrality of working families as a value for labor is clearly illustrated in a series of “Respect Work, Strengthen Family” town hall meetings sponsored by the AFL-
CIO. Sweeney (In Los Angeles, 2001) believes that the meetings are a sign that workers are “coming to the conclusion that working families can win if we do as you are doing, building toward one of the strongest, most progressive, most vibrant and inclusive grassroots community movements in recent times.” The meetings address a number of the obstacles facing working families including the pressure to work overtime to earn adequate money, health care and medication coverage, and quality education. The “Respect Work/ Strengthen Family” campaign is a clear indication of how intertwined union activities can become in the day to day issues and material benefits affecting of workers. The labor movement envisions a future in which it is capable of progress in a wide scope of sectors. While economic, social and political justice are important goals for working families, the tool to accomplish these goals is another recurring value from the labor perspective – voice.

**Voice**

*The concept of voice is the central value of the labor perspective as revealed in this analysis. While Brody (1992) discussed voice in terms of union grievance procedure, this analysis reveals that voice is a highly visible value from the inception of organizing campaigns through collective action in support of improved working conditions.* “Voice” appears four times in the AFL-CIO mission and goals (What We Stand for, 2000):

- “We will build a strong political voice for workers in our nation…”
- “We will change our unions to provide a new voice to workers in a changing economy…”
- “We will change our labor movement by creating a new voice for workers in our communities.”
• "We will make the voices of working families heard across our nation and in our neighborhood"

While labor uses "voice" in several ways, it is evident that the AFL-CIO proposes to act as a voice for workers throughout the world. In that sense, labor will "speak" for workers (What We Stand for, 2000):

• "We will create a political force within the labor movement that will empower workers and speak forcefully on the public issues that affect their lives…"

• "We will speak for working people in the global economy in the industries in which we are employed, in the firms where we work, and on the job everyday…"

• "We will speak out in effective and creative ways on behalf of all working Americans."

Labor leaders and groups serve as workers’ representatives and present the labor perspective on various social, economic, and social issues.

The AFL-CIO mission proposes that "voice" is relevant in three distinct areas: communities, the changing economy, and politics. The mission is echoed in Sweeney’s statements to SUNY (April 25, 2000), "For our part, the American union movement is working harder than ever to help working families in our country and around the world build political power and gain a voice in their workplaces, in their communities, in their governments and in the new global economy." At the community level, voice takes the form of "vibrant labor councils" and the willingness to "speak out on behalf of all working Americans." A voice for communities is important because the labor movement is primarily a bottom-up, grassroots movement that attracts workers at a local level. Organizing originates from workers in cities and communities that feel a shared sense of circumstance and expectation. To be the voice for workers, then, requires an
understanding of the circumstance and expectations, and a realistic hope of meeting these expectations that is gained from at the local level.

Voice is also perceived as relevant in securing economic justice for workers: “If workers were without a voice, corporations would compete to exploit them. The ability to produce goods and services would outstrip the ability of underpaid workers to buy them. Henry Ford understood he had to pay his workers enough to buy the cars they made. In the words of former UAW President Walter Reuther, ‘You can’t build an automobile on bicycle wages’” (Sweeney, March 21, 2000). Voice serves to protect the economic interests of workers. Such protection benefits workers, as well as the economy as a whole, by providing wages that allow for the creation of a large group of consumers. From the labor perspective, increased consumption leads to increased production and a stronger economy. Voice is motivated then by a larger economic interest that benefits workers and the companies they work for.

The most important purpose for voice occurs within the political arena and focuses on gaining influence within democratic society and corporations. Hansen-Horn and Vasquez (1997) argue “organizing for rights is a natural endeavor in a democratic society” (p. 200) and that union advocacy includes fighting for “a more equitable and democratic process for all workers” (p. 200). The labor perspective on voice must be understood in terms of a propensity for democratic systems in government and organizations.

Voice is recognized as a fundamental right in democratic political systems. Democratic society relies on multiple groups expressing their views on the nature of world in which they live and the structures and policies that govern them. Failure to
recognize, or "hear," other voices leads to a concentration of power and the eventual "silencing" of less powerful groups. The primary tool of expressing voice for the individual is the vote while larger interest groups perform lobbying and develop programs and campaigns aimed at influencing policy. From the labor perspective, voice is essential in government and organizations, "And we believe that America should practice democracy here at home - from our workplaces to our polling places - and promote simple decency abroad" (Sweeney, February 5, 2001). Effectively practicing democracy within government and at work often requires an expression of disagreement with the status quo. Sweeney (February 5, 2001) suggests, "There is a lot of talk about how we should lower our voices, so there can be consensus, cooperation, and bipartisanship here in Washington... But consensus and cooperation are meaningful only after every segment of society has spoken. And bipartisanship is productive only if public officials from both parties have heard the voices of the working families who elected them." Sweeney's statements mark a shift from "voice" as vote, to "voice" as the recognition, by public officials, of the interests of the constituents whom they represent.

*From the labor perspective, the right to organize and bargain collectively constitutes the most important meaning of "voice" as a value.* In this sense, "voice" is expressed by the exercise of certain worker rights, namely the right to create and join labor unions and to undertake collective action against organizational management in order to improve working conditions. Labor stresses that these rights benefit workers and society as a whole by reifying basic democratic values within organizations: "It was a very different Supreme Court that recognized over 60 years ago in *Thornhill vs. Alabama* that a broad discussion of worker's right to a *voice* at work is, and I quote, "indispensable"
to the effective and intelligent uses of the processes of popular government to shape the
destiny of modern industrial society’'’ (Sweeney, January 5, 2001). This quote suggests
that “voice” – the right to join a union – is a right in itself. The right to join a union helps
workers secure other rights including fair pay, decent working standards, benefits, and
than ever, working people are struggling for the right to choose a voice in their workplace
– their right to organize into unions. They want exactly what the sanitation workers in
Memphis wanted – better pay, decent health care and pensions, safer jobs and a voice on
the job.” The point is made more clearly by Sweeney (August 16, 2000) at the
Democratic National Convention, “And we will win because we believe that every
worker should have the unchallenged right to use the most effective tool available for
leveraging all these things from our winner-take-all global economy, and that’s the right
to join a union.” Voice serves as a fundamental right that protects workplace interests of
workers. The right to join a union is necessary because it provides the only authentic
mode by which workers can influence organizational policy and practice. Sweeney
(January 5, 2001) articulates this concern,

If I could wave a magic wand, I would close the wage and wealth gap by
reforming our labor laws and guaranteeing every worker the absolute right to join
or form a union with no interference from his or her employer... That’s because
union representation is still the single most effective way for working families to
lift themselves up and take for themselves a fair share of the prosperity they
create.

The struggle for “voice” is manifest in the AFL-CIO sponsored Voice@Work
campaign. The campaign seeks “to restore the balance needed to protect the right of
workers to make a free choice to join a union.” Under Voice@Work, workers “reach out
to their elected representatives, clergy members and other community leaders to gain
support for their freedom to form a union” (Voice at Work, 2000). “Voice” now becomes externally aimed at securing allies for organizing campaigns that may previously have occurred behind closed doors. *From the labor perspective, these aggressive advocacy campaigns are necessary in response to underhanded tactics used by employers to block organizing attempts.* The threats to workers’ freedom comes in the form of coercion, harassment and firings from management. The AFL-CIO cites research from Bronfenbrenner in detailing the severity of management threats:

Ninety-one percent of employers, when faced with employees who want to join together in a union, force employees to attend closed-door meetings to hear anti-union propaganda; 80 percent require immediate supervisors to attend training sessions on how to attack unions; and 79 percent have supervisors deliver anti-union messages to workers they oversee. Eighty percent hire outside consultants to run anti-union campaigns, often based on mass psychology and distorting the law. Half of employers threaten to shut down if employees join together in a union. In 31 percent of organizing campaigns, employers illegally fire workers just because they want to form a union. Even after workers go through all this and win a National Labor Relations Board election to form a union, one-third of the time their employer never negotiates a contract with them (The Threat to Workers’ Freedom to Choose, 2001).

When understood in terms of these statistics, “voice” becomes an appropriate metaphor for employee participation through union organizing. Voice is a constant value that is required at the outset of organizing campaigns through to strikes in support of improved working conditions. As Trumka (March 20, 2000) tells victorious strikers at the SPEEA Back-to-Work Rally for Boeing employees, “They now know that they can bargain successfully with their bosses, not only for better pay and benefits, but for a voice on the job and a hand in the decisions that affect them.” *Voice is ultimately perceived as the ability to influence management through collective action, and is indicative of the labor perspective on labor–management relations revealed in this analysis.*
The emphasis on voice is a clear indication the labor perspective is deeply entrenched in a structural-adversarial view of labor-management relations. Voice would appear to be somewhat of a taken-for-granted value, especially in democratic society. Voice is at the core of democracies in which individuals have the right to vote for public officials and hold them accountable when they fail to act in the interest of the individuals that elected them. The invocation of the term attempts to transfer democratic ideals into corporations, and emphasizes that organizations are not democratic places and worker rights and requests are met with considerable resistance. As resistance by government would be reasonable ground for revolution in democratic society, so too does the labor perspective argue for a revolution in support of worker rights to participate and influence the organizations in which they work.

Labor values – A management/socially responsible perspective

The second level of analysis of labor values moves from an interpretive level to a more critical level. Where socially responsible values were analyzed from a labor perspective, this analysis will view labor values through a socially responsible, management perspective. The management perspective is less inferential than a labor perspective due to the amount of existing literature written for and by management professionals. It must be reiterated that values contain a multiplicity of meanings and the following interpretations and critiques are only a few of the possible approaches to the meanings of values. In order to lend focus to this discussion then, a management perspective specific to unions will be discussed.
The management perspective on unions proposed here views unions as adversarial organizations motivated by interests often inconsistent with the well-being of the entire organization. Within labor–management relations, management functions to maintain the overall well-being of an organization, while labor attempts to gain concessions that value employees. As Keller (1963) states, “A really viable approach to good labor relations starts with the acceptance of the inescapable truth that it is management’s job to promote the success of the entire enterprise. Management is, of course, interested in the security and well-being of its employees” (p. 4). The reality of this management situation forces it to balance a number of interests and maintain responsibility to a number of parties including customers, stockholders, vendors, employees and other social groups. Unions fail to consider this responsibility and fight for themselves with little regard for other stakeholders. Keller (1963) continues, “What the advocates of ‘togetherness’ overlook is that the unions of the United States are instruments of conflict...In the United States their business is to protect and enhance their power in the interests of their members...All talk of ‘community of interest’ must bow to the fundamental aim of labor – to get more for its members and to make no concessions detrimental to them” (p. 6). Understood as a critical stance, such a management perspective holds that unions are empowered organizations that instigate conflict and upset a delicate balance of organizational interests.

Justice

The labor perspective values justice in terms of an equitable distribution of power within political, social, and economic systems. Corporate global expansion has created a “justice divide” that has impeded growth of laborers throughout the world. Corporations
respond to market pressures and sacrifice human interest in order to remain competitive. The labor perspective endorses unions as a tool to secure justice for workers around the world.

Three distinct responses to the labor insistence on the injustices inherent in globalization are viable from the management perspective. First, "socially responsible" management may agree with the labor claim that business is responsible for injustice. Again, such agreement sets socially responsible business apart from other businesses that proliferate global injustice directly or indirectly. Anita Roddick (1996), former CEO of The Body Shop argues, "According the theory some call free trade, but I call licentious trade, we should all be happy that the globe is rapidly becoming a playground for those who can move capital and projects quickly from place to place... The new nomadic capital never sits down roots and never builds communities; it leaves behind toxic wastes and embittered workers" (p. 725). Roddick's argument is similar to the labor perspective view of globalization. Although The Body Shop is a global enterprise that operates "in 47 countries with over 1,500 outlets spanning 24 languages and 12 time zones," they are committed to responsible retailing that sources ingredients from under-developed regions. A commitment to responsible retailing allows The Body Shop to straddle the labor and management perspectives of justice by illustrating that they do not contribute to the exploitation of people and markets.

A more traditional management perspective may sidestep the issue of injustice by pointing to "the market." Cheney (in press) has documented some of the popular discourses surrounding the market and reveals that genuflecting to the market shields business from ethical criticism. The market drives business and is inherently neither just
nor unjust. The market is guided by well-established economic principles that function outside the realm of ethics. While the results of a free market may be frustrating to some, it is certainly not the fault of individual businesses that seek to maintain competitive in their industries. Management perceives labor requests for justice as contrary to the capitalist foundations of the United States.

A third response to labor claims of injustice is the adoption of justice as a central task of management. Managers and owners are charged with balancing a multitude of interests within the organization. A just workplace is one in which control is exerted over various factions that may try to dominate organizational resources. A management perspective may argue that without some form of control, organizations can become places where individuals are swept aside in favor of aggressive attempts to increase profits.

**Working Families**

From the labor perspective, "working families" has become a key motivational phrase for labor struggles. The campaigns of labor unions and associations are framed in terms that expand the notion of who is benefiting from victories. Collective bargaining and strikes are understood as battles not only for each union member, but for the families supported by their work. Working families is a difficult value to argue against, as family often connotes love, togetherness, caring, and other positive image. Management would be hard-pressed to suggest that they do not care about working families or that families are not a valid part of negotiation. One of the interviews conducted in this research illuminated a management perspective that the labor invocation of working families is often perceived as a paradox by management. The invocation of family is used in two
specific circumstances: 1) when workers feel the need for increased earning potential including better wages and benefits, and 2) when more leisure time is desired. The interviewee, a general manager of a unionized plant, suggested that better earning potential can be achieved through overtime wages and wage increases. Overtime wages allow the company to increase productivity while workers gain more money. This is considered the best possible solution given that wage increases usually occur in contract negotiations. But the interviewee commented that more overtime is in direct conflict with increased leisure time, another issue when the family is invoked. Therefore, according to the interviewee, the working family agenda needs to be more clearly defined. It is either financially driven or driven by a desire to have more time away from work. The interviewee also suggested that wages and benefits meant to benefit working families must remain few and far between from the management perspective. Wage and benefit concessions are considered as precedent and can not be negotiated frequently. Management has the responsibility of honestly evaluating company risks that labor does not always consider. To give labor whatever they want whenever they want it is not good business because it fails to recognize a larger responsibility to the community and other stakeholders.

The “working families” agenda could also be interpreted as labor paternalism. The invocation of “family” suggests that working individuals provide for groups that rely on their income. The fact that the AFL-CIO has adopted this slogan also indicates that the organization is qualified to speak on behalf of all of these families. There is assumed knowledge not only of what families require, but also of what a “family” is. In the past, family may have included a considerable gender bias that assumed women (mothers)
were reliant on working men to provide food and shelter. More detailed analysis could clarify labor uses of family and whether these uses include a gender bias and account for the diversity of families associated with the labor movement.

**Voice**

"Voice" provides an interesting value for analysis from a management perspective. From the labor perspective, voice refers to influence in democratic society and within organizations. Voice is evident in various forms of political influence and the right to organize and bargain collectively within workplaces. Labor voice is considered a fundamental right that protects other employee rights and secures an acceptable standard of living.

While voice is not often considered a management value, there are many possible interpretations of employee voice from a management perspective. One interviewee recommended a management “open-door” policy substitute for more formal versions of voice. Relying on an informal policy of communication may help break down traditional management employee tensions by increasing availability and stressing the importance of employee input. Employee voice can also be formalized in meetings that provide instant feedback to employee concerns or can remain anonymous through suggestion boxes. Both formal and informal modes of voice attempt to provide a medium through which employees can communicate with managers in hopes of influencing the conditions of work.

Another management conception of voice for employee includes the varying types of employee participation programs found in workplaces. Employee stock

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ownership, cooperatives, work groups, team structures, labor unions, and other types of employee participation programs each provide a degree of employee voice in influencing their jobs and shaping the future of the workplace. From the management perspective, each program is established to ensure that employees are empowered to make decisions that affect their daily work lives. While managers often struggle balancing employee participation with management guidance, empowering employees is perceived as a key strategy in limiting management stress and improving employee interest in their jobs. Providing some form of voice through participation ultimately increases organizational productivity as workers gain more control over their jobs. The underlying assumption is that engaged employees enjoy higher job satisfaction and commitment to organizational goals which results in more effective and productive organizations.

A final interpretation of voice from the management perspective comes from the practices of socially responsible companies including Smith and Hawken, Esprit de Corp, and Patagonia. According to Hawken (1987), these three companies use a weekly “5-15 report” that takes five minutes to read and 15 minutes to write. “5-15 reports” consist of three parts including an account of what the company did for the week, a description of the employee’s morale, and thoughts regarding the overall improvement of the employee’s job, department or company. As Hawken (1987) suggests, the reports, “give managers the information they need to provide the right kind of support to the people reporting to them. At Smith and Hawken, for example, there is a tacit understanding that we will take no longer than a week to act on all ideas, suggestions, and problems presented in the 5-15s. To delay action would undermine the effectiveness of the process, ultimately turning it into a demoralizing exercise” (p. 2). The “5-15 report” is a
form of voice that offers employees a safe means by which to influence their day to day activities and comfort within an organization. *An obvious criticism from the labor perspective would be that the reports focus on micro-level workplace comforts and really do not empower employees within the broader scope of organizational activity. A true commitment to voice frees employees to take control of their jobs and contribute to organizational decisions.*

Analysis reveals justice, working families, and voice as values central to the labor movement. Labor values respond to an overall perception that companies ignore the interests of labor and focus on maximizing profits. Justice addresses economic and power distributions that favor ownership and management despite the production of workers. The activities of the labor movement are rationalized by a concern for families and a demand for political and workplace influence. This influence revolves around the concept of “voice” within political and organizational contexts as a means to secure justice and gain benefits for families.

The socially responsible/management perspective on labor values is based on a stakeholder model that balances the interests of many parties inside and outside an organization. The stakeholder has been addressed by numerous organizational scholars and serves as a powerful critique of labor insistence on constant concessions. Management cannot base decisions solely on the impacts to employees. Such decisions would be monolithic and fail to recognize the multi-dimensional reality of modern organizations. The stakeholder model is effective primarily because it allows management to prioritize concerns that are more fundamental to the success of the organization. Labor is never dismissed, but may fall within a “hierarchy of
commitments" (Cheney, in press, p. 8) that fluctuates depending on certain market-driven concerns and circumstances. Addressing multiple stakeholders helps the organization flourish and ultimately benefits all interested parties. The following table summarizes labor values, representative labor quotes, and the labor and management perspectives on those values.
## LABOR VALUES

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<th>VALUES</th>
<th>REPRESENTATIVE QUOTE</th>
<th>LABOR PERSPECTIVE</th>
<th>MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>&quot;We will sound our trumpets of equality and justice and freedom and those walls will come tumbling down because we are blue collar workers, white collar workers, new collar workers, and no collar workers and we are marching together.&quot; -Richard Trumka, MLK Holiday Observance, January 15, 2001</td>
<td>Justice is the result of unchecked, global corporate growth. Corporations seek to exploit markets, including labor markets, and cause great wealth disparity in the process.</td>
<td>Labor claims of corporate bred injustice are extreme. Companies do not have the ability to drastically effect or cure the injustices in the world.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;Each generation, it is said, must fight the struggle for justice a new and today, working families here in our country and around the world find themselves in a common struggle for basic decency in the new global economy.&quot; John Sweeney, Provost Distinguished Lecture Series, SUNY at Stonybrook, April 25, 2000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Business practices are not just or unjust. They are driven by market principles that set parameters for success or failure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working Families</td>
<td>&quot;We want you to be writing about a few other &quot;w's&quot;—working families, the wages they earn, the world economy where too few are prospering, and how we are helping workers win a voice in their workplaces.&quot; -John Sweeney, National Press Club, February 5, 2001</td>
<td>The labor movement seeks to improve the lives of working families. Labor activity seeks provision for families and is not guided by greed or a search for more power.</td>
<td>Working families are an important concern for management as well as labor—we all have families and want them to be OK.</td>
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<td>&quot;As you know, we in the union movement are struggling mightily to restore the voice of those working families in our workplaces, our communities, our government and the new global economy, an dour work depends a lot on your work.&quot; John Sweeney, NLRB Conference, October 19, 2000</td>
<td></td>
<td>The invocation of working families is a paradox. Does working families mean unions require more material benefits for their families, or more time to spend with their families? These are exclusive.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Voice</td>
<td>“In fact, today more than ever, working people are struggling for their right to choose a voice in the workplace—their right to organize into unions.” -Chavez-Thompson, Speech given to Martin Luther King Celebration, January 14, 2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Voice, in many different forms, is a fundamental right in democratic societies as well as organizations. Voice is concerned with a right to organize and bargain collectively with employers. Voice is protected through collective action.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Voice can be provided in several ways and does not require an adversarial management–labor relationship. Voice can be implemented in both formal and informal ways. Corporations are not democratic places and voice is reserved for the individuals responsible for the company’s well-being.</td>
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CHAPTER NINE: SECONDARY ANALYSIS OF ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES AND VALUES-RELATED DISCOURSE

Extension of the management perspective with interviews

The fourth goal of this research aims to extend the dialogue on the values professed by socially responsible companies and labor unions. The extension of values and values related discourse supplements textual analysis by helping to detail the management and labor perspectives that have been suggested previously. Within the management perspective, interviews and socially responsible literature reveal insights into the nature of organizational values, employee participation and the appropriateness of union representation. Within a labor perspective, interviews and labor literature help to clarify the labor insistence on union representation as a form of employee participation. Drawing from these ideas, this study now asks, might unions serve as better forms of employee participation than management sponsored programs?

The textual analysis of socially responsible and labor values is supplemented by an expansion of the management and labor perspective provided in interviews conducted with organizational members and documents commenting on CSR from decidedly management or labor perspectives. These supplemental sources are used to “expand the orbit” (Cheney, in press) of organizational discourse and clarify the interpretive perspectives provided of each value term. The interviews were conducted with individuals that can be labeled as a manager, an employee of a socially responsible company, and a labor advocate. The interviews and documents are analyzed for discourse relevant to the nature and use of organizational values, the nature and reality of employee participation, and the right to organize and the appropriateness of union representation.
The nature and use of organizational values

Interviews and documents reveal that there may be high levels of similarity in public statements of organizational values between socially responsible companies and non-socially responsible companies. A difference exists in the amount of emphasis placed on these values as guides for organizationally sponsored programs and policies. Interviews were conducted with management-level personnel of a non-socially responsible company and a socially responsible company. In chronicling the interviews, a concerted effort was made to reflect the tone of the interviewee in order to maintain the integrity of the perceptions the interviewees represented.

The interviewee from the non-socially responsible company is a Vice President and General Manager of a large, unionized locker manufacturing company in the Midwest. The interviewee stressed the importance of organizational values as a general guide that structures organizational decisions. This company’s mission statement consist of “Good People, Quality Products, and Profitability; Our sights remain focused on quality first, bearing in mind that satisfied customers and ongoing improvement are the primary reason for our continued growth.” These values are the result of the small-town nature of the community that has experienced economic ups and downs. The history of the company and the community have influenced a realistic approach to the business in general and the business’s ability to contribute to the community. Therefore, grandiose value claims have no place for the organization. Values fall between a realistic and idealistic representation of what the company hopes to accomplish. This realism is evident in the company’s explanation of its primary value, quality. “Deliver a defect-free
product on time to meet our customer requirements.” This statement is seen as a realistic, attainable goal that is easy for which entire organization to understand and strive for.

The other management interviewee is an Assistant Vice President of a global company that has been perceived as both socially responsible and non-socially responsible. The accusations of irresponsibility are often the result of the company’s energy division that continues to strive to lessen their impact on the environment. The company has been widely recognized as a values-driven organization that provides an excellent work environment and a commendable philanthropy program. Organizational values include integrity, boundarylessness, customer-centered vision, diverse teams, and quality. The interviewee felt these values played an integral role in the company for a period of time. Values would take hold following public statements by the organization’s highly charismatic CEO, but tend to fade away in time. The interviewee relayed a story of how an emphasis on “quality” led to the design of a new policy that required managers to reach a certain goal. Once the goals were met, the emphasis on quality disappeared.

The interviewee suggested that values flow top-down, and are often meant as an inspirational tool. The values originate from the CEO, and a willingness to always search for and apply the best ideas regardless of the source. Top level executives appear extremely committed to organizational values, but the values tend to lose influence as they reach the lower levels of the organization. These statements raise an issue of how values can permeate large organizations. There are several “layers” of the organization that make it difficult for values to inspire employees that have become accustomed to completing specific functions. At times, certain values can collide within the organization as one group feels primarily responsible for quality while another may be more focused.
on whatever the customer needs. Commitments to different values limit communication by forcing groups to concern themselves with their own business and contribute problems to other groups.

**Employee participation**

*Organizational value commitments appear to influence management perspectives on employee participation.* The general manager of the manufacturing plant stressed the importance of “formal” and “informal” participation and communication. “Formal” participation in the form of teams, quality circles, TQM, and other participatory practices, all disappear eventually while informal participation is constant. The interviewee suggested that “employees have good memories,” and implementation of participatory programs gives the employees “labels to resist.” When programs are highly touted and fail to accomplish specified goal, they “leave a bad taste” and lead to resistance in the future. Instead of introducing highly-publicized programs, the interviewee recommends a simple, straightforward approach to participation that emphasizes how the entire organization will benefit. Programs should never appear as if they are primarily for the good of the employee, but should be described to employees as benefiting the entire organization. Feedback on participatory programs should always be requested and taken into consideration. The interviewee mentioned that the longest lasting participatory programs – formalized participation in co-committees (Credit Union, 401k, Safety, golf league) – have been successful as “shop and office” employees realize that many of their concerns are extremely similar.
The interviewee believed that informal participation was more reflective of the realistic goals of the organization and were productive in reducing the adversarial nature of management—labor relations. The manager’s job is to seek new ways to “bridge the gap” that may be the result of previous conflicts. Different forms of participation under different labels come and go, but informal avenues of communication can provide instant participation for individual employees. The interviewee commented that mandatory feedback can lead to disingenuous responses and resistance. By employing an “open-door” policy or maintaining a presence on the shop floor, managers can foster a sense of “team” that does not require reorganization or the launch of a new program.

The interviewee also commented that some participatory programs originate as informal policies and progressively become acceptable, formal programs. “Testimonials” refer to informal solicitation of feedback for supervisors, where the supervisor asks that each employee provide one suggestion on how that supervisor can help the employee perform his or her job better. Testimonials are conducted weekly, on company time, and have become effective means of improving employee morale. The interviewee plans on asking supervisors to recommend written recordings of the testimonial in order to gauge what types of things are discussed and how the supervisors and company act on suggestions. The “testimonial” is similar to the “5-15” report of socially responsible companies and really seems to function as individual, shop-floor “voice.” It will be interesting to follow how the testimonials are received, and to examine the testimonials in comparison to comments made in union meetings and within collective bargaining negotiations.
The interviewee from the socially responsible company suggested that despite commitments to empowerment, authentic participation often gets lost due to the size of the company. Participation is attempted through a cross-functional team structure that includes individuals from three different departments. The interviewee suggested that the teams were implemented to improve communication between departments that were previously isolated from each other. The teams are assigned on a project basis, although members of specific departments always work together.

The interviewee pointed out several problems that have arisen within the team structure. First and foremost, **the different departments often have different goals that become highly apparent during the team interactions.** One department seeks to maximize profit and reduce cost by "closing the deal," while other team members seek to minimize organizational liability and make sure that the team keeps the best interest of the organization in mind. These opposing goals spawn power struggles that are usually addressed by senior-most members of the teams. **Therefore, participation of lower-level employees is short-lived and often overridden by the decisions of higher-level employees.** This "hierarchy within the team" leads to skepticism and hinders some employees from providing insight and feedback. The team structure described by the interviewee is one that increases the participation of a select few employees and can actually further the divide between employees of different departments.

**The appropriateness of unions**

Both interviewees were aware of the labor unions within their companies but had different levels of knowledge about the activities of the unions and management perceptions of them. Interviewee #1, the manager, commented that unions can both
benefit and harm organizations. The interviewee suggested that there is value to having a formal relationship with people that directly affect a product. Unions provide employees formalized input into what is taking place on the shop floor and on various means of production. *This formalized relationship also harms the organization by tying management into precedent-setting contracts. Contracts often provide little wiggle room and limit the options of management in certain crisis situations.* The interviewee believes management prerogative is important in directing the day to day activities of the company. Changes considered for the good of the entire organization may not be viable due to a union contract.

*Another benefit of union representation is the protection afforded to workers.*

The interviewee commented that union representation assures that management will address issues that could be set aside under other participation programs. The downside of this protection is that unions and management can become mired negotiating “frivolous” things. Negotiations with unions take up large amounts of time and resources, and often focus on minor or major concessions that management feels unable to give. One example in the interviewee’s company concerned a union proposal to increase worker wages some $40 million over four years. The proposal was considered unrealistic and the interviewee told the union that such a proposal could not be commented on due to inability of the organization to meet such a raise. This inability to respond to the proposal sparked unfair labor charges that drained organizational time and money to respond to. Due to the external concerns of management, contract negotiations can stall and tensions rise that make both sides more defensive. While a contract was
finally agreed upon, the interviewee felt that certain union actions harmed negotiations and forced management to take hard-line stances on labor requests.

*A final benefit of union representation discussed by the interviewee is the positive flow of information provided to employees by unions.* Unions gather and distribute large amounts of information about organizational policies and goals. Non-union workers often must take individual action to become informed of their rights within the workplace. Union employees are kept aware of national and regional legislation, as well as changes in organizational policies.*Such information can have damaging effects when used to abuse organizational systems.* The interviewee related the story of workers who, while not wearing safety equipment, became injured on the job. One man suffered a small cut to his hand while not wearing gloves. Instead of going to the hospital and having the stitches covered under the medical policy, the man let a scar form and won a settlement from the company. Company procedures were in place that should handle such an occurrence, but the worker was aware that a work-related blemish would win him a legal settlement from the company.

The interviewee from the socially responsible company was less positive about the role of labor unions. It was suggested that unions can be their own worst enemy by pushing the company for more and more concessions. The company places a premium on shareholder returns, and unions can interfere with the companies' ability to provide maximum returns to shareholders. Unions drive up labor costs and limit returns. To this extent, the organization often aggressively resists the unions and in certain cases, developed outsourcing contracts that ships labor to other counties. Interestingly, the "exploitation" of labor markets was a pronounced theme in labor claims for justice. *The*
information provided by interviewee #2, the employee of the socially responsible company, indicates that globalization has damaging effects on labor unions. Pushing for higher wages and better benefits forces companies to slash labor costs and eliminates union jobs altogether.

**Labor Insistence on Union Representation**

At the same time innovative business leaders and organizational scholars create and describe employee participation programs that benefit employees and organizations, the labor movement remains committed to unions as the most effective means of employee participation. *Interviews and analysis of labor perspective documents reveal that the insistence on union representation is the result of at least three beliefs: 1) unions provide the most protection for the rights and interests of workers; 2) this protection is necessary because management, whether socially responsible or not, is seldom willing to share organizational control with employees; and 3) workplace democracy is a fundamental goal of labor and union representation provides the most democratic form of employee participation.* Labor interviews were conducted with two labor advocates, a president of a UAW local in the Midwest, and Liza Featherstone, a freelance writer and critic that follows labor issues and authored the article that inspired this research.

**Union representation as a form of worker protection**

Within AFL-CIO documents, “protection” is used in reference to pay checks, social security, pensions, the environment, wages and benefits, workplace safety standards and job security. Union negotiations and contracts legally bind employers to
maintain certain workplace standards. When contracts are broken or not negotiated in "good will," unions participate in collective actions that exact financial tolls on their employers.

The notion of "protection" was mentioned by three of four interviewees in this research. Interviewees used the term loosely, without specific reference to what exactly was being protected. The UAW president commented that a union was empowering because it protected employees. Featherstone argued that unions are an inherent acknowledgement that "people in power don't do anything unless they are forced to," and that union representation is necessary because management will find ways to abuse power. Such abuses of power necessitate unionized protection and functions as a check on the distribution of wealth by the organization.

The general manager of the unionized plant also acknowledged that unions protect employees from organizations that see employees as expendable assets that can be quick fixes to cut costs and increase profits. It must also be noted that the general manager felt that union protection provided job security to incompetent and lazy workers that hurt the credibility of the union and the productivity of the organization. Union protection is meaningful as long as the unions take responsibility to monitor their ranks for individuals that are not necessarily worthy of that protection. The underscoring of the need for protection reveals the labor viewpoint that organizational control rests squarely with management circles that often fail to recognize labor's contribution to organizational health and wealth. At the same time, protecting workers is not a good in itself and includes a responsibility for labor to pro-actively manage themselves.
Labor beliefs about organizational control

It was shown previously that one socially responsible value is an emphasis on the importance of the customer/client. A "socially responsible" management perspective may attach the same amount of importance to the employees as to customers. Hawken (1987) writes:

A company as a whole, however, does not require control. Rather, it requires people who are able to act independently and spontaneously on its behalf at the same time as they go about their individual jobs. That won't happen if you deal with employees as underlings. Better you should treat them as you would your most loyal customers...Instead, see your job as providing your people, like your customers, with the support and service they need to function as effectively as possible. (p 21)

Hawken's insight is interesting because it lends support to the idea that "customers come first" is a highly acceptable, even obvious, management assumption. If employers really want to be good to their employees, they need to show them the same amount of respect and support they would show to customers. Hawken's comments beg a question about the viability of such a workplace model given the emphasis on customer service that pervades the business. It seems questionable that employers would allow employees the same amount of leeway in feedback about the organization that remains protected under the rubric of "customer service." Deetz (1995) argues along more feasible lines when he suggests that workplaces should seek to treat every employee as an owner. Workplace environments that treat employees as owners maximize employee engagement, responsibility, and accountability for employee decisions.

While Hawken touts the benefits of socially responsible employment practices, Maran (1995) provides a less encouraging image of socially responsible employment. Since 1987, Maran worked for the socially responsible businesses Banana Republic,
Smith and Hawken, and Working Assets in various writing, editing, and communication capacities. She successfully negotiated a director of social mission position at Smith and Hawken and developed various rationale for how her work had made political and social impacts with consumers: "What better place for consciousness-raising than in the workplace" (p. 42). Maran suggests that socially responsible companies are more concerned about external stakeholders than employees. A model of socially responsible capitalism relies heavily on consumers as agents that make the organization's social mission possible. She writes, "Companies like Smith and Hawken and Working Assets offer their customers a real alternative: a chance to vote with their wallets. But when it comes to their own employees, the best Paul and Peter can do is tweak the formula. The laws of capitalism still apply" (p. 45).

Paul Mishler, a labor educator, echoes the sentiments of Maran in suggesting that socially responsible employers have a great deal in common with non-socially responsible employers. Mishler told Featherstone (1999), "'Even employers who want to do good end up acting like employers. That's why you need unions.'" As for employers who claim that they already treat their employees so well that a union isn't necessary, Mishler says, "That's like asking, would you need democracy if you always have a nice president? It's a silly question. The fact is that dictators always end up doing bad things, and employers are the same. Without a union [an SR workplace] is a benevolent dictatorship" (p. 54). The reality underlying both Maran and Mishler's comments is the labor belief that imbalances in organizational power and control must be acknowledged and adjusted to address the interests of the workforce.
The "laws of capitalism," with their reliance on private ownership, can be said to include certain realities that predict elements of the ownership/management-labor relationship. These realities include ownership and management power and control that often translates into unfettered management prerogative. Organizational power and control over employees is something, as Maran and Mishler propose, that remains constant in both socially responsible and non-socially responsible companies. The two labor interviewees both commented that unions are primarily resisted because they attempt to realign organizational control. The UAW president commented that employers oppose unions so they can "control their employees and control their profits and losses" Featherstone (2001) elaborated that although unions can cut into company profits, control remains more important than financial concerns. Featherstone explained that control is part of a capitalist ideology – owners do not like to have employees or the public telling them what to do. Just as labor commits to an ideology that includes the redistribution of wealth and economic justice, expectations of control are nothing more than management ideological commitments. Organizational control is defended not only as a right of capitalist societies, but as a prerequisite to flexibility that allows companies to survive and flourish in changing and even volatile environments. There are obviously elements of truth in these arguments as evidenced by certain democratic organizations that have struggled to remain focused on organizational values amidst market-driven pressures (Cheney, 1999). Nevertheless, the labor perspective stresses the democratic ideals inherent in union representation as an effective means for realigning organizational control to benefit employees.
The role of union representation in advancing democratic principles in the workplace

Democracy plays a major role in the labor movement's insistence on union representation within modern organizations. But democracy within the workplace is somewhat marginalized if the collective interests of workers are not recognized in broader political arenas. Sweeney (February 5, 2001) hints this in comments to the National Press Club: "And we believe that American should practice democracy here at home – from our workplaces to our polling places – and practice simple decency abroad."

From the labor perspective, unions are perceived as democratic organizations that both
1) free workers to participate in democratic political processes outside the organization, and 2) "democratize" organizations.

The labor movement has prided itself on improving the standards of living for millions of workers. In the United States, this pride is evident in the common AFL-CIO bumper sticker that reads, "From the people that brought you the weekend." Besides the increase in worker leisure time, the labor movement has been motivated by a desire to involve workers in democratic processes. Peter Kellman (1999), an employee of the Program on Corporations, Law, and Democracy (POCLAD), argues that current models of work hinder certain sections of society from fully participating in the democratic process. He tells At Work magazine, "What I would suggest today that we set our goal the 32-hour work week, four eight hour days. And we call the fifth day a Democracy Day, when everybody would be free to participate in governmental processes. I don't think the corporate lobbyists would last very long if once a week in our legislative halls thousands of people showed up." Kellman may be considered unrealistic or extremist by
some, but he makes intriguing points about what it means to participate in democracy. He continues, "Because of their present economic situation and the whole nature of society, most people are now denied the ability to participate in the political process, except basically to vote every two or four years. How can you talk about having a democracy unless people have the time to participate in it?" (p. 19-20). From the labor perspective, influence in democratic political structures can originate and gain momentum within work organizations. Collective activity within companies can carry over into society and establish an influential political agenda for labor.

In an interview with Leonard (1999), Nancy Mills, the director of AFL-CIO's Center for Workplace Democracy, states,

First of all, we recognize that the term 'workplace democracy' is oxymoronic as it seems. We know that American workplaces are not terribly democratic workplaces, but it does represent our vision for what workplaces ought to become, not only for the good of workers but also consumers, owners and managers as well. So what do we mean by it? We define 'workplace democracy' as essentially the process through which workers, individually and collectively, influence decisions at work that are usually reserved for managers to make. (p.54)

Mills explains that workplace democracy allows workers to create and select training and education opportunities, organize work structures, decide on workplace technology, influence investment decisions, and have a say in business strategy. Mills admits that workplace democracy is time consuming, but insists the results of democracy "...are better because people feel a sense of ownership of those decisions, they feel a sense of commitment and loyalty to the company, as well as to their union, and that's something companies need" (p. 63).

Workplace democracy is an on-going process predicated on the conviction that organizations can be persuaded (through means of varying agitation) to respect the rights
of workers. In a model democratic workplace, workers would be guaranteed rights similar to those granted to citizens under the Constitution. Trumka and Kellman reflect these wishes in separate statements about workplace democracy. Trumka (January 15, 2001) states, “I’d like to make one final point, and it is this – we also believe voting in a union representation campaign should be just as precious and protected as voting in any other kind of election.” Kellman (1999) details Trumka’s point of view when he proposes, “I think people should have freedom of association. If five people want to form a union, they should do that. And the employer should recognize them based on their strength. But they shouldn’t have to go through an election process to prove they belong to an organization, especially not an election process that includes employer free speech” (p. 19). Kellman (1999) frames workplace democracy as a struggle for civil rights in the face of employer privilege. *Analogous to previous civil rights movements, the labor movement seeks freedom and protection from powers and structure capable of undermining their interests.*

Interviews with advocates of the management and labor perspectives were conducted and analyzed as supplemental data. The management interviews were organized around the nature and uses of organizational values, perceptions of employee participation, and the appropriateness of labor unions. The main findings of the analysis include:

- Values in socially responsible companies often flow top-down, and commitment to those values may be weaker among lower-level employees.
• Formalized employee participation takes many forms and can lead to resistance by employees; informal participation is a constant and is productive in reducing the adversarial nature of management-labor relations.

• "Teams" can become hierarchical when members hold different goals. This can lead to skepticism about the authenticity of the team.

• Unions provide formalized input, protection for workers, and improved information flow from the top to the bottom of the organization.

• These benefits can harm the organization when unproductive employees are protected and information is used to manipulate organizational policies.

The labor interviews were analyzed for arguments used in support of union representation as the best form of employee participation. The main headings include:

• Unions protect worker interest by formally recognizing that management and labor interests are often incompatible.

• Unions are concerned with providing some measure of organizational control to employees.

• Union representation is an attempt to implement democratic practices in the workplace.
CHAPTER TEN: DISCUSSION OF THE FUNCTION OF VALUES AND VALUES-RELATED DISCOURSE IN DISPUTES BETWEEN SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE COMPANIES AND LABOR UNIONS

Insights into the functions of values and values-related discourse in the socially responsible company-labor relationship

The analysis of socially responsible and labor values, and the extension of discourse on organizational values, employee participation and labor unions, provides several insights into the function of values and values-related discourse in the socially responsible company—labor union relationship. The early speculation of this research predicted some degree of similarity between the espoused values of socially responsible companies and labor unions. It was believed that because these organizations publicly express social commitments and were “values driven,” there would exist willingness on both sides to bridge the traditional, adversarial relationship that exists between management and labor. Socially responsible businesses often claim a type of enlightened management style that respects employees and offers a fulfilling work environment. This sympathy toward the concerns of the employee would appear to serve as fertile ground for the establishment of labor unions that have met with immediate resistance in organizing attempts. The following insights based on the previous analysis seek to explain the nature of disputes and future relations between socially responsible companies and labor unions.

Different values

It is obvious from the textual analysis of values and value-related discourse that socially responsible values and labor unions commit to drastically different values that are representative of organizational nature and goals. But it is also important to draw some general conclusions and speculation about how these values function within the
socially responsible company–labor dynamic. The findings suggest that socially responsible companies straddle a line between respect for the individual employee and the coordination of organizational activity for the good of the organization. Values like respect and diversity signal socially responsible employers recognize the need for individualism within the workplace. The emphasis on individualism could be rooted in the early American values of equality, individual freedom and inalienable rights. Americans have come to embrace freedom from oppression and, in theory at least, a sense of equality among individuals. Socially responsible companies have followed suit by publicly committing to respect and diversity.

At the same time, commitments to teamwork, culture, and the customer represent a coordinated focus that make socially responsible companies “fulfilling” places to work. Values that emphasize shared commitments allow employees to be part of something special that other companies may not offer. A shared sense of commitment indicates an organization with clear direction and an organized plan to accomplish goals. Employees are valued for their individual qualities and their ability to work with larger, organizational goals in mind. Respecting individuals while working for a common goal is certainly admirable, and serves as a model employment philosophy. Employers that can recognize the individuality of organizational members will appear to have improved on purely task-driven management styles.

The combination of the “personal” with the “organizational” is similar to strategies involved in the “rhetoric of union busting” as described by Breck, Frey, and Botan (1985). Breck, Frey, and Botan (1985) found that a rhetorical union-busting strategy includes the blending of “the two roles of objective observer and paternalistic
guardian in such a way that they constitute one unified, objective, interpersonal relationship" (p. 62). The case examples and values discussed previously show that socially responsible companies rely heavily on their paternalistic identity and cultivating a sense of consensus through personal and social values. It is proposed here that the result is a ready-made argument against unions that emphasizes socially responsible companies are places of consensus and coordination, not divisiveness and conflict.

_Socially responsible invocations of “coordinated activity,” in all its paternal forms, are a far cry from the labor movement’s insistence on “collective activity.”_

Value analysis suggests the labor movement is less reliant on values that stress individualism. Although documents did reveal the importance of individual dignity, labor values were more likely to emphasize the power of collective action as protection of individual rights. _The inference drawn here is that differences in conceptions of the nature of collective activity could be a primary point of conflict between socially responsible companies and labor unions._ Companies work hard to create “cultures” and “environments” that benefit, engage, and satisfy employees. Employees are expected to work together for the good of the company while retaining individual identity. A socially responsible employer often projects the image that employees are valuable assets that, in collaboration with like-minded individuals, can accomplish organizational goals in a supportive environment. Employees have valid reason for doubting an organization and management that balances individualism, social commitments, and coordinated activity.

_Labor unions perceive of collective action as an empowering force with the ability to affect meaningful change in the nature of work and the material benefits provided by work._ Collective activity is aimed at the good of workers and may or may not be relevant.
to some greater, organizational good. *Balancing individualism and devotion to organizational goals is less important than the redistribution of wealth and power.*

Union members sacrifice the individualism of a coordinated environment in order to band together and collectively campaign and bargain for group rights. In Leonard (1999), Dean summarizes the labor perspective on collective activity:

> Only when people come together within a common occupation, industry, or worksite can they negotiate wage and benefit standards. In addition, our success in building strong organizations for working people translates into making a difference within our communities and in our overall political process. Organizations representing the collective interests of employees provide a counterbalance to private interests within the political process. (p. 5)

*Accomplishing substantial change requires focus on collective goals that filter down to individual workers and their families while continuously establishing foundations for future labor gains.*

**Different perceptions on the nature of employee participation**

The differing perceptions on the nature of coordinated or collective activity indicate different attitudes from the socially responsible and labor perspectives toward the role of employee participation in the workplace. From the socially responsible perspective, employee participation is a win-win proposition that serves bottom-line goals like productivity, quality, and efficiency while engaging employees and offering means of influence. *Labor may embrace the same values, but insists on joint power in the decisions that guide the organization and argues that participation is not a substitute for protection.*

*Labor advocates seek to create an organization within an organization that functions as a check on management power and control over employees. These parallel organizations share some goals but differ on others. The possibility exists that the*
struggle for the creation of a parallel organization is guided by an inherent pessimism, or realism, about management's ability to act in the best interest of employees. Management is not always considered ill willed or manipulative, but does need a constant reminder that employees have an indispensable stake in company activity. As interviewees suggested, union representation establishes protection, contractual accountability, improves information flow, and provides a formal grievance procedure when management oversteps boundaries or fails to consider the interests of workers.

Different origins and flow of values

The analysis of values in formal organizational communication and interviews also reveals the possibility that socially responsible companies and labor unions vary in the ways that values are created and flow through an organization. Most organizational values are believed to originate in a top-down manner, transferring from high level executives to the “masses” of the organization. In most cases, this top-down flow of values occurs when company founders transfer their values to the organization and make them guiding principles for future decision making. For socially responsible companies, the same pattern holds true. Socially responsible founders, though, are likely to hold socially-driven, personal values that transfer to socially responsible policies. These founders take exception to traditional business practices and implement values and policies that redefine the relationship between business and society in paternal terms. Professed values become more pronounced when the founders of organizational leadership are charismatic and highly accessible. The interviewee from the socially responsible company commented that employees had almost instant access to the CEO...
through web casts of speeches and public appearances. The high-energy of the CEO serves as temporary motivation for the interviewee by convincing her she worked for a good company. This charismatic leadership adds immediate credibility to organizational values by stimulating the emotions of the employees. The resulting employee attitude is motivation in accordance with organizational values and goals. This value dynamic can be used to argue against unions that often advocate a set of values incompatible with those of the organization. *When employees accept the management premise that the organization remains committed to values, unions can be painted as obstacles to the fulfillment of the organization.*

*Labor values, similar to those of the socially responsible companies, originate from a sense that something is “wrong” with traditional business practices, but appear to flow in a bottom-up manner.* The labor movement has less freedom in choosing values because the values are implemented in reaction to management activity. In general, the values of the labor movement have been grounded in a history of perceived exploitation of workers by ownership and management. Personal values are replaced with values that react to this perceived exploitation and capture the collective nature of labor activity. Because values are not handed down, though, they take on increased significance as motivation for further activity. It is proposed here that labor does not accept that values are simply guiding principles for the organization. Rather, they are beliefs about the reality of work that require persistent challenges to management power until every worker’s rights are protected.

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14 Jaffe and Scott (1998) also discuss “value workshops” that have gained popularity. Workshops bring top-level managers together to debate and vote on the values that are most important and relevant to the
The role of organizational values in organizational reputation, self-image, and identity

One of the most interesting insights apparent from this research is the relationship between organizational values, organizational reputation, self-image, identity and corporate social responsibility. In essence, socially responsible companies attempt to humanize capitalism by creating holistic organizations that rally around admirable causes like the environment, philanthropy, fair trade, and worker-friendly cultures. Company value commitments and social policies show company willingness to consider the welfare of society while returning a profit to shareholders. Organizational values, then, function as windows to organizational self-image that reveal enlightened, socially responsible capitalists who perceive their companies as an improvement over non-socially responsible companies. Within the socially responsible company – labor relationship, organizational self-image plays a major role in arguments against unions in socially responsible workplaces.

The argument presented here is that the self-image of socially responsible companies differentiates socially responsible labor disputes as distinct from disputes within non-socially responsible companies. As Featherstone (2001) suggested in the interview, many of the more authentic socially responsible companies like Ben and Jerry’s, The Body Shop, Patagonia, etc., were formed as an “implicit critique” of capitalism. Socially responsible businesses take exception to established rules of consumption and exploitation embraced as competition in traditional capitalist circles. By departing from irresponsible business practices, socially responsible companies account for the welfare of society and redefine the paternal organization in mostly positive terms. It is suggested here that labor unions and their challenges to management organization.
decision-making act as a direct affront on the reputation, self-image and identity of socially responsible companies that perceive themselves as balancing the interests of internal and external stakeholders.

Featherstone (2001) commented that socially responsible companies can feel betrayed by employees seeking union representation. Union agitation strikes at the identity of management, ownership, and even the mission of the company. Labor disputes become increasingly personal because many founders of socially progressive companies hope to effect social improvements through capitalist endeavors. A union drive is perceived as an “offensive critique” of socially responsible business. This perception is mildly ironic given that socially responsible business practices originated as a type of critique of capitalism. The impetus of the labor movement, as socially responsible business leaders should be aware, is disenchantment with the status quo.

Labor questions the “right” and “wrong” of certain business practices as defined by the socially responsible movement, just as socially responsible advocates had done before to more traditional businesses.

Featherstone (2001) provides deeper insight into the self-image and identity of socially responsible businesses in her discussion of the term “social responsibility.” She writes, “The buzzword itself is revealing. ‘Responsibility’ suggests that, like parents or benign dictators, people running businesses should make compassionate and sensible use of power – while the fact of that power should go unchallenged” (p. 54). Claims of social responsibility indicate a new wave of paternalism that combines unquestioned power with assumed knowledge about what is good for society. Socially responsible businesses assume to have solutions to problems posed by corporate activity. Challenges to these
solutions such as unions are perceived as “biting the hand that feeds” and are met with righteous indignation from socially responsible companies. Featherstone (1999) comments, “As prescriptions for social change go, then, SR is uninspiring, inadequate, and unambitious. But it’s also a ready-made rationalization for union-busting; after all, if the people running the show are the ones that bear all the responsibility, and are cool progressive folks, why would workers need a voice of their own?” (p. 24). When it comes to challenges from organizing employees, socially responsible companies respond like individuals that become defensive when outside perceptions clash with self-images. It is clear that corporate reputation and identity mean nothing to employees that feel the need to organize in protection of workplace rights and an improved standard of living.
CHAPTER ELEVEN: CONCLUSION

This research has combined well-established methodological approaches to the study of values in organizational discourses. Through interpretive and critical analysis, the values of socially responsible companies and labor have been discussed for their possible role in management–labor disputes. The general importance of organizational values, as well as the nature of employee participation and the appropriateness of union representation were also explored through interviews and documents considered representative of the socially responsible and labor perspectives. A value framework is provided for further study of values in the socially responsible–labor context, and a general understanding of management and labor perspective on values, employee participation and the appropriateness of union representation provide ample heuristic value to the study. Every new field of research requires a first step, and this analysis will be helpful background whenever the paths of socially responsible businesses and labor meet in the future.

The concluding section of this research consists of seven elements: 1) a brief review of the research; 2) limitations in the methodology; 3) practical implications of the research for socially responsible businesses and the CSR movement in general; 4) practical implications for new labor discourses and campaigns; 5) theoretical and practical implications for the study of values in organizational discourses; 6) suggestions for future research; and 7) final thoughts on the importance of critical-interpretive analytical approaches to organizational values and values-related discourses.
Review

This research has analyzed the function of values and values-related discourse in disputes between socially responsible businesses and labor unions. The research is relevant due to the several cases that have occurred in the past 30 years. Self-avowed, socially responsible companies including Esprit de Corps, General Motors, Whole Foods Market, Borders Books, Ben and Jerry's, Noah's Bagels, and Wal-Mart have experienced conflict with workers attempting to gain union representation. While these companies differ in the amount of "responsibility" they practice, each has aligned itself with social responsibility through corporate statements or membership in corporate social responsibility associations. The evidence presented here suggests that socially responsible businesses and labor unions vary significantly in the values and value commitments they profess.

This research uncovered culture, the customer/client, respect, diversity, and teamwork as values that may represent a socially responsible management perspective. Each of these terms reflects the values with which a current or prospective employee of an organization may be expected to identify. A strong organizational culture is perceived as a competitive advantage that helps employees fully engage their work and reach a high level of job satisfaction. It follows that a satisfied employee is a productive employee and that an environment of satisfied employees leads to an organizational productivity. The customer/client is seen as the lifeblood of an organization. Customers and clients purchase organizational goods and services that allow the organization to exist and reach a high level of profitability. The customer often resides at the top of the stakeholder chain and lends a centralized focus to organizational activity. Respect is a highly
ambiguous value that includes respect given to "the dignity of the individual," to
"employees," and to "customers," as well as other stakeholders. The stress on respect,
especially that of individuals, is common sense in a culture that values autonomy, dignity,
and personal rights. Diversity is perceived as a recognition of all the talents and skills
available within an organization. Diversity is advantageous to organizations that can
actively use their range of abilities to support organizational goals. Teams and teamwork
imply a coordination of organizational activity for common goals. Teams allow groups
of individuals to achieve greater ends than can be achieved by individuals alone. Teams
foster a sense of togetherness that increases employee participation and limits the need
for constant management oversight.

*From a critical, labor perspective, the values of culture, customer/client, respect,
diversity, and teamwork can be interpreted as managerial rhetorical devices that create
the image of engaging workplaces and downplay the importance of union representation
in the workplace.* A critical labor perspective concedes management interests and
assumes that those interests will be pursued with little respect for the concerns of labor.
The labor perspective may perceive management commitments to culture as a tool of
corporate power that fails to include labor input. Organizational culture, according to
labor, is created in the daily realities of the organization and cannot be handed down to
employees in corporate documents or through management-created stories and myths.
The customer/client can be perceived as a value that spans the management–labor
boundary. Labor may perceive the customer as an opportunity to blur or shift focus away
from labor concerns. If an organization is focused solely on the interests of the customer,
then labor is subject to minimized value as a stakeholder. The invocation of respect
provides an interesting value to understand from the labor perspective. The labor perspective may make a distinction between authentic organizational commitments to respect and watered-down versions of employee recognition.\textsuperscript{15} Respect takes the form of open dialogue and responsiveness to employee needs and certain workplace rights. To discard these in any shape is a form of disrespect for the dignity of individuals and the work they perform. The labor perspective on diversity holds that union representation is a protection of pluralistic, democratic values that organizations stack under the umbrella term of “diversity.” Diversity is concerned with allowing multiple types of individuals to flourish, not about hiring a heterogeneous workforce. Labor provides more authentic commitments to diversity than other empty uses of the term. From the labor perspective, teams and teamwork are utilized to cultivate an environment of togetherness within organizations. While labor is not opposed to cordial relationships with management, it is committed to union representation as the best form of employee participation. Teams are not bad in themselves, but do not function as viable alternatives to the protection guaranteed by unions.

The values of justice, working families and voice were found to expand the labor perspective proposed by Hansen-Horn and Vasquez (1997). These terms are key labor values that illuminate labor goals and drive labor programs. Justice is regarded as a labor goal on social, economic, and political levels. The labor perspective argues that multinational corporate growth has contributed greatly to injustices as companies search for environmental and labor markets that can be exploited. Working families are seen as the

\textsuperscript{15} During this research, an informal conversation with a friend provided a telling example of the difference between “recognition” and “respect.” The friend spoke of a popcorn machine at his work that was brought out on special occasions or to recognize employees. He mentioned that the popcorn machine seemed to be a powerful tool and that employees came to expect the machine on certain occasions. It is suggested here
fundamental unit of labor activity. Organizing campaigns and labor activity benefits families, and are not motivated by union greed or self-righteousness. Voice functions as the central labor value in this analysis. Voice refers to influence in democratic society and the right to form unions and bargain collectively for improved working conditions. Gaining voice and actively using that voice in the workplace is the primary labor interest.

A management perspective on the labor values justice, working families, and voice, can provide alternative interpretations that shield companies from accusations of ignoring labor issues. Management has at least two ready responses to accusations of propagating injustice. First, companies can point to other companies that appear to be more culpable of exploitation and the advancement of inequality. Second, discourses of the market allow organizations to operate in an arena where claims of moral corruption are weakened. Business is business and the market must remain more powerful than human interest in organizational decision making. Working families is a difficult value for management to argue against. It has been proposed here that management is likely to embrace working families and suggest that current wages and benefits in the majority of occupations are adequate for raising a family. Management provides alternative forms of voice that address worker requests for union representation. Formal and informal communication and participation practices are effective means of empowering workers without the adversarial tendencies of unions.

that the popcorn machine is a good example of employee recognition that fails to accurately capture the requests for respect proposed from the labor perspective.
Methodology

The methodology employed in this research has several limitations that could be improved upon in future study. The most apparent methodological limitation is the pro-labor bias that flavors the majority of this research. The bias is admitted, and is not intended to denigrate the broad classification of "management," but is implemented as a provocative starting point for further discussions between labor and management. Given the multiplicity of labor and management perspectives, it is impossible to provide a comprehensive treatment of all owners, managers, and laborers. If the pro-labor bias of this report can induce consent or dissent from both management and labor, it has accomplished a significant goal. The first section of the analysis focussed on specific case examples and patterns apparent in disputes between socially responsible companies and labor unions. Ten cases were found involving some level of labor dispute within companies that consider themselves socially responsible. The cases were taken from popular press and progressive magazines that attempted timely coverage of the stories. This necessitated that the first level of analysis conducted here was secondary and contains the interpretive color of the journalists and individuals that were interviewed for the stories. These journalists were extremely sympathetic to labor issues and often gave only minimal consideration to the management perception of the labor dispute. It must be noted that searches conducted of business databases returned very few descriptions of labor disputes.

While the first level of analysis was not aimed at catching union busting in the act, it would be interesting to conduct primary research on a labor dispute within a socially responsible company. Conducting this primary research requires a timely labor
conflict and access to corporate and labor spokespeople. Research in the future may analyze a single case by performing interviews and textual analysis on the organizational documents that accompany the dispute.

The second and third aspects of analysis attempted to understand the values and values-related discourse that could possibly accompany a dispute between socially responsible companies and labor. The goal of these analyses was the isolation of key values that may be used to argue for and against union representation as a form of employee participation. Analysis was conducted on 46 socially responsible documents and 26 labor documents. Socially responsible documents were selected based on the level of description they provided about what a company was like, and consisted of mission statements, descriptions of corporate culture, descriptions of corporate policies, and other value laden documents. Because of a limited sample of socially responsible companies and the variance that exists in corporate commitments to values, values did not recur as much as hoped. A larger sample size and different kinds of corporate documents could improve this level of analysis, but it should be noted that the variance of socially responsible values is probably a function of the variability that exists in companies that claim social responsibility. The movement includes large and small corporations with diversified views on what it means to be socially responsible. It may be surprising that multi-nationals like United Airlines and General Motors are mentioned in the same bracket of social responsibility as pioneers like The Body Shop and Ben and Jerry's. Research could investigate the standards and criteria used to choose companies for membership in socially responsible associations or the public's perception of what makes a company socially responsible. It appears as if the CSR movement is one of
inclusion and researchers may be forced to create their own criteria in order to effectively study the rhetoric and values of socially responsible businesses.

Labor documents were gathered from the AFL-CIO web site and included speeches, press releases, and descriptions of current labor campaigns. The speeches were by far the most helpful due to the high number of value statements they contained. Focusing on AFL-CIO documents is both a benefit and limitation for this research. The AFL-CIO claims over 14 million affiliated members and is by far the most recognizable and influential labor association. Focusing on the AFL-CIO is beneficial because it creates a broad level labor perspective that can be refined in later research. The diversity of specific unions and labor councils makes it difficult to generalize about labor without starting with the AFL-CIO. Limitations occur because statements from the AFL-CIO may fail to capture the flavor of the conflicts within socially responsible companies. The labor movement is diverse and includes "internal" critiques of the labor establishment. It is likely that the statements of the AFL-CIO reflect larger scale interests than the organizing attempts of small numbers of employees. Labor values may be better understood when gathered from the source of the conflict, at the local union level. It has been proposed here that the AFL-CIO offers the best starting point for understanding labor values, but a refined case study may start at the local level and explore the values and values-related discourse within that specific dispute.

The interview method used in this research also contained several limitations. Only four interviews (two from the management/socially responsible perspective, two from the labor perspective) were successfully completed despite attempts to contact several socially responsible companies and labor advocates. One common response from
socially responsible companies was that student requests for information are overwhelming and can not be granted. In two instances, I was directed to the web site as a source of information. Another response from some socially responsible companies was that interviews could not be conducted due to time constraints. Several socially responsible companies are involved primarily service industries that force employee attention to be focused primarily on retail customers.

Several attempts to contact labor advocates were responded to with direction to other individuals considered more capable of answering questions. It appears as if the scope of this research was narrow enough as to exclude certain labor advocates that have had little or no experience with socially responsible companies. Interview questions may have been too narrowly constructed and limited the amount of interviewees capable of addressing the issue of labor disputes within socially responsible companies. Given a different scope of research and time, interviews could be conducted with the very individuals that led or participated in organizing attempts within socially responsible companies.

Implications of the research

The implications of this research are divided among 1) socially responsible businesses and the CSR movement in general, 2) labor unions and the labor movement in general, and 3) implications shared between the CSR and labor movements. These implications can serve as a guide for future organizational communication campaigns as well as function as a type of “intelligence” when management and labor disputes arise. One of the suggestions of this research has been the proposal that rhetorical strategies can
be powerful tools within management–labor conflicts. Whether these tools are used to unite or divide depends upon organizational goals and the perspectives of management toward labor and vice-versa. These perspectives are akin to the interpretive and critical perspectives used in the analysis of organizational documents, depending a great deal on the perception of power, ideology, and interest within the management–labor relationship.

**Practical implications for socially responsible businesses and the CSR movement**

This research has several implications for socially responsible businesses and the CSR movement in general. First is the belief that socially responsible business practice has contributed significantly to improvements in the way modern corporations impact the environment, society and the model of work in general. Sustainable development, environmental impact, philanthropy, fair trade, labor rights, employee participation, and employee benefits have all increased in awareness due, at least in part, to the efforts of socially responsible businesses. In the early stages of this research a conversation with Susan Anderson, a professor at the University of Montana, on the simultaneous positive and negative impacts of socially responsible business, revealed that Nike has made considerable progress in limiting environmental impact on the products they create. While Nike has remained much aligned for proliferating unfair labor practices, their manufacturing techniques serve as a model for the creation of high-quality, environmentally conscious goods. For some, to take the good with the bad is a form of unneeded compromise, but compromise marks an improvement over unadulterated corporate power and hopefully breeds further corporate responsibility.
Second is the realization that the CSR movement must constantly strive to reassess the goals of business and to ensure authentic commitment to those goals. The labor perspective described here should serve as a warning to socially responsible business that rhetorical devices are not sufficient cause for accepting that business has included large-scale social interests in their activities. *Any statement that can be made in defense of social responsibility can be interpreted from a critical, labor perspective that assumes management, whether socially responsible or not, is not always in step with the concerns and interests of employees.* The labor perspective functions as a challenge to the CSR movement that oversight and regulation are needed to guarantee that companies do what they say and say what they do.

Companies must also recognize that espousing CSR does not serve as a guarantee against employee movements for increased participation and control over their conditions of work. This research found instances of companies that were surprised when organizing campaigns started and gained support within their organizations. *Simply having values does not necessarily create an environment in which all employees are engaged with their work and identify with organizational commitments and goals.* Commitments to an improved society start at home and socially responsible business must be willing to view employees as part of the society to which they are responsible.

Similarly, the CSR movement must also be willing to constructively deal with both cynicism and criticism from outside organizations and individuals. When Entine (1994) authored his critical piece about The Body Shop, reactions from inside the CSR movement were protectionist and emotional. Criticism of CSR should not be met with the pointing of fingers or righteous indignation. Rather, CSR should seek open dialogue.
that constantly seeks to raise the bar of socially responsible business practice. While the authenticity of dialogue can always be questioned, the CSR movement should embrace disclosure and conversation about the ways business can positively and negatively affect society. Such disclosure expands the notion of CSR and allows socially responsible businesses to act as examples of positive business practice.

Practical implications for labor campaigns and the labor movement in general

The labor movement may find several uses for the present research. The values expressed by socially responsible companies indicate that these companies may be more accepting of attempts to organize than companies that lack a solid mission. While an entire section of this report is dedicated to illustrating how socially responsible companies have battled organizing attempts, it has also been shown that these companies utilized mostly legal tactics, and some have even expressed support for the general idea of organized labor. Featherstone's (1999; 2000) interviews led to the conclusion that labor unions are almost never recognized on “principle alone” (p. 11). At the same time, genuine commitments to respect, dignity, and diversity indicate that socially responsible companies probably have more in common with labor than strictly profit driven companies. Although several of the companies analyzed here have organized employees, only BP Amoco (BP Amoco Policy Expectations: Employees, 2001) makes an explicit statement in support of rights to organize: “We recognize, consistent with local legislation, the right of every employee to form or join trade unions.” BP Amoco’s statement is categorized as an expectation employees can have to “Be fairly treated.” This type of public statement may be unusual, but could be representative of increased labor sympathy within the community of socially responsible business.
A more sympathetic audience toward labor within socially responsible companies could impact directly on future labor campaigns. Labor could create rhetorical campaigns that borrowed heavily from socially responsible values, or even from the values of solely profit-driven corporations. This certainly seems possible given the socially responsible value of respect and the AFL-CIO program "Respect Work/Strengthen Families." "Respecting work" must become synonymous with individual dignity and the right to organize. Improvements to workplace empowerment and the conditions of work are interpreted as the greatest form of respect. Values must not be empty commitments when the opportunity exists for interpretation of those in support of labor initiatives.

A final implication of this research is to issue a challenge to the labor movement to constantly address and improve their activities. Much has been made of corporate social responsibility, but there is certainly a labor responsibility as well. Labor has a responsibility to seriously address the diversity of opinions within their movement and actively seek to improve on the ways they impact workers and organizations. It has been noted that labor unions, and in fact many non-profit organizations, function best in crises. Labor may suggest from a type of organizational attribution error by failing to accurately address internal causes of their problems. The crisis that exists may be real, but it may be closer to home than originally thought. Each time labor makes an unrealistic wage proposal or defends an employee that poses a safety risk, they harm their own credibility and future power to enact change that benefits their members.
**Shared implications**

Certain implications of this research are common to both socially responsible businesses and the labor movement. First is an increased awareness, by both socially responsible business and labor, of the values that drive each others’ organizational activity and decision-making. Socially responsible businesses and labor unions share a vision that modern corporations can be sites of progressive social change. Yet the value commitments of these organizations vary widely and indicate a significant divide between them. Knowledge of the other’s values can allow socially responsible businesses and labor unions to bridge their commitments and establish common ground in reshaping the models of employee participation. At the same time, knowledge of rhetorical strategies allows these organizations the opportunity to embrace the other’s values and preemptively argue from an opposing position. This “unify or divide” nature of values has been addressed by Cheney (1999). Knowledge of the other’s rhetorical strategies is a type of “intelligence” that makes businesses and unions more powerful in subverting the other. Within labor disputes in socially responsible companies, certain values like “respect” or “voice” have the power to unify or divide an organization based on interpretations and which group manages meaning.

A second shared implication is similar to that expressed by Cheney (1999) regarding the Mondragon cooperatives. Cheney suggests a need to foster a consensus of values within the cooperatives. This suggestion is transferable to the diverse, dynamic movements that occur with socially responsible business and labor. *The range of value commitments within the CSR and labor movements make consensus extremely difficult but single organizations can seek consensus by remaining open to both management and*
labor perspectives on the nature of the organization, work, and values. Consensus should not be reduced to a majority vote in a board meeting or a decision by union leadership. Rather, consensus should be fostered through democratic principles that recognize the different perspective and interests within organizations.

Theoretical and practical implications for the study of values in organizational discourse

As well as the stated implications for CSR and labor, this research has certain theoretical and practical implications for the study of values in organizational discourse. Research on organizational discourse remains important as organizations compete in creative ways to have their message received by shareholders and the public at large. Values are powerful tools in the creation of an organizational image, but also have the ability to influence the behavior of consumers, employees, stockholders, vendors, and other individuals and organizations.

Values-usage in organizational discourse has important theoretical implications as well, especially when values become sites of internal competition over definition and meaning. The power to define an organizational value can have profound impact on whether an employee is perceived as a “team player,” a “company” person, or as “not fitting in.” When identification with certain values is expected, non-compliance from employees can lead to alienation or loss of a job. Organizational values can be packaged in many ways, and may not always be clear to employees. An example from Eisenberg and Goodall (1997) makes the point of possible circumstances awaiting employees that fail to grasp organizational values:
A story circulating at a large consulting firms tells of a senior consultant rushing to meet a client, ignoring traffic laws, driving through fences and onto sidewalks, and speeding the wrong way down one-way streets, while the junior consultant sits white knuckled in the passenger seat... Afterward, the junior consultant confronts her boss, "Why did you drive like that? If we had been a few minutes late, the client would have understood." Later that day, the junior consultant is told to clear out her desk. (p. 157-158).

Eisenberg and Goodall's (1997) story is made in relation to myths, stories, and metaphors as tools of control, but describes the power of organizational values as well. The story reinforces the organizational commitment to the client and the role of junior consultant. The client is the primary value that is not to be questioned.

This research proposes to extend theoretical approaches to the study of values in organizational discourses by the modification of a labor perspective that challenges management uses of organizational values. The labor perspective, previously explicated by Hansen-Horn and Vasquez (1997), borrows from critical theory by challenging management uses of values. The labor perspective lends a critical eye to values that may have previously been considered straightforward or even benign. The perspective is highly inferential at this point, but offers a compelling contrast to management-centered approaches to the study of organizational values and larger discourse. Because of their ambiguity, Fairhurst, Jordan, and Neuwirth (1997) show that even the most sacred organizational symbols can be interpreted in widely disparate ways. Values are not strictly management tools, or even solely under management control. The labor perspective views values and large organizational discourses as requiring both management and labor voices. The insistence of the labor perspective is tied directly to some of the more practical implications of values and values-related discourse.
This research stresses the importance of a critical approach to the use of values in organizational discourse. While interpretative approaches to organizational values remain important, a critical approach serves as a reminder that values are powerful means of shaping opinion and influencing behavior. Critical theory is a necessary check on the messages that organizations disseminate about themselves, the environment, public policy, and even our images of ourselves. *Studies of organizational rhetoric have applied critical approaches to advertising, public relations, and advocacy campaigns, and critical theory must remain an important method of analysis.*

Critical theory is evident in everyday organizational life when employees question or criticize organizational messages, when students and teachers challenge administration, when audiences scoff at commercials and when the public seeks the truth about exactly what happened to spark an international dispute. Each of these incidents reveals a desire to analyze messages and uncover who controls power within interactions. This inquisitive sense translates well into larger studies of organizational communication and discourses.

**Future Research**

Several opportunities for future research on values in organizational discourses within the socially responsible company—labor dynamic are available. Future research could utilize the present value-framework and interview socially responsible company representatives and labor advocates to expand on the values they express. The interview questions used in this research were not designed to gather discourse on specific values, but sought a broad perspective on organizational values, employee participation, and the
right to organize. Different sets of interview questions could clearly define specific value terms, and illuminate the origins and possible management uses of organizational values.

The socially responsible and labor values discussed here can also be expanded through analysis of more and diversified organizational documents. All the documents analyzed are best described as formal, external communication. Research focused on different types of documents may reveal that values are adaptable to different audiences. Internal communication may be more likely to focus on employee-centered values like respect, teamwork, or empowerment whereas the primary value expressed in external communication was found to be the "customer."

Changing the sample of companies and specific unions may also result in a different list of socially responsible and labor values. The companies analyzed are presented as a representative list by BSR, but there are numerous other unmentioned companies. Future research may limit the scope of analysis by selecting a smaller sample of companies and conducting a more in-depth study. A detailed analysis of well-known socially responsible businesses such as Patagonia, Ben and Jerry's, Tom's of Maine, and the Body Shop may reveal a developed rhetoric or socially responsible discourse that is not apparent among larger, less responsible companies. This research would be guided by an assumption that a distinct difference exists between socially responsible companies with authentic social commitments and companies that claim social responsibility as a marketing or publicity gimmick. Comparison of a smaller number of companies may result in an increased recurrence of values and a clarified understanding of corporate social responsibility.
Final thoughts

Final reflections on the function of values and values-related discourse in disputes between socially responsible companies underscore the importance of critical-interpretive approaches to organizational rhetoric and values. Values must always be considered as ambiguous commitments that include multiple interpretations based on individual or collective interest. As Entine (1996) states, "Awarding A's for visionary rhetoric shifts focus away from corporate governance and behavior to a never-never land of good intentions. It's a dangerous trend that companies promote Thoreau-like mission statements without organizational commitments to implement those ideals. Character demonstrated by actions, not intentions, is the only reliable measure of corporate ethics" (p. 5). Values should not stand alone as assurance that an organization is genuinely acting with a wide-ranging social responsibility.

At the same time, critical-interpretive analysis of organizational values should not be motivated solely by contempt of a specific organization. Understood in the given context, private enterprise, for-profit organizations and labor unions are not likely to disappear based on opinions that their activities are unnecessary, unethical, or even downright damaging. Critical-interpretive approaches bridge the rhetorical divide and place the researcher in an exciting position to make known differing perspectives and connect groups that assume irreconcilable differences. By exposing two sides of a conflict, critical-interpretive approaches will hopefully create a sympathetic environment by forcing disputants to walk in the other's shoes. Understanding and critiquing organizational values provides the grounds for informed argument that paves the way for meaningful dialogue between conflicting organizations.
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Our Core Values – Whole Foods Market


Our Employee Relations – SC Johnson.


Schwab Actively Creates a Culture of Adaptability and Innovation.


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Sweeney, John J. (June 7, 2000) Remarks by John J. Sweeney, President of the AFL-CIO, International Labor Organization, Geneva, Switzerland


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This is the AFL-CIO. <http://www.aflcio.org/about/meet_main.htm> (2000, November 8).


Appendix A

Interview Outline
These questions make up the composite interview schedule. The questions will be adapted to specific interviewees. Primary questions will be followed by secondary questions and/or appropriate probes.

**Schedule of Primary Interview Questions**

For representatives of socially responsible companies—

Your company has been labeled “socially responsible” (a member of Business for Social Responsibility). What does this label mean to your company? What types of values and responsibilities does your company feel are important? How are these acted upon?

Where did this sense of responsibility come from? In other words, what was the source of the company's values?

What does it mean to be a socially responsible employer?

Is there any difference between being employed in a socially responsible versus “non-socially responsible” company?

What do you think about employee rights to participate in shaping the direction and structure of the companies they work in?

What employment participation programs does your company have?

Why were these programs set up, and how, if at all, do these programs fit into being socially responsible?

How well do you feel these programs are working? Why?

How do your employee participation programs fit into being a socially responsible company?

***Are unions appropriate to the management – labor situation within (company name)?***

***Is the right to organize included in social responsibility? Why or why not?***

*** Why do you think some socially responsible companies have fought workers trying to organize and gain union representation?***

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For union representatives/ members

What do you think about employee rights to participate in shaping the direction and structure of the companies they work in?

How well do you feel most employment participation programs are working? Why?

Why were most of these programs set up?

What do you think is the most empowering workplace structure for non-management employees? Why?

Are unions appropriate in all management – labor situations?

Do you think union representation is superior to most other forms of employee participation? Why or why not?

What do you foresee as the biggest challenges facing workers attempting to organize in the next decade or two?

What do you think “social responsibility” means, and how do you view avowedly socially responsible business?

Why do you think socially responsible companies have so strongly opposed unions and workers attempting to organize?

Is there any difference between being employed in a socially responsible versus “non-socially responsible” company?
Appendix B

Informed Consent
Informed Consent Form

TITLE: The function of values and values-related discourse in disputes between socially responsible companies and labor unions.

INVESTIGATOR: Andrew Gilla; 1939 Prairie St., Aurora, IL; (630) 897-3724; gillaa@juno.com

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS: This consent form may contain words that are new to you. If you read any words that are not clear to you, please ask the person who gave you this form to explain them to you.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of organizational values and employee participation programs in socially responsible companies and labor unions.

PROCEDURES: If you have decided to participate in this exercise, you will be asked a number of questions pertaining to your organization and broader level trends in employee participation.

BENEFITS: There is no promise that you will receive any benefits from participating in the interviews.

RISKS: There is a minimal risk of organizational retaliation for taking place in this study. For that reason, you will have the option to keep your identity confidential in the writing of the report.

CONFIDENTIALITY: If you choose confidentiality, your identity will be protected with the use of a numeric coding scheme that will be destroyed at the completion of the project. You will also have the option to allow or deny the audiotaping of the interview. In the case that you allow audiotaping, the tapes will be destroyed at the completion of the final, written report. Audiotapes will be transcribed and the transcribed data will be accessible only to the researcher and his advisor. You have the right to see and suggest changes to the written transcript of this interview. While the researcher will seriously consider any suggested changes, he is not required to accept them.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: You may refuse to take part in or you may withdraw from the interview at any time. Your decision to take part in this study is entirely voluntary.

QUESTIONS: You may wish to discuss this with others before you take part in this study. At any time before, during or after the interview, the researcher will be available to answer any questions you may have about the research. If you have any questions about the research now or later contact: Andrew Gilla, (630) 897-3724
Although the risk of taking part in this study is minimal, the following liability statement is required in all University of Montana consent forms. In the event that you are injured as a result of this research you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of the University of Montana or any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under the authority of M.C.A., Title 2, Chapter 9. In the event of claim for such injury, further information may be obtained from the University’s Claims representative or University Legal Counsel.

Your decision to participate in this research is entirely voluntary and you have these options with respect to maintaining your privacy:

1. The right to have your confidentiality protected by excluding your identity and/or the identity of your organization.

2. The right to indicate to the interviewer that certain answers you provide be excluded from the report entirely.

3. The right to refuse to answer any questions.

4. The right to delete or change any of your answers after the interview is completed.

5. The right to see and suggest changes to the transcript of the interview.

6. The right to allow or deny the interviewer to audiotape the interview.

I will allow the researcher to reveal my identity Yes_______ No _______ and the identity of my organization Yes_______ No_______

I will allow the interviewer to audiotape the interview Yes__ No____

I have read the above description of this research study. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that the researcher will also answer any future questions I may have. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study. I understand I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Signature of Interviewee ________________________________ Date ______________

Date Approved by UM IRB 06 11 2000
Approval Expires on 06 10 2001
[Signature], IRB Chair