Transcending Paradox:
A metaphor of movement for sustaining high performance

A dissertation submitted

by
Jason A. Wolf

to
Benedictine University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Organization Development

This dissertation has been
accepted for the faculty of
Benedictine University.

James D. Ludema, Ph.D. May 17, 2009
Chair

Kenneth J. Gergen, Ph.D. May 17, 2009
Committee member

Robert J. Marshak, Ph.D. May 17, 2009
Committee member

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

ProQuest LLC
789 E. Eisenhower Parkway
PO Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

Abstract

Extensive research has been conducted to define the characteristics of high performance; far less has been done to determine what enables it to be sustained. This study explores that very question; *what supports the sustainability of high performance?* In reviewing a three year period of data from 2002–2004, twelve hospital facilities in a large US healthcare system were identified as high performers based on consistently strong results in employee engagement, patient satisfaction, employee turnover, internal productivity measures, and superior performance in both financial and quality outcomes. In following these high performers for a second three year period from 2005–2007, a subset of nine facilities continued to outperform the system, while three struggled to maintain consistent results. Using a combination of grounded and generative theory methods, this study explores the intricacies, forces and factors that enabled this group of high performers to sustain their performance.

The findings reveal sustained high performance is not a permanent state that an organization simply achieves. Rather, sustaining high performance is an ongoing effort based on continuous action. Through engaging in three critical "movements": *collective/individualism, agile/consistency,* and *informative/inquiry*—as active polarities, the facilities in the study transcended common organization paradoxes that often act as impediments to progress. Ultimately, the study suggests sustaining performance is realized through an organization's willingness and ability to be in perpetual movement around these three polarities. This movement is grounded in an

intricate and dynamic balancing that eclipses either/or solutions and instead holds the possibility for a state of both/and. It is in transcending paradox—through movement and in the dynamic balancing of these key polarities—that sustaining high performance is possible. The dissertation concludes by offering implications for future research and recommendations for practice in sustaining high performance.

Dedication

In loving memory of my grandparents,

Florence Farber (Nonny) and Sol Farber (Poppy).

For Nonny's commitment to my learning, homework always came first, but also to making sure I took the time to have fun. For Poppy's dedication to education, his humble achievements and gregarious spirit, all which helped me to see that anything can be accomplished if you put your mind to it, and of course use a little elbow grease (and maybe some tape). To both of them, for their sense of adventure and their perspective that the world is small enough to be both fully experienced and completely appreciated; and for helping me to believe that each of us can make an impact on it! Their lessons supported me on this journey, their commitments pushed me forward, and their passions carried me through.

and

To the caregivers in hospitals everywhere, whose tireless work at the bedside, in labs, offices, backrooms, basements and boiler-rooms is all committed to one thing—the health and care of others. Your tireless work will never go unnoticed and as promised, your stories will be told.

Acknowledgements

A phrase I have heard often is "there are never enough thanks to go around!" I now believe I know from where that phrase emerged, the dissertation process. While an acknowledgement in writing may satiate the basic need of showing appreciation, I suggest, at least in my case, it will never sufficiently express the true depth of my gratitude for the sacrifices and commitments that others made with me in this process.

To my *colleagues at Healthco*, for the support and encouragement provided during this continuous exploration about what is right in Healthcare; a special thanks for the feedback and the mirror held up to ensure I kept these discoveries both practical and real. To the participants that took the time to share your stories about that which you care so deeply, and often your tears, this work is truly for you. To an amazing collection of leaders, especially Brenda, Britt, Deb, Don, Elaine, Harvey, John and Mark for doing what you know to be right every day. This story is yours.

To *Cohort 6*, who from the very beginning stood by each other in this process and for being the living exemplar of what it means to "walk as one". You have brought a special gift, insight and contribution to my experience and there is a piece of each of you in this work.

To my *dissertation committee*, for the true care and commitment they shared in this process. To my chair, Jim Ludema, for your push to dig deeper into what this work was truly about and to have it speak with my voice; your guidance and insights turned a rough work into just the beginning of an exciting exploration and contribution to the world of scholarship and practice. To Ken Gergen, for the gift of your heart and deepest of thoughts; our conversations always caused me to look deeper, explore around new corners and think in ways I did not even know possible. To Bob Marshak, aside from being the voice reminding me to "get it done", you challenged me to find my own voice in doing so. You have become a true mentor, in every essence of the word, as this process frames the gateway into my next life and career steps. I look forward to your ongoing "reminders".

To my *family*, who supported and inspired me on this journey. To my brother, Spencer, you have always exemplified and set the bar for what good writing and a creative mind can do. To my dad, for your sense of inquisitiveness, it is sometimes just in asking the question, from which some of the greatest ideas emerge. To my mom, or as some like to say, Momma Wolf, for her sacrifices and unwavering encouragement throughout my life that inspired and pushed me to reach this very moment. And to my wife and best friend Beth, who was my rock in this process. Your love, your contributions, your support and your willingness to spend many weekends wondering if I would ever come out of my office only scratch the surface

of what sacrifice and commitment mean. It was your belief in me that made this dream possible.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction—A Study of Sustained High Performance

"All things change, nothing is extinguished.... There is nothing in the whole world which is permanent. Everything flows onward; all things are brought into being with a changing nature; the ages themselves glide by in constant movement."
—Ovid

Overview

As Ovid said, "There is nothing in the whole world which is permanent." It is this very premise that frames the discoveries in this study and the compelling paradox it has raised. What began as means to look beyond simple checklists to the causes of performance and led to the question of how performance is sustained, unveiled a collection of organizational paradoxes. The discovery ultimately suggests that sustaining high performance in itself is not a permanent state that an organization achieves, but rather it is an ongoing action and a dynamic balancing between polarities. It is through perpetual movement that sustainability occurs.

The idea of sustainability as movement is predicated by the ability of organizational members to move beyond the experience of paradox as an impediment to progress. Through holding three critical "movements" - *collective/individualism, agile/consistency,* and *informative/inquiry* - not as paradoxical, but rather as active polarities, organizations have been able to transcend paradox, and take active steps to continued achievement in outperforming their peers. The findings reveal powerful stories of care and service, of the profound grace of human capacity, and of clear

actions taken to create significant results. All of this was achieved in an environment of great volatility and change, which is perhaps why the need to not only be in movement, but to capitalize on that movement is critical to success. This calls us to begin this journey with an exploration of change itself.

The Current Reality of Change

The challenge of change in organizations has been a central point of dialogue in organization science from its very beginning. Yet, the concept of change in organizations has moved well beyond the need expressed by Frederick Taylor (Burke, 2002; Weisbord, 2004) to simply understand what is involved in change (Copley, 1923) to a vast collection of change processes and philosophies. The need to address the issue of change has become more and more apparent in an age of "permanent whitewater" (Marshak, 1993a; Vaill, 1989; Weisbord, 2004) in which information, technology, markets, and people are emerging and advancing at breakneck speed (Beer, 2001; Marshak, 2002). This divergence of perspectives on change has also posed a challenge to the field of organization development (OD) itself. While by its early definitions, OD was a means to address a process of planned change (Porras & Bradford, 2004; Weisbord, 2004), the shift to an environment of constant change calls for new models and processes by which change is addressed in organizations. The world no longer moves in incremental steps, but rather in significant leaps that call for new modes of effecting change.

The English statesman, David Lloyd George, once stated, *"Don't be afraid to take a big step if one is indicated. You can't cross a chasm in two small jumps."* The simple significance of this thought perhaps best captures one of the greatest challenges facing today's organizations. If organizations become complacent or stationary for too long, it is inevitable that the chasm will continue to widen and our ability to reach the other side will quickly diminish. To remain in shape to make these leaps requires the development of organizational agility (Shafer, 2001) and the resultant need for organizations to be in constant movement.

The Foundation of Inquiry and Our Initial Exploration

The picture painted above leads to an examination of change in organizations not from the measure of the ability to manage change, but from a common framework by which organizations have been able to keep pace with change (Marshak, 2002) and in doing so, outperform other organizations. The premise framing these thoughts is that constructionist discourse (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2003; Gergen & Gergen, 2003; Heracleous & Barrett, 2001; Whitney, 2003) and interaction (Homans, 1951/1992) lead an organization to act with agility, i.e. the capability to respond to a rapidly changing environment. This ability to rapidly transform is what allows certain organizations to survive (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997), outperform, and create the appearance of "sustained performance" (Beer, 2001).

This theoretical discussion emerged as a result of a research project conducted at Healthco (a healthcare management company based in the Southeast United States)

that was focused on investigating the potential drivers of performance. The belief was that in a company the size of Healthco ($24 Billion in revenue with over 160 hospitals and 100 other healthcare facilities) and with the collective expertise and proven performance of its people (over 180,000 employees worldwide), the company possessed some of the leading practices in the healthcare industry. Based on this thinking, a study was initiated to examine the top performing facilities in the system and to determine the cause of strong and positive results. It was acknowledged from the start of the process that the discoveries made would likely not be surprising or earth shattering, but rather, would reinforce the core behaviors believed to drive organizational health and effectiveness (Wolf, 2008).

In launching the initial research into the potential drivers of performance, the central questions were: what performance factors supported certain facilities' ability to outperform others; what could we learn from the data; and how could we help other facilities achieve the same outcomes? It was believed that these performance characteristics could be identified and more effectively shared among facilities. We approached this idea with the hypothesis that high performance was based on maintaining a balance between a focus on numbers and a focus on people (Beer, 2001), and that this was best accomplished through the culture of an organization. With this premise in mind, the High Performance Facility Study was initiated to examine the top performing facilities at Healthco and to determine what it was they

were doing to generate positive results. (An overview of the initial research methodology can be found in Appendix A.)

Seven Characteristics of High Performers

As a result of the study, seven central findings emerged (Figure 1). A general overview of the key characteristics is provided below with the caveat that each finding has a much more robust set of practice exemplars that support its impact and influence on organizational performance.

- **Visionary Leadership**: Leaders at all levels are available, approachable, and open and operate with minimal micro-management.
- **Consistent and Effective Communication**: "Multi-way" communication which includes not only "what" needs to be communicated, but also "why" it is important to the organization.
- **Select for Fit and On Going Development of Staff**: An unwavering commitment to wait for the right person in the hiring process versus simply hiring a warm body and a corresponding courage to let people go who do not fit.
- **Agile & Open Culture**: A sense of pride, collaboration, respect and a strong focus on quality are central to the organization's *way of being*. A constant sense of reflection and continuous improvement allow these organizations to keep pace with and lead change.
- **Service is Job One**: The central focus of all efforts is to provide unparalleled service for patients, families and each other.

- **Constant Recognition and Community Support**: Constant recognition and appreciation of staff by leadership and of staff for one another, through both formal and informal means.
- **Solid (Physician) Relationships**: Collaborative relationships between all members of the facility family were central to organizational success.

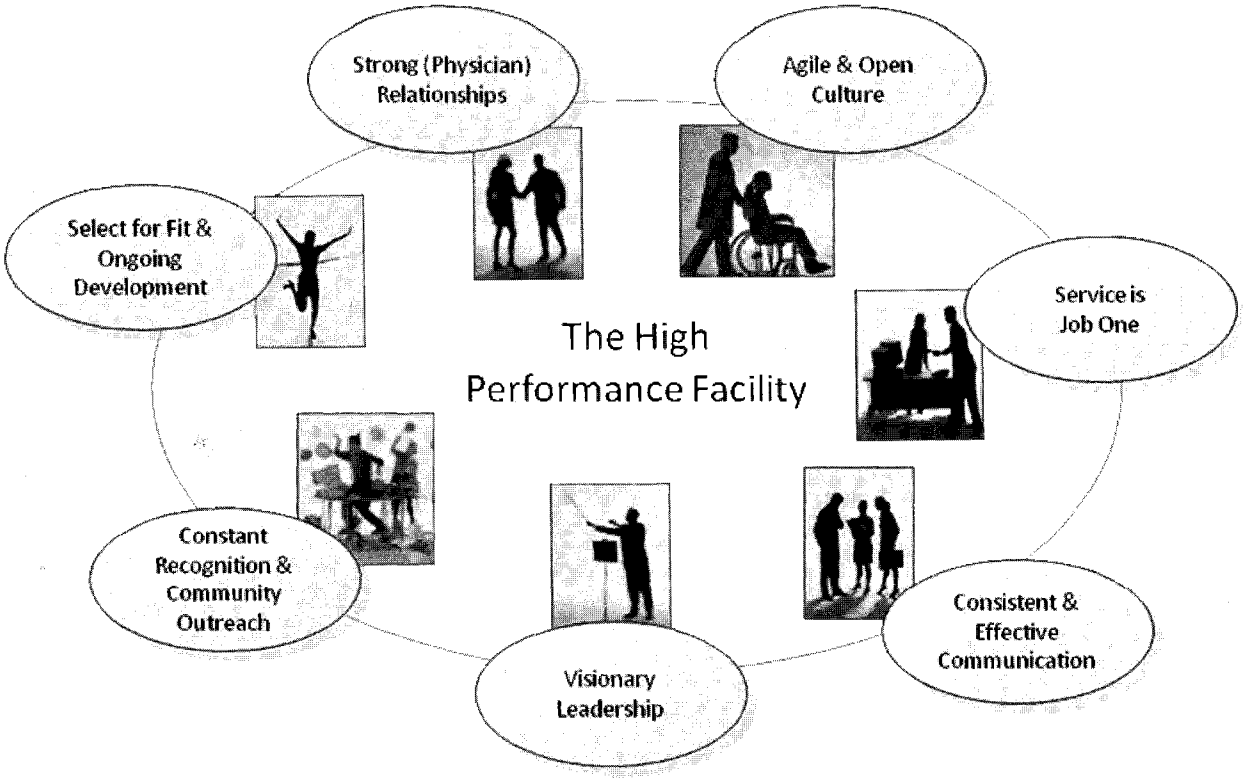

Figure 1. The Seven Characteristics of High Performance Organizations

These findings reinforced the power of simplicity and common sense in leading organizations. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to move beyond these very basics in

the search for some greater and more complicated answer to our organizational challenges (Jensen, 2000).

From High Performance Characteristics to a Question of Sustainability

The initial research moved beyond the identification of characteristics to a review of critical measures selected to validate the potential impact of these findings. The results are shared in Appendix A. It was this analysis and an ongoing monitoring of the data beyond the original period of 2002–2004 through year end 2007 that sparked the questions in this research.

In the two years after first discovering the mutual characteristics of the high performers, the original selection criteria were monitored to see if sharing the original research had affected other facilities in the system. While a few facilities did make some improvement a significant number of facilities did not move at all. The data also revealed an interesting and unexpected finding: Of the original facilities studied, nine of them continued to meet the original selection criteria established for "high performers". This was intriguing as it was now possible to identify both *sustaining* and *non-sustaining* high performance facilities. The subset of nine facilities from the original study continued to outperform the organization in both the original set of selection criteria and outcomes measures.

This combination of factors and discoveries posed an interesting possibility for exploration. Perhaps it was not just a focus on having characteristics that caused high performance. Instead could it be possible that the characteristics initially discovered were actually the manifestations of a more significant cause driving and sustaining this performance?

An Extended View of the Outcomes Data

In examining the selection criteria and outcomes data it was clear that the sustaining high performers continued to outperform the company overall. This was exemplified in the data sets around employee engagement, turnover and EBDITA % Net Revenue over an extended period now including data from year-end 2002 to year-end 2007. This data review was significant because it did not only draw distinctions between the extreme high and low performing facilities, but rather it was focused on the comparison of the nine sustaining high performers to the entire complement of Healthco facilities.

The data showed the sustaining high performers continued to outpace Healthco in employee engagement (Figure 2), increasing the gap of engagement scores over six years from 2002 to 2007. Even when the employee survey tool was changed in 2006 (marked by the change in measures and split chart below), high performers still outperformed the rest of Healthco by over seven percentage points.

The sustaining high performers also led a downward trend in employee turnover at Healthco (Figure 3). Interestingly, even with Healthco's own marked improvement in this key measure, the sustaining high performers continued to outpace the organization maintaining an average difference of around four percentage points over the 6 year period. While Healthco was hitting industry benchmarks, the sustainers dipped to industry leading levels in turnover measures.

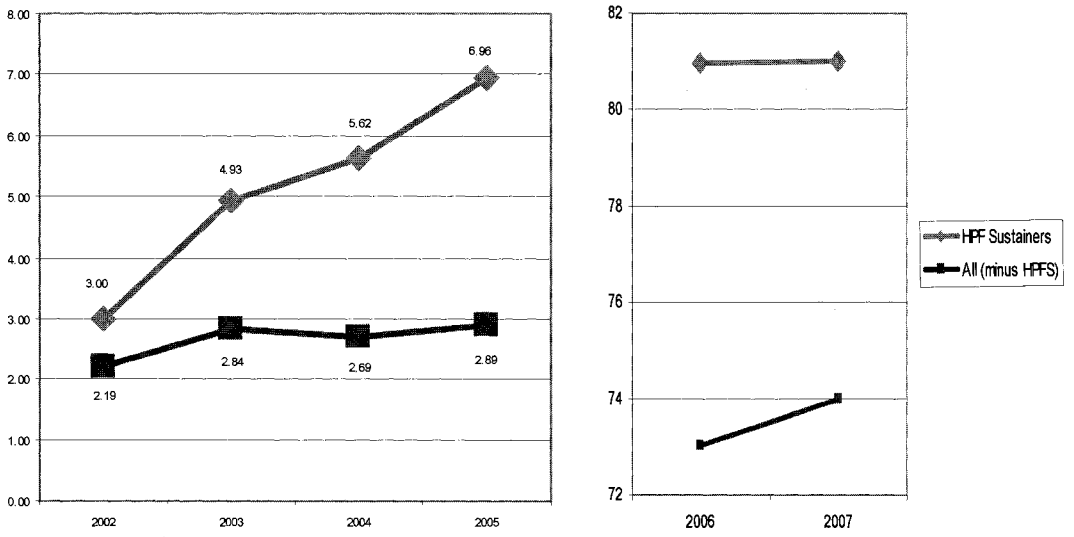

Figure 2. Employee Engagement - Sustaining High Performers versus Healthco Average (Minus Sustainers)

In reviewing the measure of financial performance (Figure 4) EDBITA % Net Revenue, the sustaining facilities (light grey bars) here too outperformed the average of remaining Healthco facilities. In this case by an average of around five percentage points over the period reviewed. This again reinforces both the potential top line

income and bottom line efficiencies that high performers exemplified in the original research.

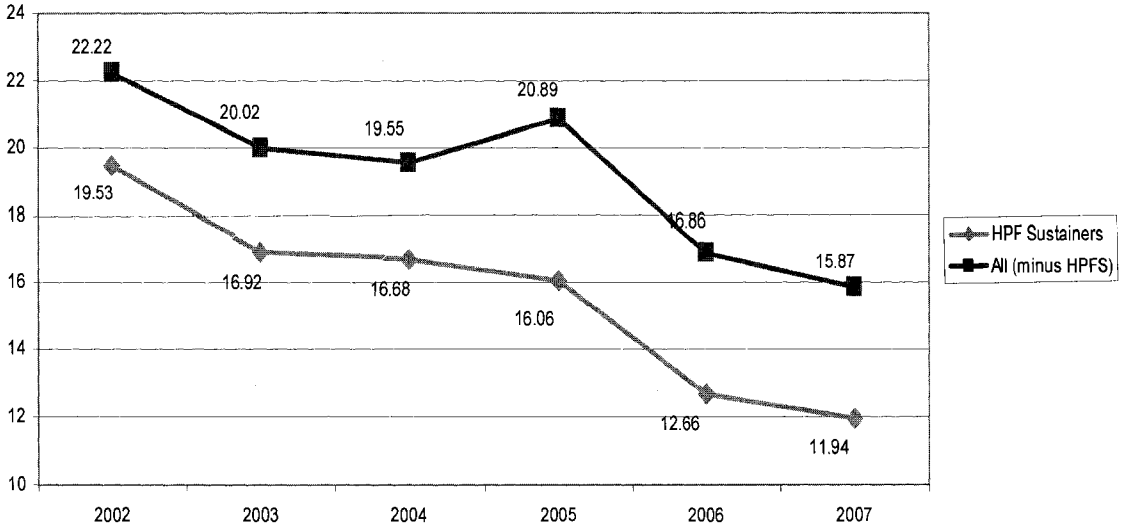

Figure 3. Voluntary FT/PT Turnover - Sustaining High Performers versus Healthco Average (Minus Sustainers)

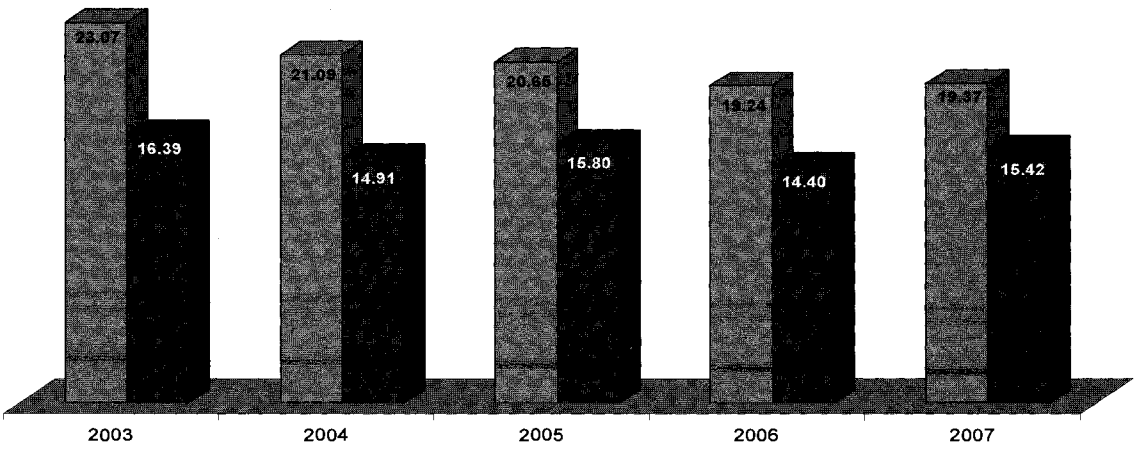

Figure 4. EBDITA % Net Revenue - Sustaining High Performers (Light Grey Bars) Versus Healthco Average (Minus Sustainers - Black Bars)

While the qualitative data revealed below paints a compelling picture about what is taking place within the organizations sustaining high performance, it is the quantitative data above that helps to substantiate the validity and show the impact of the findings in this study. It also supports why the question about sustainability has significantly bigger implications for organizations than simply new theoretical considerations. The data above ultimately speaks for itself. Not only do sustaining high performers impact the people they touch, they also impact the critical measures of business success.

From Data to the Emerging Research Question

The extended data analysis discussed above supports a strengthening belief that quick-fix checklists and other management treatises that provide the "five this" or the "seven that" as the means by which organizational performance is developed may be potentially flawed as a model for organizational improvement. The extended data raised an interesting set of questions for exploration, but most interestingly it showed that while similar characteristics existed at a point in time in 2005 when the initial data was collected, some of the very facilities identified as having those characteristics did not sustain performance in either the initial criteria or outcomes measures. What was it that had certain facilities continue to thrive while others did not? What was it that allowed these organizations to outperform the remainder of the organization over an extended period of time? Ultimately, this led to the central question of this work:

What supports the sustainability of high performance?

It was the data that sparked this exploration that also led to the narrowing and focusing of the research question. From data showing outperformance (Guerra, 2005) and sustained results over time (as shared above) to survey responses revealing clearly distinguishable characteristics of sustaining facilities (shared in the methodology and findings below) the research journey had now been framed. This question captures the curiosity of academic circles as a simple, but compelling inquiry and it is a question that sparks interest in professional circles as business and organizational leaders search for the answer of how to achieve sustainable results (Beer, 2001).

The Findings Revealed...Well Not Quite

It may be that very phrase, "achieve sustainability" that this study ultimately reveals as both misguided and potentially impossible. The idea proposed as a result of this research is that "sustainability" is perhaps not a noun at all. Once something becomes a noun, it becomes a thing to be acquired, admired or derided or in this case "achieved" (Gergen, 2008). Interestingly enough the data above revealed that once something "is", then it seemingly becomes static in nature. As discussed to open this chapter, a static state is no longer an option in a collectively progressing world.

What the findings below reveal is perhaps eloquent by its very simplicity; that sustainability itself is actually about movement—not the idea of traveling from a-to-b on a straight line, and not simply the idea of being in motion. Rather, it emerges as the transcendence of what is typically seen as the impediments and tensions of

paradox. It is not as much "sustainability" as it is "sustaining" that is discovered in this research. At the core of this sustaining are a series of polarities that are themselves in constant flux. In fact as with sustainability, balance itself is perhaps not something to achieve, e.g. work-life balance, but rather it is something of a *state* in which we exist in action - balancing. The chapters that follow will explore the process of discovery, the theoretical foundations of this exploration and the richness and simplicity of the pattern of sustaining revealed in the subject facilities.

The Journey Ahead

Chapter One of this work is focused on setting the foundation and context for this research study. It also serves to provide the background and inspiration for this exploration as well as an initial peek at what the findings are revealing through the experiences of our subject facilities. The chapter provides the quantitative framework that both led to the selection of our subject facilities and the specific measures that substantiated the validity tell the story they represented. In revealing powerful trends in major performance and financial indicators the selection of these facilities and the findings they reveal are firmly supported. The chapter then presents the emerging research question, the challenges it suggests and potential it represents in shifting how we think about sustaining performance. As the chapter concludes, the shape of the study begins to reveal its significantly generative perspective.

Chapter Two provides an overview of the initial literature explored in considering this path of research. My initial thoughts on the idea of high performance facilities came

from the framework of organizational change as discussed above and from the challenges that organizations face in the current environment of organizational, societal, and global change (Burke & Litwin, 1992; Gersick, 1991; Marshak, 1993b; Porras & Robertson, 1992; Romanelli & Tushman, 1994; Weick & Quinn, 1999; Woodman, 1993). Additional literature review led me to what allows organizations to be in motion and rapidly change in this new environment and suggests that language and specifically the discourse in an organization (Bohm, 1996; Bouwen & Fry, 1996; Marshak, 2002; Fiol, 2002; Ford & Ford, 1995; Gergen, 1999; Quinn & Dutton, 2005) is a primary driver of this new pace of change. The exploration of discourse leads to a discussion of organizations as socially constructed entities (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Gergen, 1999; Gergen and Gergen, 2003). With this, they have the ability through relationship and language to drive the type of outcomes they desire. It is also acknowledged in this chapter that while this literature exploration is what provided initial direction for the study, the findings themselves require both an expanded review of this foundational literature and a broader exploration into concepts not initially considered, including the idea of paradox and dynamic balance in organizations. This additional theoretical framework is part of the discussion in Chapter Five.

Chapter Three reviews the methodology of the research process. Using a generative theory approach (Gergen, 1978) this chapter outlines the step-by-step process used to review the data collected. The generative process proposed by Gergen (1978) is

powerful in a study of this nature as it provides a means to "challenge prevailing assumptions regarding the nature of social life and to offer fresh alternatives to contemporary patterns of conduct" (p. 1344). The study was based on 41 interviews conducted at 12 different locations; nine which were sustainers and three non-sustainers. Interviews at the sustaining facilities included the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the longest tenured executive (non-CEO), the longest tenured staff member, a director or manager with tenure from at least 2000, and a staff member with tenure from at least 2000. The interviews were conducted using a standard semi-structured interview protocol (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), digitally recorded and transcribed, leading to almost 900 pages of data. Using the conventions of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), I conducted a comprehensive coding process of open and axial coding and confirmed the outcomes via a multi-rater validation, then compared my findings with those of four research partners to enrich the interpretive process. Once codes were identified (over 1200 raw codes were initially collected), I conducted a review of the data in order to categorize and identify key themes. The initial code count was reduced to 128 initial categories that were then grouped into 24 super categories, capturing the main concepts developed in the study. I then consolidated the super categories into ten key themes. After review with peers, my committee chair and classmates, the ten themes were refined into three core concepts, representing three active paradoxes within the subject facilities. These initial findings were then reviewed with a sampling of leaders from the subject facilities to confirm both their conceptual validity and practicality as potential

solutions in addressing the sustainability of performance. It is this process that provides the theoretical framework for the comprehensive collection of stories shared in Chapter Four.

In Chapter Four, I reveal the overall findings of the research process, the three movements of sustaining high performance. The movements each represent an interesting organizational paradox and suggest a model of dynamic balance and movement/action as the catalyst for the sustaining of high performance. The chapter discusses that sustainability is not a state to be achieved, but rather sustaining is a continuing action to be taken. The three movements discovered are:

- *Collective/individualism* - the balancing of strong individual contributors who have the ability and desire to powerfully collaborate
- *Agile/consistency* - being consistently clear in purpose and direction while also having the ability to rapidly respond and redeploy to an ever changing environment
- *Informative/inquiry* - an open and honest willingness to share the good, bad and ugly and to ask for and act on input and ideas from all levels of the organization

I suggest that each of the movements is supported by three key actions. It is important to note that these actions are just that - actions that people in the facilities studied reported taking each and every day.

Collective/Individualism

- *Connecting and Caring* - taking care of one another in the facility and working collaboratively to achieve goals
- *Acting with ownership and a sense of autonomy* - acting with a clear sense of ownership and having the freedom to do what is 'right'
- *Committing to who* - ensuring the right people are on board and those that do not fit the organization do not stay

Agile/Consistency

- *Challenging the status quo* - effectively questioning the status quo and suggesting new ideas
- *Acting with clarity of purpose* - acting with a clear understanding of direction and purpose of the organization
- *Going above and beyond* - always working to exceed expectations and striving to be the best

Informative/Inquiry

- *Walking the talk* - leaders at all levels roll up their sleeves and do not ask anyone to do what they would not do themselves
- *Caring about our people* - leaders actively and consistently show an expressed interest in staff
- *Seeking input and sharing information* - leaders at all levels work to understand issues and share key information about the facility (the good, bad, and ugly) with all staff

The chapter describes these three movements and nine key actions through the words of the participants themselves. In story after story, vivid pictures of vibrant and active healthcare facilities are painted through these experiences. My argument is that sustainability itself is about being in action around these three core paradoxes. The discovery is that sustainability is not achieved, but rather sustaining is a persistent and focused action of transcending the impediments of paradox to the balancing of these polarities supporting organizational performance.

In Chapter Five, I discuss the implications of the findings in the context of additional literature and present a working model for sustainability as movement. The chapter first expands the conversation on organization change, reviewing the points of Lawler and Worley (2006) as well as Marshak (2004), who suggest that change is no longer about driving for stability or some planned end state, but rather is about developing and maintaining the capacity for ongoing change. I then walk through the framework of the findings with the exploration of paradox. Ford and Backoff (1988) define paradox as "some 'thing' that is constructed by individuals when oppositional tendencies are brought into recognizable proximity through reflection and interaction" (p. 89). The conversation on paradox challenges us to think of it as something not to be managed or addressed, but rather as something that releases the potential for action and change.

Chapter Five continues with a review of the three movements of sustaining high performance as paradoxes unto themselves. The chapter suggests sustainers have the ability to transcend paradoxes, seeing them rather as polarities, for their wholeness and potential value, versus non-sustainers who end up stuck trying to eliminate the very paradoxes I have shown effect sustaining high performance. To support this process I discuss the art of balancing and the transcending of paradox, not as a means of achieving equilibrium, but rather an acknowledgement that living in polarities means being in a state of constant movement. I suggest that movement itself serves as a metaphor for sustaining performance in the organizations studied. This is represented not only by the key actions and the polarities of each movement, but also in the way the three movements are in dynamic balance themselves, represented by a potential interplay between them. This path leads to a review of the model for sustaining high performance, incorporating the three core movements and nine key actions in an active interrelationship.

In Chapter Six, I conclude this work with a discussion of theoretical implications for sustainability as movement, reviewing the importance of holding the space between polarities as a way to transcend and thrive in paradox. I begin with a discussion of the theoretical implications of paradox as an engine versus an impediment to action, suggesting that sustainability itself is about change. I then discuss the limitations of the study, raising the issue of the interpretive nature of qualitative research and the open creativity of generative theory building. A series of questions, raised as a result

of the research is also shared, revealing a number of opportunities for additional research. Implications for practice are offered, first presenting recommendations for action directly from the collected data as represented in the key actions under each movement. A table of simple actions is provided including specific steps that leaders can take as they consider moving into action around creating an environment looking to sustain performance. The chapter closes with a personal reflection on the dissertation journey and a reinforcement of the power that sustainability as movement has in impacting overall organization performance.

"Nothing is extinguished..." (Ovid)

As the findings of this research into the sustainability of performance emerge with the continued analysis of the data, the possibility is revealed that simple replicable tricks or checklists do not cause sustained performance. Rather, it is buoyed by transcending paradox and balancing polarities. Perhaps a paradox being identified is in the very use of the word sustainability itself. The static nature of this noun flies in the contextual face of the change it is argued organizations now confront.

If what we are striving for in organizations is a state of dynamic balancing; if we are generating conversations as the tool for change and progress; if we are focusing on raising our organizations upward to new heights; only then do we create the possibility of sustaining high performance. There is no longer an end state for which we strive or an end point that organizations compete to achieve before others that has not grown "old" in the very moment it has been reached. In what some might see as a

disturbing reality, I see a great potential. The success we look to achieve may just be constructed in movement, moment-by-moment.

Michael Hammer is quoted by Thomas Friedman (Friedman, 2005, p. 617) as saying "when memories exceed dreams, the end is near." He goes on to suggest that the most successful of organizations are willing "to abandon what made them successful and start fresh". While the sustaining high performers were perhaps not always starting fresh, they were not resting on their laurels and were continually looking for the "what's next". The implications that "static is stale" can not be missed in Hammer's statement. Through movement the potential for sustaining performance is a great and boundless possibility

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter, I review the literature on organizational change, with a particular emphasis on the role of paradox in sustaining transformation. I begin by showing how traditional, Lewinian understandings are inadequate for explaining the kinds of change organizations are experiencing today - change that is at one and the same time transformational and transactional (Burke & Litwin, 1992), evolutionary and revolutionary (Porras & Robertson, 1992), episodic and continuous (Marshak, 1993b; Weick & Quinn, 1999). Following Woodman (1993), I propose that the development of continuously high-performing organizations requires approaches that move beyond these dualities to enable adaptive organizations capable of repeatedly transforming and reinventing themselves. I show how change can be both continuous and transformational when it is understood as an ongoing process of social construction through discourse (Gergen, 1999; Marshak, 2004). I suggest that in the context of discourse, paradox, if embraced rather than avoided, explored rather than denied, becomes a vital source of energy to create and sustain change. This perspective becomes the starting point for the rest of my dissertation in which I examine the key forces and factors that enabled the organizations in my study to sustain high performance.

This exploration of literature is focused on the potential factors engaged in supporting the sustainability of high performance as exemplified by the subject facilities. While a

generative study, I approached this research with initial framing propositions about the nature and characteristics of change in the subject facilities, a social constructivist lens that language and discourse are the mediums through which organizational reality and actions are generated, and the thought that inherent tensions, or paradoxes, in these organizations were surfaced as a result. My initial thinking was that powerful transformations were taking place in each of these organizations. In order to keep pace with and seemingly perform ahead of the pace of change, the facilities had constructed a central discourse that enabled them to shift from the typical results of the majority of Healthco's facilities, to high performance results. These issues also raise the inherent nature of paradox in organizations today.

With that background, the framework of this study is grounded in and emerges from the extensive literature on continuous and transformational change (Burke, 2002; Gemmill & Smith, 1985; Marshak, 1993b; Nutt & Backoff, 1997; Porras & Silvers, 1991; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Woodman, 1993), and social construction (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Gergen, 1999). It is based on a positive and focused image of the future and grounded in the constructive possibilities and power of relationships (Gergen, 1999) and conversations (Ford & Ford, 1995; Ludema & DiVirgilio, 2007) in driving change in organizations. The rapidity with which organizations must respond to change is becoming legend (Barczak, Smith, & Wilemon, 1987) and in many ways is ultimately about a continued state of becoming (Hardy, Lawrence, & Grant, 2005; Kofman & Senge, 1993; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). The nature of

organizations is seen as natural and emergent (Morgan, 1997; Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1995). "Transformational change ultimately involves the creation of 'new contexts' that can break the hold of the dominant attractors in favor of new ones" (Morgan, 1997, p. 267). It requires the abandonment of past practices (Friedman, 2005), the changing of core processes and retuning of cultural commitments (Nutt & Backoff, 1997). While addressing the nature of organizations as complex and dynamic systems, these complicated phenomena and the contradictions they raise are ignored as incongruent and inconsistent and are therefore often overlooked (Quinn & Cameron, 1988b). Key to this research is the quickness to solve problems of tensions or the avoidance of potential paradox in management theory. It is in this limited body of literature on irreconcilable organizational tensions on paradox that I find the potential for pulling together the core concepts in this research, thus making a fundamental contribution to organization theory.

On Organization Change

The "Reality" of Change

The reality of change in organizations has been a central conversation in the organization sciences from its very beginning. Frederick Taylor acknowledged the impact that change had on his ability to make improvements in organizations (Burke, 2002; Weisbord, 2004). He was quoted as saying that "before starting any radical change...it is desirable...that the directors and the important owners understand what is involved in the change" (Copley, 1923). The concept of change in organizations has moved well beyond the need to simply understand what is involved in change to

an ever-expanding list of change processes and philosophies. With this divergence and the expanding reach of constant change the field of organization development (OD) itself is now challenged by its lack of a core, shared theory or common approach to change (Bradford & Burke, 2004).

The shift to an environment of constant change calls for new models and processes by which change is addressed in organizations. Peter Drucker (1995) stated that the organization that would succeed in this new environment was one that played the role of destabilizer, meaning that it was focused on using knowledge in the moment to guide its actions. The organization for this century must be built for constant change. I would expand this thought to address the fact that not only must constant change be a part of any organizational plan; it must in fact reach beyond incremental change if it is to ensure organizational success. The world no longer moves in incremental steps, but rather in significant leaps that call for new modes of effecting change.

Foundations of Change

With the acknowledgement of the great implications of change first addressed by Taylor, Kurt Lewin was one of the first to address the issues of change as a process with his model of *unfreeze, movement or transition, and refreeze* (Burke, 2002; Weick & Quinn, 1999; Weisbord, 2004). Although this model is now widely focused on change at a system level, it was initially explained at the group level (Burke, 2002) in line with much of the early work emerging at that time in the field of OD. Groups were at the center of the development activities, with a focus on the issue of change at

both the National Training Laboratory (NTL) in the form of T-Groups and the Tavistock Institute (Burke, 2002; Weisbord, 2004).

As these ideas gained footing and exposure, they saw greater application at the level of organization. T-Groups were applied to the potential for stronger interpersonal interaction and organization effectiveness. Socio-technical processes emerged from Tavistock, taking a balanced approach (as the name suggests) to addressing both the technical systems and social systems at the level of work system or group. The emergence of OD itself has much of its early roots in the application of these methods at the systems level of an organization, with the intention of leading some sense of controlled or planned change effort for the client organization (Burke, 2002).

As this research is not meant to be an exhaustive review of the historical roots of change, I do not discuss the extensive details of the emergence of change as a practice. Rather, our exploration is to look at how change has moved from the early framework introduced by Lewin to an emerging conversation on the broader nature of change in organizations. To frame this conversation, there are two central models that begin to alter the conversation on change, while building on its rich history and tradition—the Burke-Litwin model (Burke & Litwin, 1992) and the research of Porras and Robertson (1992).

Burke and Litwin

The Burke-Litwin model (Figure 5) is significant as a bridge to emerging models and concepts of organizational change due to its dual nature of addressing both the transactional and transformational aspects of change. The model, which emerged out of practice in 1987 and based on the work around organizational climate conducted by Litwin (Burke, 2002), provides a systemic view of the influencers of organization change. It does not propose a start or end point of the change process, but rather introduces 12 key change points, with the external environment as a main input and individual and organizational performance as output (Burke & Litwin, 1992).

Key to this discussion is not only the systemic perspective this model provides by addressing these 12 key elements, but also the dual transformational and transactional dimensions that begin to address a critical balance (Burke, 2002) when effecting organizational change. The upper portion of this model delves into the transformational factors of change: environment, mission, strategy, leadership and culture. The model suggests that changes in these elements have broad systemic impact, creating revolutionary change for an organization (Burke, 2002).

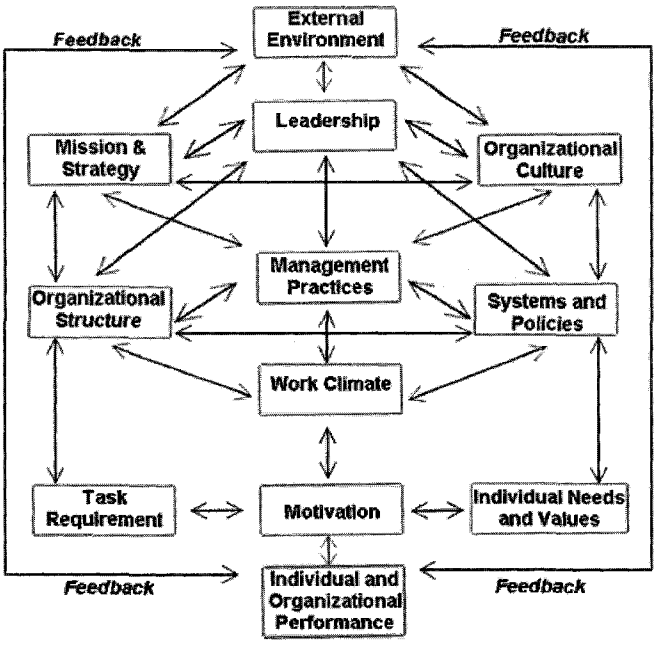

Figure 5. The Burke-Litwin (Burke & Litwin, 1992) Model of Organizational Performance and Change

The lower half of the model represents the transactional factors of change: management, structure, systems, climate, task requirements, motivation and individual needs and values. These factors represent more of the day-to-day actions in an organization, and by their very nature a change in one may not have larger systemic implications as those of transformational factors. This distinction is central to any transformational change process and is potentially best captured by the research of Porras and Silvers (1991) and represented in the following model by Porras and Robertson (1992).

Porras and Robertson

In this model (Figure 6), first order change represents those change actions focused on continuous improvement efforts; they are developmental in nature and take evolutionary or incremental steps towards change. In keeping with the traditional definition Porras and Silvers (1991) label OD as a first order planned change process. (Perhaps the very name of Organization Development supports the perpetuation of this definition). Second order change refers to more radical change that takes on a transformational or revolutionary nature.

Order of Change	Change Category	
	Planned	***Unplanned***
First	Developmental	Evolutionary
Second	Transformational	Revolutionary

Figure 6. Types of Organizational Change - Porras and Robertson (1992)

Weick and Quinn's Analysis of Change

What is significant in the Porras and Robertson (1992) model is the continued distinction of evolutionary versus revolutionary change. Which raises the question; do evolutionary change and revolutionary change need to be separate and in fact, are they in today's world? If we move away from the linear model of Lewin, which seemingly allows us to consider only one set of changes at any given moment, perhaps it may be possible for both evolutionary and incremental changes to accumulate rapidly and to result in continuous, transformational change.

The dialogue on these two comparative change modes leads us to a paper that sits at the intersection of the foundations of change and the diverging change perspectives proposed by both Burke and Litwin (1992) and Porras and Silvers (1991). In their 1999 paper, *Organization Change and Development*, Karl Weick and Robert Quinn (1999) revisit Lewin's original ideas by contrasting episodic change, which they say follows the pattern of *unfreeze-transition-refreeze*, to that of continuous change (Marshak, 1993b), which follows a pattern of *freeze-rebalance-unfreeze*.

Weick and Quinn (1999) see episodic change by its very nature to be revolutionary. It represents changes that tend to be "infrequent, discontinuous, and intentional" (p. 365) and are sparked by unrest in the system causing a need for a significant shift. This links to Porras and Silver's second order change concepts. They liken this concept to the idea of punctuated equilibrium (Gersick, 1991; Romanelli & Tushman, 1994; Tushman & Romanelli, 1985) in which organizations move through a period of relative little change or equilibrium, until a time where pressures for change increase and a revolutionary period is entered. The authors suggest that since episodic change is dramatic change requiring both the breaking of a current equilibrium and the movement to a newly created equilibrium, this process must be focused on planned intentional change. They suggest this brings us back to where we first started, with Lewin's model of *unfreeze, transition, refreeze* and with the transition step being the episodic change they propose.

While this concept is grounded in theory, it causes me to ask if the framing of this concept is potentially flawed for looking at organization transformation today. Weick and Quinn's idea is also limited in comparison to Porras' (1991) research which shows us that second order change is potentially both a planned and an unplanned change process. This raises the question as to whether the concept of episodic change is simply addressing one quadrant of Porras' model. I found it interesting how the authors address this concept as one of intentional change. They note that it is the change agent who deliberately sets out to create new circumstances through actions and interventions, either alone or in working with others to create intentional change (Ford & Ford, 1995).

I submit that in the use of this example Weick and Quinn (1999) expose a potential limitation to their argument. Why would the actions of a change agent equate only to episodic change in their account, when in reality Ford and Ford (1995) assert that change occurs in the ongoing process of communication, and is therefore a "recursive process of social construction in which new realities are created" (p. 542). In contrast to the proposed concept of episodic change, Weick and Quinn (1999) suggest the alternative concept of "continuous change" (Marshak, 1993b) which represents changes that are "ongoing, evolving, and cumulative" (Weick and Quinn, 1999, p. 375). They suggest that organizations that support this type of change are built on the ideas of improvisation and learning and are self-organizing in nature. This ties more

directly to Porras and Silvers' first order change of evolutionary, or as I suggest, incremental change.

The intervention theory proposed by Weick and Quinn (1999) to address continuous change is that of "freeze, rebalance, and unfreeze." Freezing allows patterns to be seen and understood, rebalancing is the reframing of issues as opportunities, and unfreezing is resuming the movement of the organization on its path of improvisation, learning, and self-organizing. In my analysis of this process, I am not sure how freezing any process can be equated to continuous change. I am also struck how Weick & Quinn focus on the positive framework of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 2005) and positive organization scholarship (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003) in this model during the step of unbalance, when things can be reframed. The question that this raises for me: If we were to be constructionist in nature, the first principle in AI itself (Bushe & Kassam, 2005), would there only be one phase in which positive change could occur, that would have us experience continuous change? Why is continuous change only capable of being evolutionary in nature? This very proposition diminishes our ability to make the kind of change needed in today's environment.

It is here where I believe Weick and Quinn's arguments begin to fall in on themselves. Rather than finding the integrative nature of change, they have created disparate concepts. This leaves us again looking at change with competing theories,

supporting the point raised by Bradford and Burke that as a field of OD in this new environment of constant change we lack a core, shared theory or common approach to change.

BIG OD

In 1993, Dick Woodman addressed this very issue in his article, *Observations from the field of organizational change and development from the lunatic fringe* (perhaps in response to Porras and Robertson's work in 1992). He warned us to look at the issue of OD and change with a wider lens, making the point that our founders built this field to do BIG OD (Woodman, 1993). This is what he described as second-order transformations at the level of strategy and culture. BIG OD is system-wide change and has no beginning or end, but rather provides a "way of managing complex organizations so that they are able to survive in a world of constant change" (Woodman, 1993, p. 72). It is here that Woodman makes perhaps the most significant point in looking at change theory and in raising the conflicting ideas explored above. He raises the potential that change itself is paradoxical, suggesting it is both transformational **and** continuous. He emphasizes that managing this dynamic tension should be the rallying cause and "battle cry" of all OD practitioners.

Woodman is quick to point out that in looking at our BIG approaches we need to acknowledge and recognize how the OD approach also draws a distinction from other perspectives on change. The dual focus of OD, from its very beginnings in action research and the T-Group processes, has been on both organizational effectiveness

and human fulfillment in the work environment. It is this values base on which OD should continue to grow its ability to affect organizations and change. It is from this value base that our new models for change can emerge, in integrating our divergent paths and reminding ourselves that with BIG OD great things can be accomplished for organizations. Woodman summarizes his point in a simple, yet powerfully integrative statement: "Organization development means creating adaptive organizations capable of repeatedly transforming and reinventing themselves" (Woodman, 1993, p. 73).

So how can we get back to BIG OD, to continuous, transformational change? I believe we get there by leaving our linear incremental tracks, such as proposed by Weick & Quinn, and moving to a three-dimensional, generative and transformational process for ongoing change. Somewhere in the nexus between the deep structures, equilibrium periods, and revolutionary periods of punctuated equilibrium (Gersick, 1991; Tushman & Romanelli, 1985) and the planned change interventions of Lewin (Burke, 2002; Weisbord, 2004) and suggested by Robertson et al. (Robertson, Roberts, & Porras, 1993) lies an opportunity for BIG OD to emerge, where continuous, transformational change is creating adaptive organizations allowing the creation of new contexts to emerge (Morgan, 1997, p. 267).

Many popular change methodologies (such as re-engineering) support the idea that rapid change (what we have discussed as revolutionary) requires a different way of

acting than continuous change (evolutionary). Recent case studies show that in practice this is not the case, showing instead that leadership seemed to appear to do the needed things more quickly rather than taking short-cuts in the process (Calori, Baden-Fuller, & Hunt, 2000).

This supports our earlier discussion of BIG OD in saying that change can be both continuous and revolutionary. In fact I believe many of the prevailing models of change, based on linear paths, steps or engineering-like flow charts, miss one of the great paradoxes (Luscher, Lewis, & Ingram, 2006; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989; Smith & Berg, 1987) in organizational science; there is a need for both transformation and preservation in order to provide effective change (Adler, 1988; Volberda, 1996; Weick, 1982). French Philosopher, Henri Bergson called this concept *creative evolution* (Bergson, 1998); that living things have a past that does not leave us, but rather carries with us into the future we create. Our past becomes the foundation on which we can ultimately transform. We can only speak to the future based on our past, and it is in our declaration of a desired future that we create continuous, transformational change.

Can Change be Both Continuous and Transformational?

The ongoing debate on change models, specifically the need to distinguish between continuous and revolutionary change, is seen in Brown and Eisenhardt's (1997) work. They seek to draw the distinctions between the punctuated equilibrium view (Gersick, 1991; Romanelli & Tushman, 1994) which they believe sees change as "rare, risky

and episodic" and the perspective of change as continuous (Marshak, 1993a; Weick & Quinn, 1999), in which change is "frequent and relentless". In Gersick's work on revolutionary change theories (Gersick, 1991), she presents the opposite perspective from Brown and Eisenhardt (1997). She describes punctuated equilibrium as the evolution of systems through the alternations of periods of equilibrium, in which persistent underlying structures permit only incremental change, and periods of revolution, in which underlying structures are fundamentally altered.

This is clearly a chaotic feeling model of change, but one that is truly revolutionary in nature. The idea that organizations hold steady in one position until a blast of change emerges seems challenging at best, but Gersick shows how this model is exemplified through various theories in other fields. It is this swift capacity to change that also provides support for my thoughts on sustainability as movement. Quick, revolutionary changes are necessary in today's environment, but this does not supersede the need for incremental change to occur as well.

What is interesting in Gersick's work is that she too presents an argument against simple models of linear, planned change, yet is clearly proposing an idea counter to the models and processes proposed by Brown and Eisenhardt. It is this very drive for distinction in theory that presents the greatest challenge for the overall conceptualization of change.

This continual need to create distinction, rather than connection as espoused by Woodman (1993) is what brings us back to the initial challenges laid out by Bradford and Burke (2004); if those of us in OD can not get clarity regarding how we frame change, we can not provide a central way in which to help our client systems manage, lead, or experience change that benefits the system and the people that comprise it.

Perhaps what is critical to a new change model is holding the tension of these two positions that many scholars have worked so hard to distinguish. Perhaps a significant contribution could be to show that the linkages between revolutionary and continuous change allow us to frame the concept of change in a way most relevant to today's organizational environment.

When we get in to the specifics of comparing continuous and revolutionary (episodic) change, it may be caused by the perspectives of the process observers. From a distant vantage point, routines and repetitive actions may seem sprinkled with occasional episodes of revolutionary change. But if you move to a micro-level view you can see the continuous motion of ongoing adaptation and adjustment (Purser & Petranker, 2005). Some suggest (Orlikowski, 1996) that these ongoing adjustments are the essence of organizational change. This again leads to the dialogue on the simultaneity of continuous and episodic change.

Beer and Walton (1987) ask a very simple question to help examine our thoughts of continuous and transformational change: Can change actually be planned at all? If this question was significant in the late 1980s, I am fascinated by the emergence of countless consulting organizations that thrived and grew on selling the very idea that change could be managed. This also addresses a critical point in the development of the concept of sustainability as movement. Rather than change being brought about as a project (Barczak, Smith, & Wilemon, 1987) that has a beginning and an end with carefully calculated steps and pre-determined actions, change is a flowing and organic process requiring continual adjustment of goals and direction throughout the process (Beer & Walton, 1987).

In fact Beer and Walton (1987) assert that research on change clearly argues that change does not obey the linear models and phases espoused by Lewin (Weisbord, 2004), Kotter (1996) and others. Instead change in many ways becomes an art of understanding many competing variables, recognizing both the current state and the readiness of an organization for change, and building on (Kimberly & Bouchikhi, 1995) and balancing the past (Bergson, 1998) with the energy and action committed to achieving a desired future (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2003). In this we see how change must be both continuous and transformational and where BIG OD can actually re-emerge.

Discourse: A Catalyst for Continuous, Transformational Change

As Weick and Quinn (1999) suggested, change can be generated and sustained through the interactions of individuals. From a social constructionist perspective, it is in our interactions (Homans, 1951/1992) that we create the potential for discourse and therefore change. This potential emerges in conversation (Fiol, 2002; Ford & Ford, 1995; Quinn & Dutton, 2005) and is generated in relationship (Gergen, 1999) through language and conversation (Bouwen & Fry, 1996; Wittgenstein, 1953). Thus, discourse itself can become social action (Gergen & Gergen, 2003). It is discourse that enables the creation of shared meanings and the raising of participatory consciousness (Bohm, 1996) that can ultimately lead an organization towards significant change.

The Social Construction of Change

Discourse itself is at the heart of social construction (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 3). It is within individual interactions that the point of generation and possibility for change is found. Ken Gergen, in his book, *An Invitation to Social Construction* (1999) presents four working assumptions on social construction that help frame its usefulness and application in looking at new models of change:

- The terms by which we understand our world and our self are neither required nor demanded by "what there is". For any state of affairs there are an infinite number of ways by which it can be described or explained.

- Our modes of description, explanation and/or representation are derived from relationship. Meaning is born from the interactions between individuals.
- As we describe, explain or otherwise represent, so do we fashion our future. It is in generative discourse that we can challenge what exists to create what can be.
- Reflection on our forms of understanding is vital to our future well being. It is only from our current traditions and reality that a new state of being can emerge.

The implications of Gergen's ideas weigh greatly on how we begin to construct a new way of looking at organization change. Fundamental to this idea are Gergen's second and third points; that our meaning is born from the interactions that take place between individuals, and that through generative discourse in those interactions we create our future. While we believe we need to work at the level of BIG OD in organizations—at the systemic and cultural levels—social construction has us identify the critical touch point to be the interaction between individuals, at the point of discourse. The research reveals that this process of ongoing interaction seeds the potential for sustaining performance.

The Emerging Dialogue on Discourse and Change

There is a growing movement to look at change from a new perspective, with a greater focus on dialogue and a proposition that change is more an evolving process of collectively sharing and constructing new meaning (Anderson, 2005). This perspective has provided a platform for an expansion of social constructionist and discourse-based approaches to change, with the focus now being the development and transformation of meaning during the change process itself. The language of change is moving away from being managerial in nature, based on prescribed phases or stages (Lewin, Kotter, etc.) and political in nature, based on the organizing process of key interest groups and stakeholders, to a more social approach where discourse emerges as the primary driver of change (Anderson, 2005).

Chia (1999) also addresses this growing realization that our current theories of change are not adequate to capture the new dynamics of change. Asserting in fact, we have continued to treat change as a challenge from a static-based framework. If we believe change to be our new reality as so much of the current writing expresses, why do we continue to stand in a place of stability to address it?

Chia proposes an alternative model to both our continuous and revolutionary change models, instead offering a *rhizomic* model of change (Chia, 1999, p. 210). A rhizome is a horizontal stem (usually found underground) that often sends out roots and shoots from its nodes ("The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language," 2006). I believe this model provides for a broad connection of meaning to guide change and

creates the possibility of bringing transformational and continuous change together. In doing so, it expresses the far-reaching power of discourse and exemplifies the power that interaction and dialogue purposefully have in creating the possibility for change.

More importantly for Chia, he believes this model translates into focusing less on the concept of change as a process and more on the act of "becoming organizational transformation" itself (Chia, 1999, p. 211).

> Contemporary models of organizational change remain, for the most part, trapped in a Parmenidean intellectual legacy which implicitly elevates permanence over change, discreteness over immanent interconnectedness, linear progress over heterogeneous becoming and equilibrium over flux and transformation. A major consequence of this still dominant metaphysical orientation is that change is perceived as an epiphenomenon of primary unchanging entities. Thus it is organization which is privileged in the expression "organizational change". The underlying implication is that there are existing, discrete, social entities called "organizations" which "evolve" from one stable state to another. Such an orientation misses the truly dynamic character of social and material reality. From the perspective of a *metaphysics of change*, on the other hand, it is change which is natural and primary and 'organization' is seen as a secondary and artificially-imposed attempt to arrest and stabilize what is essentially a ceaselessly fluxing reality indifferent to our causes. Organization is a human accomplishment, and one very necessary in order to extrude a more stable, familiar and livable world from an essentially undifferentiated reality. Organization, as such, is first and foremost about "organizing social worlds" and not primarily about the functional effective deployment of limited resources. It is organization, not change, which is the exception. (Chia, 1999, p. 226)

Chia makes a significant point here in looking at change in a new way, in essence saying "change is". In our many attempts to name and tame change through the

science of organizations, our constructions have been focused in the wrong direction. Change is the natural and primary reality; we can see every day that change does naturally occur without any action on our part. It is our social construction of organization that we have the greatest ability to influence.

This is where change and discourse provide the means for changing how we look at organizations. In examining a new state of change, we too can view sustained performance in a different light. As the data show, performance itself is not a state to be achieved, but an ongoing process of movement. Sustainability is not a plateau, but as Chia acknowledges above, we are challenged by a sense of permanence over change, a sense of equilibrium over flux. We need to acknowledge the emerging paradox that to sustain we must be in movement, in disequilibrium, in a state of continuous and transformational change.

A Shifting Perspective on Organization Change

A significant shift in the discourse of change is taking place in today's organizations and calls for a new way of talking, from static to dynamic and from descriptive to active. It is through this shift in language that we will ensure the type of continuous, transformational change outcomes we look to achieve. Lawler and Worley (2006) suggest that this "new" language is at the core of the *built to change* organization. These organizations do not search for **the** strategy, but are continuously strategizing and do not attempt to find **the** organization design, but rather remain in an ongoing process of organizing. As seen in the data, the sustaining high performers had just

such an active and dynamic discourse. In looking at the findings, they are not static tasks, but rather focused actions and are in clear alignment with this dynamic mindset.

The theory emerging in this study supports the notion that organizations must be willing to look inward and loosen the binds of stability. As in taking off training wheels for the first time, the organization may well feel imbalanced and at risk of falling, but it is only in releasing those constraints that organizations can emerge change ready. This is what Woodman (1993) challenged us to consider from the lunatic fringe, it is what our subject facilities told us through their experience and common "ways of being", it is what Lawler and Worley (2006) suggest in asserting that the successful organizations in the world to come and even so in the world today are those that are built to change.

> In an increasingly complex world, organizations built on traditional assumptions of stability, equilibrium, alignment and predictability will, more and more, be out of touch and ineffective. Pursuing the latest management fad that is sold as a way to make organizations more efficient, more agile, more reengineered, or more whatever doesn't address the fundamental need for organizations to change more quickly and effectively. We can put lipstick on the pig, but it's still a pig. (Lawler & Worley, 2006, p. 283)

Marshak (2004) challenges us to broaden our thinking even further, presenting a new perspective on change through the concept of organizational morphing.

> The primary task in organizational morphing would be to help foster… an organization capable of continuous whole-system change. Note especially that the emphasis would be on creating and maintaining

> capability rather than arriving at some preferred or planned end state. (Marshak, 2004, p. 16)

Marshak also suggests we need to look for new language to help us move beyond the embedded assumptions we currently hold in thinking about change as there is still a strong tendency for organizations to strive for a state of permanence, order, and stability. This idea raises the overarching paradox discussed above, that to sustain performance or maintain capability actually requires our willingness to keep moving. Also, this issue raises the concept of paradox as a key means to explore the very nature of the sustaining organizations in this study.

Paradox as a Potential Framework

> Why is it that organization theorists should be concerned with the issues of paradox? What insights does it offer to the understanding of organizations that are not available or have not been available though the existing "nonparadoxical" perspectives? For us, the answer to these questions is quite simple: *paradoxes are important because they reflect the underlying tensions that generate and energize organizational change* (italics added)...A focus on paradox, therefore, moves us away from the concept of organizations as static systems coping with problematic environmental fluctuations through deviation counteracting processes to a concept of organizations as continually dynamic systems that carry the seeds of change within themselves (Ford & Backoff, 1988, p. 82)

In examining the idea that sustainability itself may actually be grounded in action or movement, we are called to examine the paradoxical nature of organizations themselves as Ford and Backoff suggest above. Many writers have identified the importance of paradox in understanding the complexity of organizational performance (Marsh & Macalpine, 1999; Pascale, 1990; Peters & Waterman, 1982).

Yet, paradox as a concept unto itself carries many challenges and stigma in current management thinking. Poole and Van de Ven (1989) suggest (as reinforced by Marshak and Ford and Backoff above) that much of the focus of contemporary theory construction is still biased towards the side of permanence, order and stability. They add that little has been addressed in looking at the tensions or oppositions (paradoxes) in organizations. Quinn and Cameron (1988b) support this idea, adding that investigations of complicated organizational phenomena are often focused on linear solutions and equilibrium, either ignoring contradictions or identifying one as good and the other bad in order to resolve the issue. This seems to suggest that there is a still a general discomfort with the idea of, and feeling experienced when facing, paradox.

This avoidance of, and attempt to resolve, paradox seems to generally permeate organizations. While acknowledging paradox exists, many continue to suggest paradox is something to be "managed" (Morgan, 1997; Peters & Waterman, 1982) or "addressed" (Van de Ven & Poole, 1988). In contrast as paradox has become increasingly prevalent in organizational studies (Lewis, 2000; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989; Quinn, 1988; Quinn & Cameron, 1988b), it has also presented itself as an effective means by which to explore what is taking place in organizations (Luscher et al., 2006).

In recognizing paradox we are exposed to and can more effectively explore the complexity and ambiguity of organizational life (Cameron & Quinn, 1988). In exploring a model for sustaining high performance, paradox presents a powerful means to get at the dynamic factors involved. Poole and Van de Ven (1989) believe paradox can serve as a viable alternative strategy of theory building. In looking for organizational tensions or oppositions, we can stimulate the development of broader, more interesting (Bartunek, Rynes, & Ireland, 2006; Davis, 1971) theoretical concepts.

Luscher, Lewis and Ingram (2006) add that understanding paradox does not solve problems, but instead creates the potential for new possibilities. They suggest that in fact, paradox itself is socially constructed. Much as discussed above, it is the process of the discursive actions of an organization's members. Paradox emerges when, "elements of our thoughts, actions, and emotions that seemed logical when considered in isolation are juxtaposed, appearing mutually exclusive" (p.492). Ford and Backoff (1988) provide a working definition that supports this assertion suggesting paradox is "some 'thing' that is constructed by individuals when oppositional tendencies are brought into recognizable proximity through reflection or interaction" (p.89).

In taking on this definition and perspective we can connect the importance of social construction and change discourse to not only the realization of paradox, but also as

central to the ability to thrive in the existence of paradox. As Ford and Backoff (1988) stated above, the presence of paradoxes and the tensions sparked by their duality creates the potential for action and energizes organizational change. This supports the ongoing nature of action and continuous movement.

Defining Paradox and Its Application—Ford and Backoff

While many attempts have been made to define paradox, Ford and Backoff (1988), in reaching the definition shared above, have been purposeful in framing paradox as the integration of three critical concepts or views. The first of these views support the notion that paradox is a subjective phenomenon in the minds of the beholders (Dell, 1981 as cited in Ford & Backoff, 1988). This relativistic view suggests that what is paradoxical to one, may in fact not appear so to another. The second view, interactional, suggests that paradox emerges from the interpersonal interactions that occur. This supports the notion that paradox is socially constructed. The third view, dialectical, suggests that paradox is realized when natural opposites are finally acknowledged as being in existence. At this point, when conflicting items are both recognized and shown in juxtaposition, paradox is provided a space to emerge and be recognized. With the integration of these ideas, we return to the working definition of paradox suggested by Ford and Backoff, "some 'thing' that is constructed by individuals when oppositional tendencies are brought into recognizable proximity through reflection or interaction" (p. 89).

In exploring the ideas of Poole and Van de Ven (1989) we focus on paradox from a social perspective (as framed by Ford and Backoff (1988) above) rather than a logical one. They support this notion and recognize the influence and impact of paradox in stating that "organizations are systems of relations" (Ford & Backoff, 1988, p. 113) influenced by the very language and metaphors on which they are constructed. If we deny the presence of paradox or ignore their constructed presence in favor of a stable or consistent framework, we in essence restrict the very movement an organization can make. Rather, they suggest paradox itself is a central influence in organization change.

> If realities are constructed (as is suggested), paradox is a function of how construction is accomplished, and the dualities of paradox provide the energy for change, then it is possible to bring about organizational change through the creation of paradox…It is the creation of paradoxical tension which serves as the bases for change. (Ford & Backoff, 1988, p. 114)

This suggests that as we look towards the ideas of continuous, transformation change and towards sustainability as movement, it is the creation of and the holding of paradoxical tension that becomes a potential key in building a theory of "sustained" performance.

Managing Paradox as a Challenge to Change—Morgan

Morgan (1997) suggests successfully managing change in organization requires an ability to deal with the "contradictory tensions" of paradox. Using the potential of a new future versus the maintaining of the status quo as example of the dialectical challenge organizations face, he suggests that it is the very nature that tensions are

viewed as contradictory that could stand in the way of change. Morgan dubs this the "inevitable struggle of opposites" and suggests that if we are to lead successful change, namely transformational change in organizations, managers must be skilled in managing the tensions that arise.

Morgan suggests two steps in managing paradox. The first is recognizing that both dimensions of the contradictions usually have merit. He contrasts this perspective to the idea of removing resistance to change first introduced by Lewin, which calls for identifying and following the forces that drive change. Rather, Morgan believes the dialectical view allows for the potential to embrace both sides of the paradox. "Paradox can not be successfully resolved by eliminating one side" (1997, p. 294).

The second step is to suggest ways that capture the value of the dual tensions while minimizing the conflict. This is not conflict avoidance, but rather finding new perspectives in which to frame the dialectical nature of the paradox. While Morgan warns that paradox remains one of the major forces stalling change in organizations, it can be "transformed into a major lever of change" (p. 295). I would suggest what Morgan begins to suggest here is that rather than manage paradox, we must look for ways to transcend it to enable its power to influence effective change in organizations.

Resolving Paradox or Theory Building?—Poole and Van De Ven

> Paradox is the simultaneous presence of two mutually exclusive assumptions or statements; taken singly each is incontestably true, but taken together they are inconsistent. If unacknowledged and unresolved, a paradox can drive theorists to emphasize one pole over the other, in an attempt to maintain an elusive consistency. Organization and management theorists have not been immune to this tendency. Most efforts to build theories of organization change have emphasized either action or structure, stability or change, external or internal causality, and have subordinated the other terms. In part, this tendency to deny the existence of paradox may be due to the common quest to achieve coherent, consistent, and parsimonious theories. But this quest often appears to minimize appreciation of the paradoxes inherent in human beings and their social institutions. Moreover, and most important, a theory that incorporates paradox need not, itself, be paradoxical. However, achieving such a theory requires adopting new methods for systematically addressing paradox inherent in organizational life. (Van de Ven & Poole, 1988, p. 21)

Poole and Van de Ven (1989; Van de Ven & Poole, 1988) present an alternative theory to building theory, proposing we "look for theoretical tensions or oppositions and use them to stimulate the development of more encompassing theories" (p. 563). They take on a social constructionist perspective that theory building itself is a discursive process. Theories do not represent ultimate truth, "but rather are alternative cuts of a multifaceted reality" (p. 563).

With this foundation, paradox in organizational or management theory building takes on a special form, the social paradox. One of the most significant representations of this is in the juxtaposition of stability and change itself, sustainability and movement perhaps? According to Poole and Van de Ven this is due to the nature of social

paradoxes being "looser". Rather than clear logical contradictions, social paradoxes require a more careful exploration of the subtle tensions (and I add potential connections) between seemingly contradictory positions.

Even with this perspective that paradox is a fundamental part of organizational life, Pool and Van de Ven (1988) offer four ways in which to address the paradoxes faced in organizations.

1. Accept the paradox, learn to live with it and use it in a constructive manner. This perhaps poses the greatest challenge to the drive for consistency and either/or thinking in drawing theoretical conclusions. While this first option focuses on acknowledging the paradox, it still raises the fundamental challenges current theory building faces in suggesting "a truth".

The next three suggestions shift to the position of resolving the paradox.

2. Clarify levels of analysis which provides a spatial separation in the paradox. For example while A and B may be paradoxical, A is a micro issue, while B is a macro issue or A is only relevant to Senior Leadership, while B is focused on staff.
3. Temporally separate the paradox and suggest that each side of a paradox might hold for different time periods; for example, A is relevant in times of rapid change or turmoil, while B is present during times of stability or calm.

4. Introduce new terms that in essence provide for the reframing of the paradoxical state. This attempt to change the nature of the paradox again seems to be avoidance rather than an acknowledgement of paradox.

The challenge posed by these attempts to resolve paradox reinforces that the drive for consistency has us often unable to hold paradox in a way that can constructively stretch the boundaries of our thinking. The subtle acknowledgement by Poole and Van de Ven in their presentation, is that even with the recognition that paradox is part of organizational life, and even in the face of many who suggest it is in paradox that we find the potential for the greatest outcomes, we seem to tend significantly towards resolution of paradox, versus living in the paradox in search of new truths.

Capitalizing on Paradox—Fiol

Fiol (2002) suggests that to capitalize on paradox organizations must use "the inherent tensions to one's advantage rather than ignoring or resolving them" (p. 655). She presents the idea that most often there is a tendency to engage in a process of "deparadoxification" in which there is an intentional attempt to resolve the paradox. She believes this is exemplified by the tendency of research to avoid or resolve the tensions by focusing on some middle ground. This overlooks the essence of a paradox that is grounded in the dynamic and distinct tensions of both polarities not necessarily in some halfway point between them. While Fiol focused on identity change in her article, her central message is that the clear acknowledgement and effective use of

paradox—capitalizing on paradox—can lead to successful change and organizational transformation.

Towards a Model of Transcending Paradox

Lewis' article, *Exploring Paradox* (2000) pulls our conversation of paradox together and offers a way in which we can move forward in using paradox effectively in the organizational sciences. Considering the many issues raised in the cross section of material on paradox, it was interesting to discover a relatively limited body of work around this concept in terms of its impact on organizations. While much of the work identified the existence of paradox as an unavoidable part of organizational life, the authors suggested that much of the effort in organizations is focused on reducing paradoxical situations (Fiol's "deparadoxification"). Lewis pulls many of these thoughts together in a means for how we can begin to move forward in our understanding and effective application of paradox.

Lewis offers a means to tap the positive potential of paradox, introducing a new way to look at the concept of managing paradox. Rather than attempting to reduce the tension of paradox or rationalize its existence, we should use paradox to generate insight and change. She believes that the linear models under which we tend to frame organizational action do a great disservice to the complex organizations of today. We can not turn from paradox and suppress the tensions paradox may reveal. Rather, we need to explore those very tensions. Lewis also suggests that in today's organizations this tension is no longer the experience of top leaders, but exists throughout

organizations. With that "managing paradox requires that local actors learn to cope with their tensions" (p. 764).

This is a new perspective on an old term. Rather than managing paradox as a means of reduction and control, it is managing paradox from a position of acknowledgement and embrace. It is in the understanding of the potential contributions of paradox that this idea of managing paradox can be reframed.

Lewis discusses three means by which researchers have chosen to address paradox. The first, acceptance, is the freedom to live with a paradox, allowing it to exist not as a source of conflict, but acknowledging it as part of organizational life. The second, confrontation, is as it suggests, taking on a paradox with the intention of shifting its presence and ultimately reducing the tension it brings. The third, Lewis suggests is transcendence, which represents the "capacity to think paradoxically" (p. 764). This is a reframing of thinking that incorporates paradox in an organization's "way of being". With this, the tensions typically associated with paradox are experienced in a new way. Rather than contradictory and potential impediments to action, they are experienced as complementary and interwoven. Transcendence is not the removal of paradox. It is changing the way in which paradox is experienced in the organization, from what was potentially an impediment to what is potentially a powerful force.

Change, Paradox and Sustaining Performance

Smith and Berg (1987) see the effort to avoid paradox as the means by which "stuckness" is created. They suggest that by embracing the tensions posed in paradox we find the ability to move a group (and in that case an organization) forward. The literature continues to expand its exploration of change in organizations as a means by which this forward motion occurs, while the debate still lingers as to the nature of change that exists. Is change incremental or revolutionary? It is the paradoxical nature of this question alone, and a drive for theory that supports one idea over another that exemplifies our natural tendencies to avoid the opportunity to live in the tensions created by the juxtaposition of these two polarities. Not only is this part of the conversation on organizational change, but it shows up in dialogues across many elements in the organizational sciences.

While it is also widely recognized that the paradoxes raised in organizational life are unavoidable, little has been offered on how organizational change and paradox actually allow for the sustainability of organization vitality and performance. The following exploration into what supports the sustainability of performance is grounded in these two very items—paradox and change—and leads us to the critical intersection between them. The literature has provided grounding in change theory and a suggestion that BIG OD, i.e. continuous, transformational change, has a significant position in exploring what effects organizations today. The literature also expresses the unavoidable challenges of paradox suggesting a collection of means by

which to manage and exist in paradox as a constructive part of organizational life. Only in Lewis' suggestion that paradox can be transcended , can we begin to explore a new way to experience and exist with paradox as the regular element of organizational life it is. If sustainability is potentially based on the paradoxical nature of movement, the possibility for looking at how we lead change and strive for performance outcomes in organizations can be fundamentally impacted. Lewis perhaps summed this up most effectively and begins to frame the potential for an emerging theory in her conclusion.

> The rising intricacy, ambiguity, and diversity of organizations place a premium on researchers' abilities to think paradoxically: to live and even thrive within the plurality and changes of organizational life and help practitioners do likewise. Building this capacity requires confronting our own defenses— the desire to over rationalize and oversimplify the complications of organizational life—and learning to explore the natural ebb and flow of tensions. (2000, p. 774)

In this review of the literature, I explore the nature of change facing organizations today, raising the issue that the either/or mentality of change being evolutionary or transformational misses the need for both continuous and transformational mindsets in today's environment. While holding both may seem contradictory or indeed paradoxical, I explore how it is that paradox itself best supports our ability to both survive and thrive in an environment of constant change. As Ford and Backoff (1988) suggest, paradoxes both energize change and move us beyond the view of organizations as static systems. In doing so, the potentiality of movement is raised, for if we deny the presence of paradox or are simply stopped by it, we restrict the

very movement an organization can make. Ultimately I suggest we need to look at the idea of transcending paradox (Lewis, 2000; Pascale, 1990) in which we see the elements of paradox not as roadblocks, but rather as potential conduits for sustaining organizational performance. So in this transcendence is movement and in movement is sustainability. This thinking provided the framework of my research endeavor and the methodology we will now explore in attempting to answer the question: *What supports the sustainability of high performance?*

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The Emerging Research Question

While the findings of the initial High Performance Facility Study were having resonating effects on Healthco, it also became clear that the simple discovery of common characteristics was not having a direct influence on the organization overall. A few of the organization's facilities were trending toward the high performance criteria, but many more were not. In particular, there were the nine facilities in the original sample that had seemed to lock onto something that not only had them achieve the original criteria, but also had them consistently produce stronger performance results over an extended period of time.

With this recognition, a critical question was raised, challenging the very core of the initial study's findings. Perhaps, beyond a simple checklist of characteristics as was initially discovered, there were potentially greater organizational factors at work in these facilities. From this idea, the research question at the core of this study emerged, taking the exploration into these high performing hospitals one step further. The study would need to look beyond the identification of common characteristics at the surface to determine what was happening *inside* the organizations. It is through this exploratory "dive" that we can begin to answer the question: *What supports the sustainability of high performance?*

Foundational Data Analysis

A Concept of Movement Revealed

Where did the idea of movement begin to reveal itself? Interestingly enough, it was discovered in data that was collected as part of the original research conducted in 2005. During the initial study, over 1800 surveys were collected from ten of the twelve participant facilities. The data was initially difficult to analyze since all facilities surveyed were considered high performers; with that the response pattern across the surveys was consistent. With no significant variance to explore, the data lay dormant for almost three years until the question of sustainers versus non-sustainers was raised in this study in the summer of 2007.

It was at the point where sustainers and non-sustainers could be distinguished that the data took on new potential. This led to a new question: What did the data reveal in looking for possible distinctions between the responses collected at the sustaining and non-sustaining facilities? This was particularly interesting as the survey was conducted in the summer of 2005, which marked the beginning of the extended period of data reviewed to determine which facilities sustained performance over the period 2002–2007. The possibility was that the survey responses provided potential indicators of sustainability before it was ever considered a question.

Analysis of the survey data was initiated for the participating facilities. Two of the original twelve subject facilities did not complete this survey during the original study period as site visits conflicted with the administration of Healthco's corporate

employee survey. The over 1800 survey responses were examined for complete responses to support statistical validity for further analysis, leaving 1478 surveys with responses to every question. Of the 1478, 1078 surveys were from sustaining facilities and 400 were from non sustainers. These numbers mirrored the proportion of sustaining (7) to non-sustaining (3) facilities represented in the survey data.

To complete the analysis, the question responses were grouped from a four point response scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree) to a simple agree/disagree comparison. Using SPSS the responses of the members of the sustaining facilities were compared with those of the non sustainers. Six questions were determined to be both statistically valid (chi-square of $< .05$) and showed a significant difference in the agree/disagree responses (Table 1). The score response reflected on the table represents the difference (in basis-points) between the sustainers' percent agree response and the non sustainers' percent agree response.

At the same time, five questions were identified that were both valid and reflected no statistically significant distinction between the responses of sustainers and non-sustainers (Table 2). This comparison group was important as it allowed not only for comparison of individual questions, but also the opportunity to see if there were any potential themes or patterns in the distinguishing versus similar responses of sustainers and non sustainers. As the data revealed, in fact there was.

Table 1. Distinguishing Sustainers and Non-Sustainers - A Pattern of Action

Question	Sustainers vs. Non-Sustainers Score Difference on "Agree"
We do not have a high rate of *turnover*.	11.9
Our recruitment **process** ensures we attract and hire staff with the right competencies to achieve our goals and reach our facility vision.	6.3
We have a **process** to suggest new ideas or change current services in order to achieve facility objectives.	6.0
We have adaptable **systems and processes** that allow us to meet the demands of a diverse patient population and a changing market.	5.2
Our facility *mission* is clearly understood and shared by staff.	4.7
Our hiring **process** targets candidates who exemplify the competencies we need and who share the values of our facility.	4.6

Table 2. Similarities in Sustainers and Non-Sustainers - A Static Pattern

Question	Sustainers vs. Non-Sustainers Score Difference on "Agree"
Our facility *has* a defined set of shared values.	0.2
I *understand* how my individual role contributes to the success of the facility.	0.2
Staff is *aware* of facility vision.	- 0.4
People that work in our facility *share* the same set of values.	- 0.8
The values we *share* support our facility vision and objectives.	0.9
Staff *believes* their individual jobs have an impact on the facility objectives.	1.0

The most significant discovery in the data was the pattern comparing the language of the similarities to the differences. The similarities were found in the questions that addressed steady state and passive items, for example, "Our facility *has* a defined set of shared values" and "Staff *is aware* of facility vision". Both had a difference in percent agree responses of less than one point and, in fact, in the case of the latter example (aware of facility vision) and the question of shared values the non-sustainers actually had a slightly higher percent agree response.

On the other hand, the pattern that was revealed in the differences between the sustainers and non-sustainers was about processes and actions. The questions that emerged primarily touched on the critical means of generating outcomes through people, communication processes, and the ability to adapt. They identified active structures that could serve as conduits for generating outcomes.

Also in the data distinguishing the sustainers and non sustainers, there were two questions one could argue were static: "not having a high rate of turnover" and "having a mission that is clearly understood and shared by staff". I believe these two items are distinct from the similarities in that they represent both the framework (mission) and outcomes (turnover) of action. Mission represents the active direction an organization moves, and a clear commitment to purpose (Levin, 2000) versus a vision or values that serve as static pictures or objectives to be achieved. With turnover, the question represents the choice made by employees to remain in the

organization, a result of actions taken by the sustaining organizations to retain talent, whether directly or indirectly.

It was in the discoveries revealed in this data set which had been waiting patiently to be rediscovered, that the idea of sustainability as action and ultimately as motion was seeded. Through the evaluation of the performance and outcome measures discussed in Chapter 1, and the review of the comparative survey results shared above the question guiding this study was substantiated, framed and solidified, leading us to ask:

What supports the sustainability of high performance?

It is important to note here that the framework and motivation for this study was not concerned with defining "high performance". Rather, it was an investigation into what enabled a certain selection of organizations to maintain an established set of "high performance" criteria over time. While the popular literature is rife with content attempting to capture the essence of high performance, this study makes the bigger case that the achievement and sustaining of powerful outcomes trumps the ability to acquire a checklist of characteristics that deem an organization "high performance".

The findings of the original research process (reviewed in Chapter One and Appendix A) created a foundation for additional research. The review of data provided a strong case for exploring the distinction between sustainers and non sustainers. The research

question was now framed for investigation and a process was required to most effectively gather data. With the anticipated need that the research would call us to dig beneath the surface of the subject organizations, a survey-based quantitative process did not seem to provide the most effective means to uncover the possible causes for sustainability as motion. Given this need, a qualitative approach was deemed the most appropriate methodology for this exploration.

A Qualitative Exploration, a Generative Process

To answer the research question, the study followed a qualitative approach (Cresswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss., 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) using semi-structured interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The overall research process was based on the concepts of generative theory (Gergen, 1978) which fits the nature of this investigation and its exploration of potentially paradoxical concepts. Instead of substantiating truth, generative theory has an exciting opportunity quite the opposite in its "capacity to unseat the comfortable truths of wide acceptance" (p.1357).

While following a generative method, the sheer volume of information collected through the stories told in the interview process provided a breadth and scope of data that required a manageable framework for analysis. My objective was to analyze the data in a way that afforded comprehensive and thorough understanding of the patterns held within. I turned to the conventions of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss., 1967;

Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to help with this task, leading me through a process of open, axial and selective coding of both text and stories.

The power in the qualitative process is not only its focus on generating theory, but the grounding of this theoretical development in data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process is not about the quantifying of qualitative data, but rather it is "a nonmathematical process of interpretation, carried out for the purpose of discovering concepts and relationships in raw data and then organizing these into a theoretical explanatory scheme" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11). Creswell (2007) adds, "Qualitative inquiry represents a legitimate mode of social and human science exploration, without apology or comparisons to quantitative research" (p. 11).

It is the generative capacity of this research process that made it the appropriate course of inquiry to follow. Gergen (1978) challenged the state of current theorizing as lacking generative potency and suggested we look at theoretical development for its generative capacity in order to " challenge prevailing assumptions regarding the nature of social life and to offer fresh alternatives to contemporary patterns of conduct" (p. 1344). He suggested we move theoretical development beyond the confirmation of "fact" to the potential for greater societal possibilities.

> The attempt to build theory inductively from "what is known," the demand for verification of theoretical ideas, the disregard for the temporally situated character of social events, and the avoidance of valuational entanglements all prove detrimental to the kind of catalytic theorizing that throws into question the commonly shared assumptions

> of the culture and points to fresh alternatives for action. (Gergen, 1978, p. 1356)

The power of this generative capacity, based on the grounded review of both coded interview responses and the analysis of shared stories told by the participants, provides us a significant opportunity to move beyond proving or disproving past 'truths'. Instead, we create the space to generate new concepts, challenge conventional frameworks and "enhance the adaptive capacity of society" (Gergen, 1978, p. 1357).

Research Design

As discussed in the introduction, in examining the selection criteria for the original high performance research, it was determined that nine of the original twelve facilities sustained performance in the original criteria for an additional three years beyond the initial study timeframe. In order to best answer the research question, it was decided to visit not only the nine sustaining facilities, but also the three non-sustainers. This would allow us to best identify what made the sustainability of performance possible and determine the differentiating factors between the sustainers and the non-sustainers.

To initiate the process a standard semi-structured interview protocol (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) was created to provide a consistent platform for data collection. The protocol was reviewed with my dissertation committee, internal members in the Healthco organization and colleagues in the Benedictine Ph.D. program. Feedback was

collected and the final protocol (see Appendix B) was developed for use at all twelve facilities. As part of the interview process, the participants were asked to share specific stories that best exemplified their facility. The decision to use the same protocols at all twelve facilities provided the opportunity to examine potential distinctions in the responses from sustainers and non-sustainers.

Data Collection

Prior to conducting the research I communicated directly with the CEOs of the selected facilities to invite them to participate in the continuation of the research process from 2005. At this time they were not made aware of whether they were a sustaining or non-sustaining facility. We simply discussed their participation in the research process and how it would serve a dual process of supporting my doctoral studies while providing a practical resource to Healthco for other facilities working to achieve success in the high performance criteria.

Upon agreement to participate, I worked with each facility to establish their interview schedule. I decided to focus the broader scope of my research on understating what was occurring at the nine sustaining facilities. During the process of setting the interview schedules, I became aware of both recent and potential leadership changes at two the nine sustainers. I felt these changes could have an effect on the data collected as leadership changes would be occurring close to and even during the research period, thus I narrowed my focus to the seven remaining sustaining facilities.

With these considerations, the interview process was now directed towards three subgroups: sustainers, sustainers with recent/pending changes and non-sustainers. The data collection process with the seven sustaining facilities included a one or two day site visit. A series of face-to-face interviews were conducted at each facility. In each of these facilities a standard set of five positions were identified as participants including the CEO, the longest tenured executive (outside of the CEO), the longest tenured member of the facility, a director/manager with tenure from at least the year 2000, and a staff member with tenure from at least the year 2000.

At the two facilities that sustained, but were experiencing or pending leadership changes, between one and three interviews were conducted. In the smaller of the two facilities, an individual that represented more than one category of interviewee was included. In the second, the members of the facility were very interested in participating and the CEO asked that I speak with three individuals, resulting in interviews with the longest tenured executive (outside of the CEO), the longest tenured member of the facility, and a director with tenure from at least the year 2000. These interviews were conducted via phone calls.

In the three non-sustaining facilities, one interview was conducted for each organization. In each case the subject represented a director/manager with tenure from at least the year 2000. While one interview was conducted in person, the other two were conducted via phone calls. In one of the three non-sustainers, the new CEO

requested to sit in on the interview process. It is possible that his presence may have biased the responses at this facility in comparison to the other two non-sustainers where the interview conditions were different.

The data collection process resulted in forty-one interviews. In the case of all interviews, participants were informed of the purpose of the interview, but were not provided the questions in advance. All interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed for analysis. Almost 900 pages of transcription were generated for review. In addition, after the initial review of all transcripts, almost 70 pages of verbatim stories were pulled from the interview data, many of which are shared in Chapter Four.

To parallel this direct data collection, a researcher's journal was kept of each visit. This journal was a way to capture field notes and observations from the experience of each facility visit or phone call. The journal served as a contextual frame and an alternative lens in the analysis phase of what I was discovering in each of the subject facilities.

Data Analysis

Once transcripts were gathered, the multiple ways in which the data could be analyzed were considered. Understanding from the volume and breadth of data collected that analysis could take place on a facility-by-facility basis or on a role-by-role basis, I returned to the research question. As the research was directed at the

broader question of sustainability across the subject facilities, I determined it would be of some value to use the role distinctions as the primary means to analyze data. This would keep the data review focused on examining cross-facility patterns versus becoming stuck in broad facility-to-facility comparisons. With this decision, the key remained to distinguish the responses of the sustaining versus those of the non-sustaining facilities. This early step in the process exemplified how even in a grounded process, the analysis of relationships in data are the generative constructions of the researcher and are what drives the direction of discovery. As Strauss and Corbin assert (1998), "analysis is the interplay between researchers and data" and it is in this interplay where theory is ultimately created.

Analysis—Overview

In order to best track the coding process, I maintained a methodology log through the entire process from the start of transcription review to the most recent review of findings with subject facility CEOs. Early in this effort I determined that regardless of the extensive amount of data collected, I would forego the use of any computer-based analytical tools. My decision was based on my desire to dig directly into the words and stories of the participants interviewed in this process.

Since this study was focused on uncovering what was supporting sustainability and going deeper than the shared characteristics initially identified, I believed that it was in the stories of the participants and the emerging patterns they presented where the most powerful findings resided. I wanted to ensure that I touched on every paragraph,

sentence and word shared by our participants, and that the analysis was driven by a direct relationship with the patterns discovered versus driven by technology.

Early in the coding effort, I followed a process for inter-rater validation (Cresswell, 2007). A sample of the coding was reviewed with a selection of three classmates and my dissertation chair. Coding agreement occurred in over seventy-five percent of the occurrences. Where distinctions were discovered, follow-up conversations to gain greater alignment and understanding took place and informed the remainder of the coding process.

While this process is central to grounded theory, as the research was grounded in a framework of generative theory it did not require that the data revealed a link back to observable facts. In fact, there is no clear need for the necessity of verification at all (Gergen, 1978). The validation process allowed me to determine a consistency in the findings that would have the data perceived as relevant and purposeful. In recognizing the generative theory lens, I focused also on what findings had the greatest potential for being promising for people, organizations and society.

In looking for patterns of impact, I dove headfirst into my data via a comprehensive coding process. I read each transcript for content and understanding and then re-read the document to complete the coding process. As I worked through coding, I circled back to my field notes and journaling to ensure I was capturing the full scope of each

experience. In reading each transcript, first I coded word-for-word to identify in-vivo (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and other codes, and then tracked both the breadth and the frequency of the emerging themes. I used multiple means of tracking results from word document lists to spreadsheets. This process allowed me to effectively track themes and begin an extensive analysis of theme development. What began as over 1200 codes was reduced to 128 categories, which were combined to create 24 super categories and ultimately led to ten key themes. It was in a deeper dive to get to the core of the ten key themes, and a parallel macro review of all the data from which the theory began to emerge. The findings will be shared in Chapter 4.

Analysis—Timeline

In the interest of presenting a comprehensive and transparent review of the process leading to my findings, I present a step-by-step timeline below. Sample documents are included in the appendices that show how the data review represented a comprehensive, generative theory building process. As a scholar-practitioner, the process fit both the needs that frame this research study. First, it provided for the development of a solid academic and theoretical framework and second, it allowed for the translation of the findings into a means for practical application that can ultimately provide new alternatives for social action in organizations.

Initial Coding—Identifying the 1278 codes

As the interviews were all conducted in a tight time frame over a four-week period, the results and experiences of each interview informed the next. It meant also that most of the coding would happen at one time, after the completion of the interviews

and return of the transcripts. As the coding process began, I made the decision to code each interview as an individual document versus immediately looking for themes. This open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) process led to a large number of codes that required greater consolidation, but also allowed me to gain a greater depth of perspective from each of the 41 voices in this study. As I coded each interview, I was able to memo key ideas that I saw emerging from the data.

Once all the interviews were reviewed, the initial coding process completed, and coding reviewed with peers (as described above), I began a tracking sheet that listed every code, noting both the number of times a code emerged and on how many occasions a subject's words linked to that specific code. It is important to stress here that theory development is not driven by the counting of words (Suddaby, 2006) and this was not the intent of this process; it allowed for the determination of themes and words that emerged as central to the multiple voices engaged in the process. The master code document included every code determined, in which facilities the code appeared, and by what roles it was mentioned. It should be noted here that roles mean the five different roles identified in the interview process above, i.e., CEO, the longest tenured executive (outside of the CEO), the longest tenured member of the facility, a director/manager with tenure from at least the year 2000, and a staff member with tenure from at least the year 2000.

Clustering Initial Themes—Determining the 128 categories

Once this initial tracking was complete, a distinct document was created for each role in the study that listed all the codes mentioned by individuals in the role. These role code lists were cut into smaller slips and laid out on a large table, following which the first round of clustering codes began. Codes were grouped by connection and relevance with the goal of creating groupings that would begin to consolidate the many codes. This was done by role in order to gain a cross organizational perspective and also to enable a manageable sorting process. Each of the roles was represented 200–300 initial codes. During this time, I kept a running memo, as well as more broad flip-charted concepts and diagrams that were beginning to emerge from the data.

Once all of the roles passed through this initial code clustering, I gathered all the categories on one master document. From the original 1278 codes, there were 128 remaining categories. At this time I was still connecting these categories to both the facility and the role from which they came initially.

Determining 24 Supercategories

Once the 128 categories were listed, I again began to cluster these ideas into thematic/similar groupings. I reviewed the 128 categories over three separate passes to identify connections and begin to frame these new groups. In the process, I reviewed the next level clusters with colleagues at Healthco as well as peers in the Benedictine Ph.D. program to ensure there was a broader set of input in determining the supercategories. When this process was complete I was down to 24 supercategories (Table 3).

Table 3. 24 Supercategories

Above and beyond	Physician relationships
Actively seek input	Recognition & appreciation
Autonomy/involved in solutions	Respect one another
Care about our people/each other	Right people
Challenge the status quo	Service (patients first)
Community presence	Share info
Consistency/clarity of purpose	Staff development
Don't fit, don't stay	Starts at the top
Fertile ground	Visible/accessible leadership
Gauge against real measures	Walking the talk
Not all about the dollar	Well-oiled machine
Ownership/helped make it this way	Work together

From this convergence of 24 supercategories I looked once again to refine the list to the most relevant themes emerging from the data. Before proceeding, I conducted an additional validation review to ensure that each of these supercategories were representative of the original codes from which they were generated. To do this, I created a sheet for each of the 24 supercategories that included all the original codes tied to that supercategory (see sample—Appendix C). Also, as part of the process, I was able to review the original codes and confirm each supercategory was found in all the sustaining facilities and across all respective roles interviewed in those facilities.

Down to Ten Key Themes

Once each supercategory sheet was reviewed, I began the next step of clustering key themes. I laid out each sheet (as seen in Appendix C) on a large table and in conferring with colleagues at Healthco we reviewed each supercategory, associated categories, and raw codes, and ultimately grouped the supercategories into ten central themes (Table 4).

Table 4. The Ten Key Themes
(listed alphabetically with associated count of occurrences of this theme in the overall data)

Key Theme	Count
Above & Beyond	126
Actively Seek & Openly Share Input	169
Agile Consistency	252
Care about our people	123
Commitment to Who	277
Ownership & Autonomy to do the right thing	172
Physician Relationships	52
Service – Patients First	140
Something Leadership /Leading	223
Staff Connectedness and Care	342

The ten themes became the foundation for theoretical development and extensive memo writing and served as the framework for weaving the earlier discoveries in reading every interview into the emerging theoretical model. I created a master sheet once again, this time for each theme that included all the codes associated with the

theme including raw code count, a list of all categories that supported that theme, and the supercategories that were central to that theme. I then created a placeholder name to frame the theme while I moved into to deeper analysis of the emerging theory (a sample is provided in Appendix D).

From Ten Key Themes to an Emerging Theory on Sustaining Performance

In reviewing the ten themes I was excited, but challenged. I wondered if I had narrowed the data to its most compact form, yet still believed there was a greater discovery embedded in these themes. To expand my review, I shared the themes with colleagues and my dissertation chair.

In the meeting with my chair, he challenged me to change my frame of reference and look at the data differently; moving beyond what it said literally, to the deeper essence of what it represented. To do this I stepped back from the grounded theory coding processes and turned to a generative theoretical framework. I explained one of the most compelling concepts I experienced in these sustaining high performers was the juxtaposition of having a clear purpose and sharp focus, while maintaining the ability to change with the needs of the environment. From this dialogue, the idea of *agile/consistency* emerged.

I took another dive into my data to look for what other patterns I could find. It was here I fully donned my generative hat and recognized that I was not creating the proof for something that already existed (i.e., reinforcing the findings of the original High

Performance Study); rather I was generating something that could well provide greater promise.

I spent the next few evenings reading and reviewing the process I had taken to get from a simple research question, to a journey of interviews across twelve healthcare organizations, to coding and memos, clustering ideas and exploring my thoughts. I continued to memo on the ideas as I saw them. I read through the many pages of stories captured in the interviews looking for what was actually taking place in the sustaining high performers.

Then it happened. It was late one evening as I was working to confirm if the ten themes really did capture the essence of my data. At that moment, one piece seemed to fit where it had not before and in that instant, a super theme appeared. I looked back at the data and another emerged and almost as quickly a third. The ten key themes were now supporting three core concepts which when seen together took on a life and a theoretical framework that was hidden in the data only moments before.

Whether this is a formal piece of methodology or appropriate for a dissertation, I do believe it is important to convey at this moment (it was 9:36pm) I unconsciously jumped from my chair, wrote "I Got It!" across my memos and actually ran (perhaps danced) around my chair in celebration. The data had taken on new life and a new possibility versus the recanting of past discoveries. The three concepts, revealed in

Chapter Four, captured the essence of what was taking place in the sustaining facilities in a way I could not have imagined. Even more compelling was that in returning to the data collected from the non-sustainers, it was evident that these concepts were missing.

Validating the Findings

Exciting as this discovery was, I believed the process still called for additional review and further substantiation of the emerging theoretical concepts. This is a critical piece that I see all too often missing from methodological processes. It is not a validation of ideas in so much as it is taking the process full circle. Theory development all too often moves from the real and quickly rockets into the abstract. My objective was to not only create good theory, but also to create theory that could be applied by the very people that helped uncover it.

To do this I chose three paths in which to test and challenge these findings as I prepared to write about their implications. The first was a review with peers, both at Healthco and in the Benedictine Ph.D. Program. I asked my peers to challenge me on my thoughts and on the content and to engage me with questions and test my assumptions. I was testing also the theoretical strength and generative passion that supported these findings. This first path helped to solidify that I had something more than just a *nice* concept; it seemed *real* to my colleagues at Healthco and applicable in our work setting. It seemed rigorous to my Benedictine peers and held theoretical water as we dialogued on the merits and constructs of these findings.

The second path was being challenged by my committee members regarding the viability and theoretical strength of these concepts. In separate connections with all three scholars critical questions were posed. The theoretical framework was poked and prodded, tested at its foundation and examined for its strength. What emerged was a collective belief that there was something here that had merit. The coding process and the generative theory development helped create an idea that both intrigued and engaged this team in continuing to move the process forward.

The third path was perhaps the most important in terms of overall validation of the findings, and one seldom seen in research efforts. It was a test of practical relevance. I conducted a data review in one-on-one conversations with the SVP of HR at Healthco and a selection of CEOs from the top performing hospitals. I also held a series of focus groups and follow-up interviews with a subset of the original participants.

In these conversations the context of the study was reviewed, the methodology was provided and the findings—the three movements of sustaining high performance—were presented. The CEOs responded positively and specifically acknowledged that the emerging theory effectively captured their day-to-day work. While it captured the pattern of work, each of the CEOs admitted they had never looked at their day-to-day work in this way. They supported the words that presented the central concepts and supported what the words represented. This idea was expressed by each of the CEOs

in subtly distinct ways and is exemplified in the following statement from one large facility CEO.

> This is great work that I think fully captured the essence of what we do here day-to-day. The funny thing is that I am just an operator and have been one for over 20 years. I just keep doing what I believe to be right every day. What you have captured here is a pattern that truly resounds with me, but one that I have never seen. I have never really taken the time to stop and look at it from this level. It is quite powerful and (laughing) quite exhausting. It even helps me to understand why I do what I do, the way I do it every day. Thank you for this excellent work.

As part of the validation process I reviewed the findings with participants on three distinct occasions. The first was a mid-point review with a selection of participant CEOs to ensure that I was heading in the right direction framing the emerging theory. This was followed by a complement of two focus groups in which I shared the findings and emerging model with the participants and asked for their feedback and input on perspective applications of the results. In order to polish the loose theoretical ends, I dug deeper into the findings in follow-up interviews with a subset of the participants in a final review of the emerging theory.

As mentioned above, the CEOs responded with great support for the findings, collectively agreeing that the pattern uncovered presented an accurate picture of the actions taking place at each of their facilities. One individual commented that what was critical in this framework was the dynamic nature it represented. "There is no time for complacency in today's healthcare world," added another. A third CEO,

excited by what was captured in the findings, said that this explained the "essence" of what it meant to be at his facility. He said as a high performer, their environment was "consuming and intoxicating", suggesting that "high performers recognize they are different…you can feel the excitement…it is palpable". The CEOs agreed that they were not attempting to achieve some status or state of high performance, but rather were doing what they believed to be "right" for their organizations.

As I was wrapping up the review of findings I returned to my participants, this time with a sample of individuals from the director, manager, and staff levels across the organization. There was again great support and acknowledgement that the data and findings effectively captured the nature of their respective hospital. The direct validation, while critical in reinforcing the suggested model, was almost overshadowed by the specific conversations these focus groups generated between the participants of the study. Each focus group was comprised of members of at least three of the nine sustaining facilities.

In the first session, the participants were very supportive of the key findings of the study and confirmed that the theory as presented was an accurate representation of what was occurring at each of their facilities. In concluding the conversation we began to discuss not only the distinction of the themes, but also the integration of them in accomplishing outcomes. This integration concept was a critical thought and a fundamental component of the concept of sustaining as movement and moving

beyond checklists to the need for simultaneous action. As the review was ending, one subject made a point about the importance of the integration of the concepts saying (in commenting on the three movements), "you can't just work on one without the others". This brought immediate verbal agreement from the focus group members with a supporting "yes", "uh-huh" and "exactly". The experience in the first focus group was significant in exploring the nature of the theory and only a precursor of what was to occur in the second.

In the second of the two debriefing sessions a dialog was sparked that brought life and power to the discoveries in this research, and ultimately supported the very notion of sustaining as movement. The session was attended by participants from three of the facilities included in the study. The group represented a cross section of roles from longest tenure to directors and staff nurses. The three participating facilities represented a perfect cross section of the Healthco system (and in fact healthcare overall). One was a major tertiary hospital in an urban center with over 2000 employees, one a community hospital in a rural/suburban area with around 1000 employees, and one a specialty hospital with around 300 employees. What emerged from this session was a powerful realization of this study's findings and a validation of the simple, yet powerful implications. It is represented by this selection from their conversation.

A department director began to reflect on the findings.

> When I listen to you talk about the bubbles (the three movements) what I see is [my hospital]. I can look at each bubble as you talk and pull out actual opportunities of things that actually happened that would be fitting under each of these categories.

In asking the group if there was a priority order in which the movements influenced what happened in their facilities, one nurse suggested an answer (eerily) similar to the subject in the first focus group. "I don't think you can have one and do well without having the other no matter which way you go…it all ties hand-in-hand…it kind of has to all happen." This statement led to a collective agreement and a supportive realization that indeed it was not only the individual paradoxes that were at play, but it was in their connection and interaction that results were achieved.

The group went on to share stories and examples related to a number of the key actions. Their energy level and volume rose suddenly as they began discussing how each of their leadership teams pitched in just that week to help in their facility. One hospital's Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) was seen stocking supply rooms throughout her hospital. In another, the CEO was lending a hand by working in the OR recovery room. They continued to discuss how most people in their facilities seemed to follow this lead in helping one another, which led to the following exchange (persons A, B and C represent individuals from the three different facilities).

Person A (in reacting to the conversation about the actions of their leaders): "If it needs to be done we find a way to do it and it is not beneath any of us."

It was after this statement that there was a brief pause in the conversation as if a collective "ah-ha" was taking place. A profound realization seemingly hit the individuals in these three very distinct facilities.

Person A: "It sounds like all three of our facilities are very much alike." (laughter and verbal agreement)

Person B: "It sure does, I am sitting here thinking the very same thing."

Person A: "I think we're in it for the right reasons…we're in it to help people…we hire people who are in it for the right reason…but because we care about people and each other."

Person B: (quickly interjected) "It is not just a job." (verbal agreement)

Person C: "We actually promote that we are family…if it hurts one, it hurts us all."

Person B: "That's right!"

Person C: "…and everybody strives to make sure the family stays together, and if that is not your mode we will separate you from [the family]" (laughter and verbal agreement)

The group continued to share stories on similar hiring practices and methods for reviewing and acting on employee survey results.

Person A: "We really do seem to be very much the same."

I shared with the call participants my own reflections on how powerful it was to hear this relative group of strangers sound as if they were all discussing the same place. They agreed. I raised the question to the group that we had discussed almost a year ago in their individual interviews, how did they believe they were able to sustain their high performance? One individual quickly responded.

Person B: "We have to keep moving. Just because we got to this point doesn't mean we can slack off." (laughter and verbal agreement)
Person A: "Never!" (again collective verbal agreement)

Perhaps the outcomes of this study are best summarized by that last exchange—We have to keep moving. Just because we got to this point doesn't mean we can slack off…never. In those very words we see the idea of sustainability as movement. More importantly as we review the research methodology and follow the qualitative, generative process framing this research, the ability to return to the participants and validate the emerging theory provides great support to both the theoretical underpinnings and the practical implications and applications of these ideas.

Conclusion

The methodological process reviewed in this chapter has been about more than simply reporting on actions. The process itself was one of framing a simple, yet compelling question based on foundational data, structuring a comprehensive and thoughtful inquiry, and delving deep into a broad range of subject responses for what generative possibilities they held. This process was much more than a validation of fact, it was a journey of self and collective exploration, of thematic painting and ultimately of searching for a contribution that would add value not only to the academic world in which this work resides, but more so, would provide possibility to the people and their peers who are represented by what this work discovered.

Chapter 4: Findings

A Potential Pattern

It was in the closing moments of one of my final interviews when I asked the subject, a director of a nursing unit and long time nurse, what else it was that I needed to know about her facility. She paused for a moment, looked down at the table and took a deep breath. It was the kind you take when gathering yourself and your thoughts. She looked back up at me and with a subtle smile in her eyes and the slight flash of a tear in the corner of her eye she responded.

> If I would say what really represents [our facility], I would have to say it is a team of executives, leadership, all the way down to the last housekeeper. It's a team. And I still say that it's the people, their commitment, their pride, and the ones that are here are the ones that want to see what's best. When you can go from a float nurse to a manager and the door's still open. [There is] no pressure, and no fear.

The words of this nurse touch on the people that comprise this facility from executives to housekeepers, the pride they have, the commitment to purpose they bring, the openness they experience in working with one another and the environment they experience in their work day. While maybe a simple descriptive statement of this individual's experience, the quote represents the very intricacies and simplicities of the patterns uncovered in speaking with participants across this study.

In presenting the findings in this chapter, my intention is to share just that - the patterns found in the stories of the participants themselves. In telling their stories, we

will experience these organizations through their words and encounter the subtleties that rest at the heart of these sustaining high performing organizations. It is the pattern uncovered in the words of our participants that begins to reveal one possible answer to the question: What supports the sustainability of high performance?

It is important to note here in discussing the nature of this investigation as generative, that there are multiple avenues of analysis that could have been pursued in the review of the extensive data collected. The path selected for the data analysis was, as outlined in Chapter 3, the identification and clustering of common emerging themes. This led to the identification of significant and recurring patterns that begin to frame the theoretical discoveries of this study.

The Pattern Revealed

The data pattern uncovered reveals three living and active elements: *collective/ individualism, agile/consistency* and *informative/inquiry* (Figure 7). These elements, which I call *movements*, present themselves in the findings as integrated parts of a whole. The data reveals they are not hierarchical in nature, but rather they generate sustainability in their very co-existence and simultaneity in action.

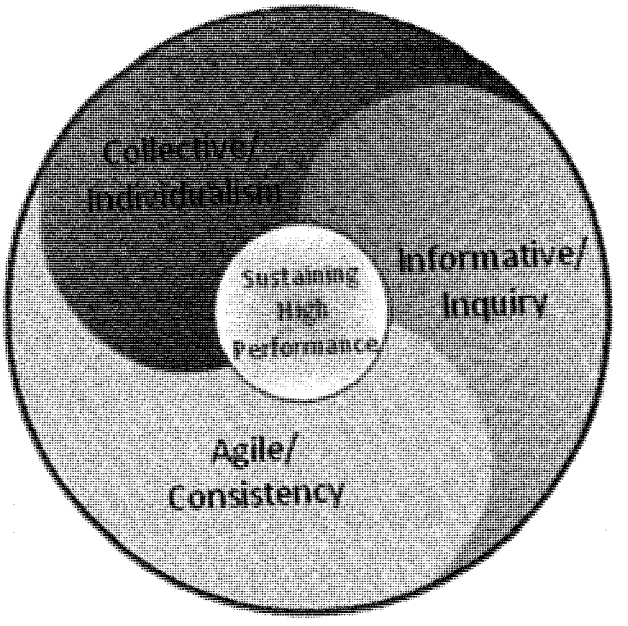

Figure 7. The Three Movements in Sustaining High Performance

The term *movement* has many definitions and connotations. Therefore, it is important to frame how it is used in this context. In doing so, I pull from selective portions of the definition of the word. I choose *movement* as it represents the multifaceted nature of the findings. First it suggests motion, that these elements are not static. Rather, they are dynamic components of the sustaining high performers. This is not suggesting a linear path of moving from A to B, but the dynamic nature of flux, balancing and disequilibrium (Guerra, 2005; Morgan, 1997; Strauss, 2002). In addition, I choose the term to represent the symphonic interplay of the concepts, as movements in a piece of music. Each movement represents a whole unto its own,

maintaining its own character and rhythm. Yet, each also serves as an integral part of the larger whole.

In discussing the dynamic nature of balance represented by these movements, their very presentation raises the issue of the paradoxes experienced in organizational life. The movements as paradoxical relationships represent more than just contradictory terms. As will be revealed in the findings below and discussed further in Chapter Five, they may be better described as polarities that represent possible ends of a dynamic continuum.

Distinction of Non-sustainers

The overview of the research shared above reveals the general findings from facilities that sustained the initial selection criteria; those that did not sustain also provided some valuable data. Distinctions were discovered in the different tone of the discussions that took place with the participants in these facilities. The stories shared at the non-sustaining facilities expressed greater levels of questioning and doubt about the current state in contrast to the energy and confidence of the sustaining high performers. This was especially interesting as all participants in the research process were interviewed using the same protocol.

In light of this discovery, in combination with providing the specific findings of each movement, I offer stories occurring at the non-sustaining facilities. A specific example will be provided with each movement to express the subtle but, important

distinctions between the sustaining and non-sustaining facilities in the study. This will help us to more completely understand and explore the influence of the movements in sustaining high performance.

The Three Movements in Sustaining High Performance

This section provides a deeper look into each of the three movements discovered in sustaining high performance. Each movement will be explored through the words and stories of the study's participants. The order in which the concepts are presented have no implication on their importance as the findings suggest that it is from the interplay of all three movements that the sustaining of high performance is possible.

As with any attempt to report findings through the words of others, I must be clear that what is shared reveals the way in which people engaged in dialogue about their respective facilities. The findings represent the collective themes and patterns in the way of talking shared by the participants. The findings reveal what it is that people valued in their experiences and uncover ways in which people put these thoughts into practice.

Collective/Individualism

Collective/Individualism represents the first of the three uncovered paradoxical movements. This concept was mentioned in the interviews on almost 800 occasions. The stories related to this finding tell of the accomplishments of strong individual contributors. They expand on these accomplishments as not just an individual achievement, but as exponential successes resulting from the strong collaboration

among members of the organization, both across departmental boundaries and spanning the organizational hierarchy. The data provides story after story of both the strengths of the individuals that comprise a facility and the synergy of excellence generated by the connection of these individuals with one another.

This movement is grounded in the fundamental human principles of caring and commitment, directed not only at the organization and its customers, but also with great focus on colleagues. The three themes comprising this concept include committing to whom, acting with ownership and autonomy, and connecting and caring (Figure 8). The idea of caring appeared almost three hundred and fifty times in the interviews. Commitment itself appeared just under three hundred times, while ownership and autonomy appeared almost two hundred times.

Committing to Who

The theme *committing to who* appeared in the data almost three hundred times. This central action encompasses a careful weaving of three critical components emerging from the data: getting the right people on board (and getting the wrong people off); providing opportunities for staff development and professional growth; and ensuring the encouragement and support of and the acknowledgement and appreciation for the work people do. This important concept has significant implications far beyond the now almost trivialized idea of "getting the right people on the bus" (Collins, 2001).

Figure 8. Collective/Individualism

"Committing to who" was expressed by the participants in the repeated use of the words (and an in vivo code) "right people". When asked about the supports of sustainability responses touched on the idea of "hiring for fit" (and as one manager stressed, "the fit I am talking about is not to the skills of the role, but to culture that we have here.") Accompanying this idea, the data also revealed a consistent response around the ideas of development and cross training. As another respondent added, "I have the opportunity to grow" in my facility. The idea of acknowledgement often showed up in responses. Acknowledgement most often appeared through the use of the term "appreciation". This was revealed in the data not as formal programs (though

formal recognition programs were mentioned), but rather it was informal "thank yous", "constant encouragement" and "providing positive feedback" that people shared as examples of what "committing to who" looks like in action.

The idea of "committing to who" provided many examples from the subject facilities about their efforts to attract people that fit their culture, while maintaining the courage to pass on hiring "warm bodies". This courage also included the willingness as one study participant said, to "get rid of the bad apples". In interview after interview, participants discussed the fact that if people did not fit, they did not stay.

The first story shared by a facility CEO represents the lengths to which the sustaining high performers went in order to find the right talent for their organization. In this example, we see that not only did the members of this facility know the importance of right fit, but they also found creative ways to attract talent in a very competitive marketplace.

> We're having trouble getting floor techs, and I told Sam who's our director, I said why is it I can go into a Wal-Mart and their floors are spotless, and they have more traffic than me, and we can't do the same here? I don't know what happened, but Fred, the supervisor, got a hold of the fact I was throwing a fit about the floors not being clean.
>
> He went out to Wal-Mart and observed these floor techs. Of course they get no benefits out there, and after a couple of days decided which guys he wanted to approach. We have hired three of their floor techs, they are so excited, walk through these halls at this hospital. I've got e-mails from employees saying I don't know what you've done, but these guys are wonderful. They're thrilled, they have full-time hours, they have benefits, which they didn't have before, and they're pro

> ABC Medical Center. I mean, we got them from probably a $7 to $8 an hour job to a $10 to $12 an hour job, but with benefits. Wasn't that a great idea?
>
> Someone was watching. Fred watched them for I think two days before he decided which ones he wanted to approach. And look at the difference it's made.

This example was not only about focusing on the right people, but also represents the intention of this facility's management in engaging their staff in a sense of ownership and pride. The outcomes were twofold: staff felt appreciated and engaged for what they could contribute and a marked difference in the physical plant took place. As we see in this story, the right people can be found in the most unconventional ways. It takes only an understanding of and a commitment to the purpose of the facility.

This commitment to a facility also comes to light in the following series of stories that represent one of the more courageous acts in a tight and competitive market for healthcare talent; the willingness to remove people who do not fit. These examples go beyond the simple idea of getting the right people to one that addresses both the needs of the organization and the individual. While there are many stories of finding strong talent, I chose the following exemplars as they express the tough decisions the high performers seemed to make to sustain performance, while treating every individual they encounter with the utmost respect.

The next story paints a picture of an individual hire who "had the skills" and was "really nice", yet when it came down to executing on the values of the organization, he "didn't take care of the patients" and "interfered with other people" trying to do their work. This was both a recognition that skills and personality do not necessarily equate to a good hire and more importantly it shows how this director dealt with the situation with the values of the facility in mind. In this story they opted "out of respect" to have a conversation with this individual, and directly address the issue.

> We hired a nurse who just didn't fit in. He just didn't fit in, a very nice person, I think he had the skills, but he spent more time talking about [himself] and didn't take care of the patients. He interfered with other people doing work, so we called him in and said we just don't think it's a good fit, it's not working for you, it's not working for us; it just isn't a good fit. He said yeah, I see that too. I think maybe because we gave him the respect enough to say I don't think it's working out instead of letting him stay and be unpopular and have people talk about him. Yeah, we just don't fire them and say we don't like you and you don't fit with us, out of respect for them. I felt sorry for him because he was a really nice person, just not focused on patient care, he was focused on himself. We did it because he wasn't working for us, and it wasn't working for him.

What begins to frame the actions of "committing to who" is the idea that this director expressed in saying "we just don't fire them", being very clear to express that their actions are taken "out of respect" for the individual. While many organizations may choose simply to let an individual like this go, or often times keep them on due to the need of a warm body, this director told the story of how his organization was acting in what he believed to be a different manner. In this story, the director expressed the facility's "commitment to who" by expressing the importance they place on the

respect for and care of each individual. Even in this situation, in which the employee was not working out for the facility, the story shows a sense of honor and commitment to both the individual and the organization.

The data show us that the idea of "committing to who" is also seen as central to the value respondents place on working together. In multiple interviews, members at all levels of the subject facilities mentioned the importance of the contributions of each and every individual in supporting the achievement of outcomes. In the story shared below, a staff member discusses how a collective process that was focused on the improvement of employee satisfaction scores led to a discovery that touched directly on the facility's "committing to who".

In this situation, the team was reviewing their employee engagement survey results in a collective planning effort focused on improving their scores. The analysis of the results revealed that there were a "couple of bad apples" who were having a negative effect on the team overall. The staff member first shares how the action was designed to be a collective effort and exploration into improving the employee satisfaction scores of this particular unit. What the discovery led to was the negative influences that two individuals were having on the outcomes of the department.

Again, as in the previous example, what is shared in this example is not the callous firing of individuals that people did not "like". Rather, as the staff member expresses, it provides a picture of "don't fit, don't stay" and shows the difficult nature of, but the critical need to, remove people that negatively affect a unit. She expressed the values of her facility in expressing that "we don't just cut ties very often" showing that the nature of the facility is not just to fire people for the sake of it or under a baseless guise of not 'fitting' the organization. In fact, she says "we pride ourselves in working with you", but acknowledged that if those developmental actions do not bear fruit then an alternative option is viable.

> An example of that right now is in one of our units our employee satisfaction scores were down. When we got to looking at it, we've got a couple of bad apples that are affecting the whole group. We've allowed that to continue, we have. So now we know in order to get everything else in line, we've got to get rid of those bad apples. No matter how hard it is, or what have you, those bad apples are affecting the whole group. And that's hard, and we try to work with you, we try to grow you. We don't just cut the ties very often. But, in doing our employee feedback sessions, we realized how much of an influence these two bad apples have had on the other twenty. So that was a big realization to us, because we do pride ourselves on working with you, counseling with you, but there comes a point when you can counsel somebody and they're not going to change, and you have to realize that they are not going to change and [ask yourself] are they right for this facility?

The actions expressed by this staff member exemplify a shared understanding as found in the stories told about the facilities "committing to who". Not only was a collective action undertaken, but an individual issue was uncovered. In this example,

the process of acting in collaboration helped to address and act on an issue of individual contribution that was affecting the outcomes of this unit.

The next story was shared by a facility CEO and exemplifies the courage it takes to make the critical decisions related to "committing to who". More often than not, leaders at the high performers were willing to make the tough and right decisions even in the face of "making the numbers". This example shows both how long time employees can get out of alignment with the core values and purpose of the organization and the affect that behavior can have. It not only shows how tough decisions that put a facility's culture "to the test" have to be made, but also, how decisions must be made even when there is "a lot of respect" for an individual. "Committing to who" is seemingly about how we link the right people to the focus and core values of the organization.

> I can tell you that we had our culture put to the test the week before we started the engagement survey, because we terminated someone that was beloved from a clinical standpoint, and I can tell you there was real unrest out in the major nursing areas. Of course we do our communication, which was to get right out in the middle of the staff meetings and everything, Gina and her group and everybody did, and worse yet it happened to be the wife of one of our other directors. Because this facility has always grown up with lots of family, when you start looking at that it made it even more awkward, and this person had been here ten years. We ended up facilitating the transfer because we had a lot of respect for the person and if they just had that much of a difference of opinion than the director they reported to, then we were going to respect to disagree respectfully. The person is doing a wonderful job at one of our facilities, and she's great. It's just she did some things that violated the core values of the organization and we don't accept that.

In this story, we are again privy to a decision around right people and don't fit/don't say that had to be carefully handled, but was a necessary action for this leader. What we see in this example is the care given the individual even in the face of this decision. Also, the extensive communications effort portrayed does not seem to be the typical mode of communicating around a change in organizational staff. Though a subtle point in this story, the effort that was taken to communicate broadly and consistently across this organization potentially furthered the "commitment to who" taking place at this facility. Rather than a memo, or even more typically, no communication at all, this situation was dealt with openly and honestly, both in how the decision was made and how it was shared.

Each of these stories provides a glimpse at the constant motion and sense of discovery that are integral parts of "committing to who". The process exemplified in the stories and data appears to be dynamic. It shows us that ensuring the right people are on board and developing and recognizing the people you have requires a committed and focused ongoing effort. The words of interviewees help us to see these difficult decisions are not just about removing people, but rather they represent a broader process focused on purpose, and exemplify a respect for and sense of commitment to people in each of the organizations.

While the "right people" focus is one form of recognition and action, the sense of appreciation is also shown in the data to be a core part of "committing to who". While

the data provided many examples of the typical recognition programs that strong organizations effectively implement, what emerged from the data at the sustaining high performers was an interesting wrinkle in the process. First, recognition was more a part of the fabric of the facilities rather than just a set program held at certain points in the year. What was found was the power of informal appreciation and acknowledgement from simple "thank yous" to hand-written notes.

The following story presents an example of how the high performers seemed to take things just a step further. In this story, a charge nurse talks about a recent effort to appreciate a colleague. It was taken on as a group effort, not simply for doing one thing well, but more powerfully for this nurse's body of work. Recognition in the sustaining high performers does not only follow formal channels or come from above (though they were rigorous in having these types of programs). What they exemplify is that appreciation truly comes from all around us.

> We hired her for that unit before the unit was open and then we started with like 3 or 4 patients. It's a step-down unit. She was the first employee that we hired, so she developed all the policies, procedures, hired all the people, did everything. So anyway she's been here since day one when we started that unit. It went from a step-down unit to when we moved into the new tower it became an IMC/telemetry unit, and then we moved from Cath lab in a trailer to a permanent Cath lab to interventions to open heart. So she's followed this whole process. She's been one of our experts, she's a cardiac nurse. So anyway, last month all of her co-workers, they all filled out all this paperwork together to get her a CARE award. Not for anything specific, but for everything that she does. She's kind of like the mentor. She is the everything. She is like the true leader of this unit. So I thought that was just phenomenal. It was like for her whole body of work that she does

> for those people, and how much they respected her, and I thought that was really terrific.

How often does an organization express appreciation for an individual as in this case "for everything she does"? Let alone how often do we truly have systems for appreciating one another and sharing respect at all levels? This is not to say that you won't find appreciation programs in many organizations, but these high performing facilities have seemingly mastered this action as a critical piece to a much larger commitment in "committing to who".

As the data show, "committing to who" represented more than the simple idea of hiring the right people. The stories consistently included a sense of respect for the individual in the context of doing what was right for the organization. Central to what was discovered about *collective/individualism* is ensuring strong individual contributors who are provided ongoing developmental opportunities, offered sincere acknowledgment and appreciation, and ultimately shown a strong sense of respect. These actions were revealed in the data as ongoing and seemingly provide a critical element of the sustaining organizations, the individuals through which interactions are created and the sustainability of performance ultimately constructed.

Acting with Ownership and a Sense of Autonomy

Acting with ownership and a sense of autonomy was another concept found in the words of the study participants, appearing on almost 200 occasions. The participants talked about ownership for and pride in the facilities they served, bringing their

individual ability to bear on the greater collective good, through the strong sense of personal accountability and solid commitment to the facility. Statements such as "we're 100% involved", "there is no 'it's not my job' here" and "I feel ownership for the hospital as a whole" were common in the data. The sense of ownership of and personal identification with their facility is well exemplified in the statement of one interviewee who declared "Med Center X is Me"!

This sense of individual pride and connection with the facility expressed in the interviews was also complemented by the acknowledgement that people in these organizations talked of being "allowed to do the right thing", that they "have the power to do what is right", and the "freedom to solve problems". The statements of staff members stand in grave contrast to the types of attitudes and actions one might expect to experience in typical hierarchical, command and control organizations. In the subject facilities, the stories did not tell of people who were waiting for orders before acting or asking for permission to make decisions. Instead, the sustaining high performers talked about a positive balance between autonomy, "I can make a decision without asking" and "we have the freedom to solve problems" and ownership, "I have a sense of ownership for everything" and "I helped make it this way".

The following selection of stories provide us with some insight into how individuals at all levels of the organization put the power to do what is right, and their pride in and commitment to their facility at the core of their actions. This first example shows

us that "care" in healthcare reaches beyond what we may typically consider. While we most often think of the caregivers, the physicians and nurses, this story shows us that care can take on a special meaning for many of the other "off-stage" roles as well.

In this story, told by one facility's longest tenured employees, we learn of how the head of facility engineering made a decision to act in a potential emergency situation. It was a decision, as it was described, that was made quickly and with the freedom and autonomy to do what was right. The subject of the story showed a great sense of personal ownership for the facility by choosing to directly man a malfunctioning switch, standing-by over a 24 hour period until the proper repairs could be made. This example, which was described as part of the "lore" of this facility, provides a glimpse into the level of commitment individuals have towards their facility. In the challenging scenario it presents, we can begin to see the emergence of the power of organizational pride and the individual commitment to do what is right.

> I'll tell you a story on our head of engineering. We had one of our emergency switches that malfunctioned, so that if we got into an emergency situation it would not automatically flip on and the hospital would be in darkness and might get into a problem. Well, was that going to happen? Probably not, but it could have. Well, the head of engineering had ordered the new part, so the only way to ensure successful back-up was to man that switch manually, well he stayed over 24 hours and checked that switch continuously, and then somebody in his plant operations did that too. [Though] the likelihood of that happening was very remote, he wasn't going to be satisfied with that. The patient safety, the employee safety, just the building safety was that important to him until that switch could be fixed. Somebody manually manned that switch.

The actions of the head of engineering show how he both took accountability for the problem and had the freedom to act in ensuring its safe resolution. What was perhaps even more compelling than these actions was the manner in which the interviewee shared the story, something its mere presentation in text can not easily convey. It was not told as if this example was a unique occurrence at the facility, but rather it was introduced by the words "let me give you an example about the way we see ownership here"; words that seemed to convey a great sense of pride. When the individual shared "he wasn't going to be satisfied with that" it was as if she was saying none of us would have been satisfied with that. She was not surprised by the individual's actions, adding "it's just the way we are", but she still seemed moved by its simple power when she again stressed to me "somebody manually manned that switch".

The previous story, as well as those that follow, provide examples of how *collective/individualism* springs from the purposeful actions of individuals who choose to do the right thing and have the freedom to do it. They show how the power to do what is right has the potential to positively impact the provision of care. In this next story we see how a strong individual contributor takes it upon herself to ensure the greatest possible experience for her patient. While the example is based on a direct caregiver, it also suggests that the sustaining of high performance may significantly be supported through the non-clinical aspects of care, as well.

The actions of the nurse in the story below represent a sense of ownership and pride in her facility and provides not a unique, but rather what was described as a "typical example" of the type of organization the story teller believes her facility to be, adding "I thought, you know, that is [our hospital]." In this example we see personal ownership and a freedom to act without the need for 'permission'. This autonomy literally takes this nurse far, far away from her unit and in essence alters her role from nurse to valet as she strives to provide the best possible experience for this patient.

> This is a story about one of my nurses. She had a patient that was elderly and he had parked in building X, we're in Z, and she said to him where did you park? He said I'm out at building X. She said let me push you in the wheelchair over there. So she pushed him way over to building X and she got to the bottom floor and she said now, where's your car? He said it's in the back row. Okay. She pushed him all the way up the hill, all the way to the back row, and she found that the people next to him had parked so close to him that he couldn't get in there with his walker. So she had to leave him locked in the chair, get in his car, back his car out, and then help him get in the car. I thought, you know, that is [our hospital]. That is what we have been taught to do.

This story presents a powerful metaphor of continuing to stretch beyond the boundaries individuals often times feel in their roles, whether by organizational constraints or by the self-imposed thought, "that is not my responsibility". The untold portion of this story, as expressed by the subject sharing this experience, is about what occurred when the nurse returned to the unit after a longer than expected absence. As she began to relay her story to her peers, rather than finger pointing or blaming for her absence, there was collective laughter at the never-ending journey she took on behalf of one of their patients.

As the interviewee shared, "This is an example of the type of facility we want to be. It is what we have been taught and encouraged to do." While there was probably not a formal protocol for taking the patient to his car at the far reaches of the parking lot, let alone pulling his car out of a space to provide easier access, the nurse in the story acted within the "boundaries" of the type of facility they wanted to be. The story provides a glimpse at how a sense of ownership can link with the freedom to act, and in this case provided the nurse the opportunity to have a powerful impact on this patient far beyond direct care. I can only imagine later that day, the elderly gentleman sitting with his family or friends telling the incredible story of the personal nurse/valet service he received. The autonomy and ownership exemplified by this individual had ripple effects well beyond the boundaries of her "job" that day.

Another example of this sense of ownership and autonomy is told by a longest term executive. She shared the actions of a registration clerk, a non-care giver, who took ultimate ownership for outcomes in the facility by using her own time off the clock to help a patient and his family. Again, this exemplar shows how care comes from all corners of the sustaining high performers.

> It's kind of that ownership and taking care of the patient. We had a registration clerk probably two months ago and her shift was ending about 3 or 4. A dad came in with an injured 7 year old, had two younger kids with him as well, wife was at work. The registration clerk tried to take care of the business part of it, and then recognized that this dad needed to be with the injured kid, he can't be out here watching the others. She ended up taking them over to [the ice cream shop] after she clocked out, and kind of stayed with them for about an hour after that.

The actions of the clerk, as well as those of the nurse in the previous story, provide us a picture into what the combination of right people with ownership and autonomy can bring to a facility. The executive sharing the story marveled at (or maybe rather bragged about) how willing not only this individual was, but how the staff across their organization is willing also, to ensure a top experience for their patients. These stories show how ownership is critical in all aspects of the organization, from behind the house in the engineer's situation, to direct care in our nurse 'valet's' experience and at the front door in the case of the admissions clerk.

While these examples demonstrate a broad range of ownership and autonomy across the sustaining high performers, the critical interplay of these individual roles not only provides a better experience of care, but actually has life-saving implications. One CEO told of a story about a critical event at her facility and how the team at hand was able to take action to generate positive outcomes for a patient. The powerful nature of this story comes in her final words "these are people that feel like they can make a difference in other people's lives."

> This lady pulled into the outpatient surgery center, she just pulled off the road into the center, and my purchasing agent saw that her husband was laying with his head back on the back of the car in the front seat, and the lady said I need an emergency room, I think my husband's stopped breathing. Well, we don't have an emergency room, but she knew that there was a couple of nurses and a doctor in-house, and so my maintenance man and my IS man were also over there, they got the patient out of the car, put him on the stretcher, we go the anesthesiologist to come quickly from the recovery room, he actually put a tube down the guy, they saved his life. But it wasn't the nurse that assessed the patient, you know what I mean? It was the little girl in purchasing that said something's wrong here, and we have to get

> this coordinated to take good care. She automatically got the two biggest guys to go out and pull the patient out, she let the girls in the holding room know. This is people that feel like they can make a difference, and these are people that feel like they make a difference in other people's lives and because they do, they do the right thing.

As amazed as this CEO was in telling her story, she also described the event without question that this is what her people would do. A team of individuals, namely a purchasing agent, and a maintenance and IS staff member teamed together to address an emergency situation, one atypical to their outpatient environment. Yet, they moved into action with a sense of ownership, coordinated their effort, and engaged the right people. They did in fact make a difference; they did do the right thing; and their result was immeasurable. They saved a life.

In this next example, we again are presented with the opportunity for an individual's independent actions to contribute to the collective accomplishments of the organization. In this story we experience the potential link that *collective/individualism* has with *informative/inquiry* as the nurse's actions and the very outcomes of the situation were supported by an environment of open communication with leaders.

In this example, the staff member not only faces a direct challenge by a customer to the services the facility provides, she has to determine the appropriate course of action to address the situation. While there was no formally defined protocol or process for this nurse to follow in this circumstance, she took it upon herself to act.

She not only took individual action, but also openly raised the issue with leadership, resulting in a change being made. To even further exemplify a sense of ownership and the freedom to act, the nurse then closed the loop by reaching out to the family member with whom she first interacted.

> I work here every fourth weekend and one weekend I had a visitor just wham into me in the hallway because they were furious that we didn't have a gift shop. I know that's a small thing, but it was a Sunday, regular stores weren't open close enough that they could drive to, and they were upset that they couldn't get their loved one just a balloon or a rose. So I voiced that complaint, took the lady's name, told her I would tell the administrator on Monday. I went over there myself and talked to him and within a couple of months we had a gift shop down the hall. We took a room out and made a small gift shop and we have gotten many compliments. It just makes a difference. I actually called that lady and told her to come back; we've got a gift shop. Little things like that go a long way to pleasing someone that's going to give you business again.

In the customer interaction described above the subject had a choice to simply let the encounter pass as part of the day-to-day chaos of the work environment or to act with commitment on behalf of the organization. This staff member not only took the time to listen to the visitor's issue, but exemplified the ownership and autonomy she had to solve this problem. Key to this being possible in the example was her ability to directly approach her facility leadership to address the issue (a critical component of the movement *informative/inquiry*). This staff member turned a small encounter into a catalyst for change in the organization as well (a critical component of the movement *agile/consistency*).

While in the example above the sense of ownership and the ability to interact with leadership led to positive outcomes for the facility, ownership also plays a critical role in allowing individuals to take accountability when things do not go well. In this next story, told by a long tenured CEO, we see the power of right people with ownership as the individual involved acknowledged his ownership for the issue and worked to resolve it. As this example provides, ownership at the sustaining high performers often showed up both when things went well and when they did not. In almost all cases the right people took the right steps to rectify a wrong outcome.

> Al took over our lab about three years ago. (Soon after coming on board) he had to go through a review process…and he didn't do the paperwork like he was supposed to. The reviewers come in and we get just eaten alive. I never had to say a word. He came in and said I am so ashamed and so embarrassed because I let the whole team down. He said we get great scores in everything that we do and this has never happened before here, and I'm the reason for it. 100% accountable, 100% right, and he's really made a huge effort to turn that around.

As the CEO said of the lab director in this situation, "He was 100% accountable". Key here is the level of ownership the individual took about the outcomes in this situation. First by directly addressing the issue with the CEO and then also acknowledging that he felt he had "let the whole team down." It speaks a great deal to the nature of leadership and to the sense of ownership and autonomy an individual has when he can admit to his boss, "We get great scores in everything that we do and this has never happened before here, and I'm the reason for it". The result, as the CEO went on to share, was a stronger relationship, a greater sense of respect and a much better result in scores. This ability to act with responsibility and accountability

without fear continues to show up in data as central to the overall idea of *collective/individualism.*

The final story in looking at the elements of "acting with ownership and a sense of autonomy" again touches on the broadest fundamentals of care found among the sustaining high performers and shared in the example above. In this story the ultimate power to act with autonomy results in an important discovery. An ultrasound tech was able to act with personal ownership in her role and raise a question to her director that ended up saving a life.

> One time one of my techs, she's an ultrasound tech, did an ultrasound on one of the girl's daughters that works in surgery. After she did it she called me and said what do you think about this, I don't like the way it looks. I said well it doesn't look good at all, I don't know if it's a tumor inside the heart or a tumor outside the heart. It was just like this is a 15 year old girl. So then we talked and I said well call the radiologist and let's look at it. Because this girl, this child, and this mother was in my class today and I asked her how her daughter was doing, and her daughter is fine, we saved her life from the doctor perspective. Her daughter had been sick for about six months and nobody could ever figure out what was wrong with her. When [the tech] found this, it wasn't anything that just hit you, you had to really look for it in your test, so her excellent ability to scan found this, and she called everybody, called the doctor to come up and read it. We called the doctor to get her appointment in and then we called Rita to say hey, you need to take your daughter to the doctor. They ended up operating on her; it was an abscess between her liver that was just getting worse and worse. But then Rita, even if she hadn't worked here she probably would have done it, she called administration and she was crying, she was so thankful that people cared about her and cared about her daughter as an individual, and that [the tech] had saved her life. And even today when I asked how her daughter was, she said she was marching in the band and you all saved her life. It's just that dedication to the job.

The tech in this story not only used her professional skills to discover the problem, but she also felt she could contact her director and the doctor to raise the issue. Her ability to act in this manner, with a sense of autonomy and ownership, blended with a top skill set, enabled her to not only to discover the issue, but also to act on what she found. Again the freedom to act allowed a life to be saved.

Through the words of the participants interviewed we see the possibility that *acting with ownership and autonomy* may be linked to the *commitment to who.* Having strong individual contributors as part of the organization that understand both where the facility is going and how they fit in supporting its success creates a greater possibility for these individuals to act with pride in their facility (ownership) and with a sense of freedom (autonomy). As we have seen, when that happens, great things are possible.

The central ideas of this concept, ownership and autonomy, are perhaps best exemplified by the phrase one long-time nurse used in talking about her experience. When I asked her to describe what stood out most for her in reflecting on her facility, she said plainly with a smile, here at our facility "one person does matter". This powerful phrase, "one person does matter", may be more implicit than explicit in the words of the participants as exemplified above, but the idea represented in this phrase, that people have the ability to have an impact, shows up throughout the numerous stories shared by staff. Staff consistently talked about having the freedom

and the encouragement to think and act with an organization-wide perspective. They discussed numerous opportunities they were given to personally contribute and tackle challenges in support of their facility. These actions, described by the participants in interview after interview, are powerful examples of how one person, with both a sense of ownership and of autonomy, truly does matter.

Connecting and Caring

While "committing to who" provides the building blocks and "acting with ownership and a sense of autonomy" serves as the framework from which *collective/individualism* is built, "connecting and caring" seems to act as the glue that allows this movement to hold together. It was the key theme seen most often in the coding, appearing almost 350 times in the data collected. This is not a surprising finding as the idea of care is central to healthcare in general, but this idea of caring described by one study participant as "*care above all else*" seems to take on an additional level of significance in the sustaining high performers.

It is important to note here, that the "care" described in this theme is not about the direct care of patients, but came from the data as "caring for one another" and "strong staff connection". It was represented through the continuous mention in the interviews of "cohesiveness" and "respect", "collaboration" and "getting it done together." The pattern emerging from the data expresses this idea of caring as based on a strong connection to one another and a commitment to the collective.

In this first story, we get a sense of how the sustaining high performers break down the typical boundaries of healthcare organizations in crossing departmental, unit and functional boundaries in a general sense, and of care for the facility as a whole. This broader perspective both inspires and supports the sense of ownership and accountability discussed above and allows for a connection among staff based on a sense of collaboration and pride. This example allows us to get a true sense of what "team" is to the members of these facilities.

> It's kind of like a team. To me a team is not just a nursing team. Take for instance my unit. If we're talking team I'm talking about my housekeeper, I'm talking about my pharmacist, my case manager. This is my team. I should be able to grab my housekeeper and say hey, we want to make sure we got this part done. Pride. From the housekeeper on down, she'll say watch my wet floor? It's the pride of not having footprints there, because we want to be presentable. So I see it as pride.

This story presents the juxtaposition of caring with collaboration. As many of the stories from exploring ownership and autonomy showed people work together across organizational boundaries; this example takes it to the level of application, of team connection and facility pride. This director sees connecting as reaching much further than her team of direct care providers.

Connecting was a critical component of the findings and shows up in the collaborative actions as exemplified in stories across all the movements. The idea of "cohesiveness", "watching one another's back", "getting it done together", "supporting each other when things get rough", and a "sense of community" are all in

vivo codes that emerged in the interview process. They play an important role in how people work together to accomplish the work in the subject facilities.

While the idea of connecting and care is central to healthcare in general, it emerges consistently in the responses of the sustaining high performers. In particular this idea shows up in the data as the word "family". While many healthcare organizations (and many other organizations for that matter) talk about co-workers and/or colleagues as "family", what is seen in example after example from our participants is that it is a much different thing to treat one another as family, and commit to collective success based on a fundamental focus of taking care of one another.

The example below tells the story of a recognition program, not for employees, but for the children of employees. The original idea emerged as a way to provide creative methods for recognition to staff members that were not eligible for the performance incentives provided to higher level leaders in the organization. The director of this department felt it was important to acknowledge the contributions of his staff, but thought that in the true sense of family why not engage the employee's family as well, so he created a recognition program for the children of employees. This story provides a powerful example of how this facility shows its care beyond just the "job" someone does day to day, by expressing a sincere care for the whole person who is part of the facility's "family".

The executive who shared the story was moved as she talked about her feeling of being at the event and watching staff members turn from employees into parents. She added with almost a sense of surprise herself, "Who would have ever expected to see parents watching their kids get recognized by their employer?" The executive expressed how these employees, turned parents are "sitting out there so proud" as their children stand up for their recognition. The executive goes on to say, "It was so profound...who'd ever thought we'd be doing these types of things?" It is perhaps in this statement that the true uniqueness of caring exemplified in sustaining high performers makes its departure from the traditional track and begins to enter the realm of an active, extended family, in which connecting and caring takes on a whole new meaning.

> We have one of our directors, who is just a brilliant man, very unique, he came up with a concept and this was originally just to support his staff. This was an original concept out of his area to somehow recognize his staff in a way that would transcend the boundaries of the organization. He came up with the fact that why don't we reward their kids for their scholastic capabilities, whatever it might be. They might be good in sports at their school, or they might have written an essay, or they're a straight A student or they volunteer somewhere, whatever it is. It started off one year, and I remember going the first year, I think there were three kids recognized. But I watched those housekeepers sitting out in the audience, all of a sudden they were parents, not housekeepers, they're parents watching their kids get recognized by their employer. This was like very odd to everyone. It was just uncomfortable sitting there only because you never felt what it felt like before in an organization. So here we were, fast forward to this year, and there were now ten or so, but to watch those kids stand up in front of people. I think of these as defining moments in a child's life, and we can all think back over times in our lives where some mentor has taken the time. You think of these people that have done something or spent a moment, and it was only a moment in time, it wasn't that you had a lot of interaction with them, it was a moment in time, but you remember it for a lifetime. And for these kids to stand in front of all of

> us, our CEO gets up there and he does this thing, and I got up and said a few words, and our COO said a few words, and here they are receiving this plaque from our hospital, and the employees, the parents, sitting out there so proud watching their kids getting these awards. It was so profound. But that's again a story where it transcends all kinds of boundaries. Who'd have ever thought that we'd be doing these types of things? It's a small event. It probably takes all of a half an hour a year to do this, there's a ton of things that go on before it, but just a half an hour of our time to recognize these kids. There aren't many people there; it's usually just the parents and us. But these kids will remember that for a lifetime. Someday they'll be our nurses; they'll be our doctors, whatever they are in the world. But we will have stood out as a moment in time for them, for what they've been able to accomplish.

A powerful moment in this story exemplifying a sense of connecting and caring comes in the insightful statement, "It was just uncomfortable sitting there only because you never felt what it felt like before in an organization." The essence of the uniqueness declared in this statement represents the power of connecting and caring expressed by the interview participants. The action of caring for one another was told in an unending stream of stories about people supporting each other in times of need or crises. While one could argue that many healthcare facilities take the time to care for one another, many of the interviewees said things similar to one tenured nurse who mentioned in all her years in healthcare and in all the hospitals where she has worked she had "never experienced a sense of family like the one I do here." As one director said, "it's just the way we are around here".

The example below provides just one sample of the types of actions taking place at healthcare facilities on a regular basis. The distinction at the sustaining high

performers is in the volume, scope and creativity through which these activities occur as expressed by the nurse above. In this story, the director stressed this idea of family to me through both personal experience and the stories of others. The sense of personal impact these types of actions have in the countless examples provided in the interviews comes through in his words, "If that ain't family, I don't know what is."

> A lot of times you really see how it's family when you have a tragedy. In 2001 my wife's parents both got killed in a car wreck. I'm going to tell you what, I'd been here since it opened, and Jason, there were people that had never met my wife, but you would not believe the people that came to my house, came to where they were from to give us support. It was unbelievable. That's one example. I'll tell you another one. We had a guy worked in surgery that was just an OR tech back there, not a high profile job, not a job that a lot of people would want to do. This guy had an aneurism, he was in the hospital, he didn't have a whole lot of vacation time, and he didn't have a whole lot of sick time. People in this hospital volunteered their sick time and PTO time to this guy until he could come back to work. And they weren't asked to do it. They did it on a volunteer basis. If that ain't family, I don't know what is.

By sharing this story and others I am not suggesting that caring for one another alone is a distinguishing factor, but when examined in the sheer volume and in the way in which it is accomplished as told by the sustaining high performers, these actions seem to be woven into their very way of being. The stories told talk of how "everyone smiles at one another", "addresses one another directly" and acknowledges "there are no strangers". This sense of care and connecting comes out of what interviewees described as a "sense of respect" and "treating peers as we would want to be treated", and also out of "a willingness to hold one another accountable" and "support one another when things get rough".

A staff nurse shared the affect this type of care had on her personally as well. She told the story, as tears welled in her eyes, of a family loss and the exceptional outreach she felt from her colleagues. Her example continues to show how the connection people experience in these facilities seems to be more than just the ability to work together.

> I know a personal one I guess, and then again it all relates to employees and how employees are treated probably, but we have a nurse that has terminal cancer, and there was a huge benefit and things done for her, and lots of money and PTO donated to her for her struggles. When my sister was killed in a car crash, doctors, everybody, I was just like blown away with the generosity of people. Not that I needed anything, but it's nice to know that somebody cares. So maybe that. Maybe that if something happens to you as a person, somebody is going to be sending out an e-mail, somebody is going to care.

In this interview it was almost as if she had an epiphany in sharing her final thought. She acknowledged in talking further that the idea of caring was more a natural reaction than a planned action in her facility (as it seemed to be in many of the other sustainers as well). The idea that "somebody is going to care" was a powerful realization for her.

This was the case in almost every interview. The stories of care seemed to be told without any prodding. They emerged as if not distinct, but rather exemplary of the way people connected with one another in these facilities. The examples below present a montage of how care shows up in the data as not a structured activity, but rather it seems to be just the way these organizations choose to behave. The first story

is told by a longest tenured executive who talks about the idea of care as a means to "pay it forward".

> Well it's kind of like that whole pay it forward. I think really they're not just paying it back, they pay it forward, and so you watch ongoing, you see situations happen and somebody else does something else for somebody else. It's just unreal. We had an employee recently who left one department, she's been gone a year and a half from that department. Her husband recently died, I went to the funeral, there were so many people there and her old department had a huge showing. There must have been 30 people from that department that came. They could have just said well now she's in [her new department], we don't have to deal with her anymore. But they were there and they wanted to be there for her.

This idea of "somebody else doing something else for somebody else" gets to the continuous nature that care takes on in these organizations. It also speaks to the naturally occurring nature of these experiences. What perhaps is most compelling in many of these stories is the sense of awe the story tellers have while sharing their experiences ("It's just unreal"). The sense of care is overwhelming even in places where it is part of the organizational fiber.

We continue to see this in the next story shared by a department director. Rather than remembering the one time someone did something memorable for another colleague, she explains "it is not even one story". She even stopped to ask herself mid-story with an almost curious sense, Why would anybody do that?" exemplifying the sense of awe we see in story after story from the sustaining high performers.

To me the very question, "Why would anybody do that?" speaks to the uniqueness of the occurrences this individual experiences at her facility day after day. What caused her to perk up with pride was when she paused again to answer her own question, "It's because they're good people". In the face of these significant acts of caring, she seemed awed by the fact that these are not actions taken by people looking for praise or acknowledgement, commenting that people "don't broadcast the stuff". This sense of humility seems to serve as a foundation for this idea of ongoing caring, built upon a foundation of connecting with one another. As the director explained to me:

> There are so many nice stories. It's not even one story…I seen Dr. Smith take Susie Brown groceries, she got a divorce and didn't have money. He took groceries to her house. Why would anybody do that? Because they're good people. Or they've been raised right, their daddy told them to, I don't know. And they thing is, they don't broadcast that stuff. Bobby in the lab, he lost his house in the tornado, he probably doesn't have a clue where all that money came from. I had a girl in my department that lost a son in a car wreck last year, and they decided to collect money. One week one of the case managers would bring a box of cards and pass them out and collect them and send them to her, the next week another one. Every week that girl got a box of cards from the whole hospital. I know one envelope I delivered had $800 in it, and I have no idea who it came from. It just happens. It wasn't that anybody was obligated…so I don't think it's one story, I think it's just everybody has been touched by somebody else here. I've been touched, and so I touch back. So it's kind of like it's a plague going around.

In framing the action of "connecting and caring" and showing how its presence supports *collective/individualism*, perhaps this director expressed it best in her own words, "It wasn't that anybody was obligated…so I don't think it is one story." Here she was helping us to see these weren't rare occurrences, but rather they were

common ways of being. She continues, "I think it's just everybody has been touched by somebody else here. I've been touched, and so I touch back."

The data seem to suggest that this action of caring and connectedness is not something that can be mandated of people, but rather it is a way of being, generated when people are given the chance to be truly human, to be touched by someone else. It is at these touch-points between individuals where bonds are built, relationships established and *collective/individualism* is constructed. What is interesting, is that while the occurrences of caring are not unique in these organizations, it is the presence of this way of being that makes these organizations truly unique.

While "a plague going around" may not convey the most positive of images, it speaks to the powerfully contagious nature of care if provided the right space to thrive and grow. This epidemic (Ford, 1999) of "connecting and caring" is tightly woven with "committing to whom" in ensuring the right people are in place who have a strong focus on and willingness to care. In "acting with ownership and autonomy" the actions are not mandates of leadership or policy-driven expectations ("it wasn't that anybody was obligated"), but rather they are individual and collective choices to address challenges facing peers. Perhaps the idea of "connecting and caring" helps link us back to the overall concept of *collective/individualism*, as seen in the powerful words one staff member used to describe the nature of her facility. She stated that in

her facility there was a strong connection, one of pride and one in which people said without hesitation and with great respect, "I walk beside you!"

Non Sustainers and Collective/Individualism

In examining what makes *collective/individualism* a movement central to sustaining high performance, the stories told by those in the non-sustaining facilities were also examined to see how they related or referred to this concept. The example cited below by a department manager paints a picture of actions that appear to contrast with the idea of "I walk beside you". The story shows how the idea of "there is no 'it's not my job'" which was a frequent theme emerging from the sustaining facilities, actually appears in the opposite manner in this story.

The manager describes a situation in which nurses do not get up to respond to call lights from certain patients because as she described hearing, they would say "that's not my patient." The story presents conflicts with the very notion of both strong contributors, exemplified in people's unwillingness to act, and collaboration, as it is evident that the individuals are only committed to doing what is specifically assigned to them. The manager explained the challenges she faces as follows:

> A lot of times, patients, when they call out to the desk and they need something, there will be three people sitting there, but that's not their patient, so they don't get up. I said the patient doesn't know why you're not getting up. If you're sitting then you need to be answering call lights, because these are all our patients.

While a simple story, it serves as a powerful example of how the actions of *collective/individualism* can easily fall by the wayside in one simple moment. The nurses in the example are just "sitting there" because "that's not their patient". The story provides an example of how people's perspective on their role ("committing to who"), may be linked to these individuals choosing not to act with "ownership or autonomy" to address the situation, and in doing so, potentially misses the mark of "connecting and caring" for one another and even more so for the patients in need. This example shows how fragile the nature of *collective/individualism* is and how easily it can be derailed.

Conclusion

Collective/individualism is a movement built of many pieces. It seems to grow out of and sustain itself in a framework of relationship. Individuals define themselves and create their reality through interactions with others. This supports the notion that the cornerstone of this concept is not the individuals or the collective as physical components, but rather it may very well be found in the construction that occurs at the point of relationship between organizational members. The roots of the word 'individualism' lead us to think of indivisibility or oneness, yet what emerges from these organizations are stories of a "oneness of many", a powerful collective of strong individuals. The findings suggest that it may be from these interactions that *collective/individualism* establishes itself and builds its capacity to support the sustaining of performance.

The stories shared by the participants helped us to see the possibility that this idea is not simply about getting the right people based on some polished talent management program or about the need to build high performance teams. The stories told express that while one could easily say 'in our organization we select the right people, we do not micromanage them and we help them care for one another', these items become just that, surface activities that someone can check off a list. Our participants' examples paint a picture of *collective/individualism*, comprising the actions of "committing to who", "acting with ownership and a sense of autonomy" and "connecting and caring" as a perpetual state of becoming (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002).

Agile/Consistency

As with *collective/individualism* above, *agile/consistency* too presents an interesting paradoxical concept. This concept appeared in the data almost 600 times and is inclusive of three central actions that drive this movement. The stories related to this finding talk about the sustaining high performing facilities "acting" not only "with a clarity in purpose"— a determination and resolute focus on a desired result, but they also tell of these facilities balancing this focus with a strong willingness to "challenge the status quo" with a commitment to continuous improvement.

The data provide us insight to a precarious, but potentially important balance. At one end is the need for consistency in organizations as seen in many of the responses of participants who stated "we have clear shared expectations", a "common commitment to purpose" and "we all focus on the same goals". At the other is the need for agility

to address the challenges of a rapidly changing world. The recognition of this shows up across the data in phrases like "we change what needs to be changed", "we make changes quickly" and "we are willing to change as required to be better". This dynamic tension presents itself in the recognition over and over that these facilities are clear about who they are, but realize that the world may call them to adapt at any given moment.

The third element that comprises the movement *agile/consistency* is tied directly to the last phrase shared above "as required to be better". The theme of "going above and beyond" presents that potential balancing point where focus on purpose and a commitment to progress meet. We will examine each of these central actions—"acting with clarity of purpose, challenging the status quo and going above and beyond"— as we explore this movement in greater detail below (Figure 9).

Going Above and Beyond

The theme "going above and beyond" appeared over 120 times in the data. Of additional interest is that the in-vivo code "above and beyond" appeared as a distinct category in three of the five role groups in the interview process. The actual term "above and beyond" was found in the data of almost half of the interviews and appeared more than once in every subject facility. This seems to suggest that the idea of "going above and beyond" is not just a created concept, but seems to be a term that shows up in the very language of these sustaining high performing organizations.

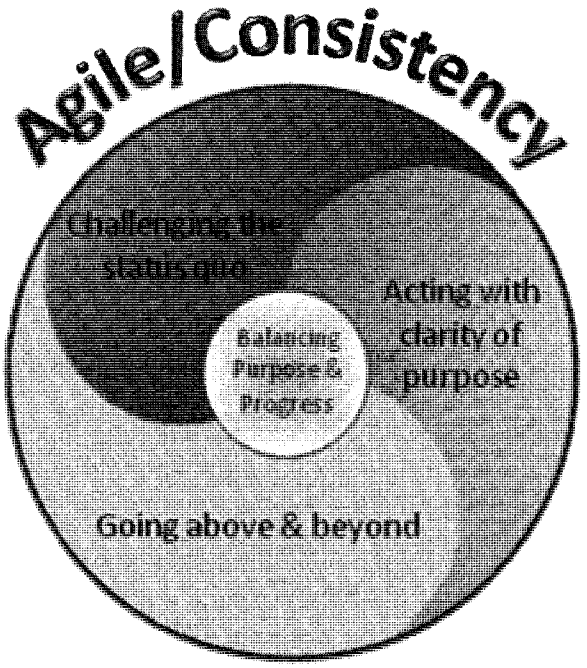

Figure 9. Agile/Consistency

"Going above and beyond" also appeared in the data in a number of other forms that help us to better frame what the participants are suggesting with this concept. Included in "going above and beyond" and representative of this theme and central action associated with *agile/consistency* are such phrases as "we are always trying to be better" and we believe we can "always do more". The data supporting this theme also reveals a consistent message around being "focused on greatness" and being "committed to" or "striving for excellence". Perhaps the phrase that best represents the essence of the theme "going above and beyond" is the idea of "raising the bar". As one longest tenure employee suggested,

> You absolutely cannot just sit back and say well we've achieved X and that's good enough. So even though our scores are excellent [we want to know why there are people who] weren't very satisfied. We're thrilled [most] were satisfied, but we just keep trying to raise the bar.

The data reveal situation after situation where this desire for continuous outperformance (Guerra, 2005) appears to be a possible way of being for the organizations studied. It is within the framework of this theme that many participants expressed their greatest pride in and commitment to their facility. The stories they shared revealed the potential link between consistency of purpose and agility of progress that enabled these facilities to maintain a commitment to "going above and beyond".

The data revealed a commitment to achieving desired results and provided some insight into the recognition of the participants that the ability to respond with agility (and to continuously improve) was critical to success. The story below paints a picture that links the theme of "going above and beyond" back to the key elements discovered in *collective/individualism* above. It provides another example of the ways in which each of the three movements of sustaining high performance feed off of and support one another. In this story we see how "acting with ownership and autonomy" led to purposeful action and significant outcomes, all summed up in the phrase "we're going to do this".

> Our CEO's wife got really, really sick, and so he was not [able to be] here for us. I cannot tell you how this team pulled together. We said we're going to do this. The week of the [Joint Commission] survey he

> was not able to be here because he had to be with his wife, and so we knew not just because we wanted to attain a better survey, but for him, we wanted to make sure that we all did good for him. The day we got the results from the survey, when the survey team came in and talked to us, and when they left the room and they looked around the room, and you looked at the managers who had tears in their eyes, and then he had sent this card to us about how you can reach your dreams and your goals, and he sent this message to us which just was so important to us that day, and so even though we didn't have our top boss here, that didn't mean we weren't going to do the very best that we could do. We had two reasons then to pull together, for the facility and for him. We had one of the best surveys we ever had...when we know we've got a goal, we pull together and get it accomplished.

This story provides a picture of a commitment to outcomes that was representative of "going above and beyond" as they wanted "to attain a better survey". It also revealed a sense of pride and a commitment to purpose that we will explore further below as the individuals were focused on "doing the very best that we could...for the facility". Of additional interest is that this story also provides us some insight into how the three movements may weave together in the sustaining of high performance. The movement *collective/individualism* was represented by the action of the individuals to "pull together". The story ends with a simple, yet profound summary statement that shows the interplay of these key ideas. In concluding the story, the subject expressed herself with a strong sense of emotion in saying, "When we know we've got a goal, we pull together and get it accomplished".

This example is laced with the undertones of "going above and beyond". It can be seen in the commitment to the facility as exemplified by the survey outcomes and in

the connection to the facility as exemplified in their tears. The story also reintroduces the theme of "connecting and caring" when we experience how the staff responded collaboratively during an extremely trying time for their leader.

The linkage of "going above and beyond and connecting and caring" also can be seen in the following story. A department director talked about a situation where a patient on vacation was traveling on the interstate near the facility and had a serious heart attack. The pride of both "working together" to take care of the needs of both the patient and his family has this experience stand out as an exemplar for her.

> One time last year or the year before, right after Thanksgiving, we had a couple from Virginia [passing through on vacation]. We get all the people traveling through...and we had this guy traveling from Virginia that was 49 years old. He and his wife were on vacation and he had a heart attack on the interstate. He had it going through the city, he was having chest pains, but he wouldn't stop. So his wife calls 911 on the cell phone, so the EMS tells her to get off on exit 147 and they'll meet them at the exit. So when they got there they did a 12 lead EKG and faxed it into the hospital and with the coordination of the ER staff this EKG comes through and he's having acute MI. They call me and say an acute MI is coming in. We had him in from that door to the Cath Lab and his artery open in 19 minutes. It's that coordination of staff and the dedication to their job. And then my staff member realized they're from Virginia, they're on vacation, and she had a freebie card to a local bed and breakfast. She called over there and asked them if she could use it that night for his wife so she could spend the night, so she would be just right across from the hospital. I was so proud of her because she took the award she had won and went out to the waiting room and told the wife she had a place to stay. It was just really neat. The gentleman ended up staying in the hospital three or four days because he had a bad MI, but it was just the whole coordination of how that happened from an internal aspect of the team working together to take care of the needs of the patient, and then the staff taking care of the family member at the same point in time.

As exemplified by the stories above, study participants repeatedly shared their pride in the actions and outcomes of their facility. There seems to be pride expressed in these facilities' ability to positively impact people's lives such as in the case of the gentleman above. In the story, the director was proud to share not only the clinical accomplishments of her facility, but also the care accomplishments of the staff.

Participants across the study expressed this pride through their competitive spirit and desire "to be the best", speaking of a "commitment to excellence". Terms such as "we don't take success for granted", "we are always trying to be better", "we keep raising the bar", and "we're focused on greatness" appeared again and again in the data. This raises the very possibility that to these organizations "going above and beyond" is not a unique characteristic, but rather it is a fundamental principle in how they choose to act each and every day. The stories collected contain example after example of these types of actions taking place at all levels.

As was shared in the story above about the nurse pushing the gentlemen all the way to his car, here too are examples of how *collective/individualism* linked with a clear commitment to "going above and beyond" leads to great things for a facility. The stories below go further in showing us that these are not necessarily isolated incidents or random acts of kindness bound to happen in any organization. Rather, they represent the possibility of the broader purposeful actions of many.

The following story again shows the collective effort across a facility, including the critical partnerships of nursing staff and physicians in providing top patient experiences. In this example, or as it was introduced to me, "The Glasses Story", we see how "going above and beyond" sometimes shows up completely outside any of the typical occurrences in the healthcare environment. It also shows how every aspect of the patient (and physician) experience can affect our ability to "be the best".

> There is one surgeon in particular who we just love to absolute death, will do anything for him. He's older, we did a little thing on doctor's day, like certificates that say most whatever, best whatever, and his was most cherished and most dedicated. He did surgery on a patient, a little old lady, and he's one of those doctors that sits beside your bed all night if he's worried about you. So he came over to me and said Miss Z had the greatest experience, she had nothing but great things to say, but she can't find her glasses. I said I'll be on it. I picked her up from outpatient and I knew she handed them to her husband. I know she did, but I can't go over there and say don't you remember? So long story short I said Miss Z, I'm almost sure we left your glasses in outpatient, I know you didn't have them in the operating room, but we'll investigate and we'll do something. Outpatient didn't have them, and days went by, I talked to risk management, they went and talked to her, and then I called back and said did you go talk to her and they said yeah, but we just can't find them, but we're still investigating. Well the next day Dr. X calls and said have you found her glasses, I'm discharging her tomorrow. I said no, but I'll call back up there. I said pay for her glasses, what's $100? Dr. X's going to buy them if we don't. And there's a little more, she had a bump in the road in her stay here, so we were just like go to [the CFO] we need to buy her glasses. So we did and he said okay. So there you go. What other big hospital could you call the CFO and say I need you to buy her some glasses. In the end, come to find out, Dr. Weiser comes back the next day and he says I just want to thank you. Well her husband found them in the car. We didn't have to pay, and it all worked out.

The story above shows us how "going above and beyond" may also never touch the customer (patient) directly, but still does not reduce their importance. It was the

actions of the individuals involved and the willingness of the Chief Financial Officer that supported the above and beyond effort. From the perspective of the story teller, her pride came more from the fact that she could do something to address this situation rather than actually having to see it through. The combination of "acting with ownership and autonomy and going above and beyond" exemplified in this story shows the potential interplay of the movements in sustaining high performance.

This idea is supported as well in the following story in which the subject, a department director tells of a patient who was a foster child. The experience the patient had while at the facility motivated her to write to the facility and share her story. The story as it turns out was not just about the one nice thing someone did for her during her stay, it was about the collective effort she experienced throughout the facility to provide her a positive experience. It paints a simple, yet powerful picture of how others are touched by the efforts of "going above and beyond".

> I get a letter weekly now. If you read patient comments they won't just comment [on] one person, they comment [on] three. We had a letter from a 17 year old a couple of weeks ago that was a foster child, and it was read in the operations meeting with all the managers. She was a foster child, she come in for surgery, and she just wanted to thank the nurse for being her mom when she was here, because her real mom didn't even bother to come, and that she felt like that this girl really spent a lot of extra time with her, making her feel comfortable, and that she was very scared. It just brought tears to your eyes. But then she said I also thank the housekeeper for just sitting down and talking to me when I was so nervous. It wasn't just one person, it was three or four. It used to be when you got a letter it was thanking one person. You don't see that here.

The power of "going above and beyond" is experienced in this story as not only did the nurse engage with this patient in a special way, but also the housekeeper was acknowledged for her efforts by the young woman. What stood out in experiencing the excitement of the storyteller was that in her example she focused on more than the subject of the story. She also stressed the fact that thank you notes are received mentioning not only direct caregivers, but also the team of people supporting each patient, both directly and indirectly.

This focus on striving to be the best and "going above and beyond" seems to be an active commitment of people across the sustaining high performers group as the concept was discussed by many of the interview participants. In stressing the importance of above and beyond, one nurse director said, "this is not just a job". This idea that the work these staff members and leaders do is more than a job can be found in many interviews. The idea is well represented by this final story of a sad situation with a thoughtful and caring ending. It describes a situation in one of our facilities where people "will do above and beyond to make the situation what it can be".

> I think that the people who are here have stayed and they will go above and beyond to make the situation the best that it can be. Working in healthcare obviously we see bad stuff all the time. We had a very specific situation where a husband and a wife were driving to the hospital, the husband was having chest pains, having a heart attack, and he wouldn't let her drive. So she jumped in the passenger seat trying to get him to stop, let me drive, no, I'm just going to go ahead. He actually has a heart attack and dies on the way to the hospital, and she is in the passenger seat. She takes her seatbelt off to try to get control of the car, so she's severely injured and he's dead. They came in and tried to save him, but he was dead, and she's in the ICU with multiple injuries. Needless to say a little depressed and just beside

> herself and now they need to have his funeral. Well she's got many more days in the ICU, but they need to bury him. So what are we going to do? Well, we had a funeral in the ER. We rolled her bed down to the ER, the ER gave us a big room, we put some flowers in there, tried to make it as nice as we could, told them bring in whoever you want and let her have her service right there. It's that kind of stuff that happens here, I could come up with a lot of stories that go above and beyond.

I am not sure this story can be better summed up than in the closing words "It's that kind of stuff that happens here…that goes above and beyond." The actions representing going above and beyond, as seen in the story also show up in the data as aligned to the clear purpose of these hospitals as centers of care. This idea of clarity of purpose is the next component of *agile/consistency.*

Acting with Clarity of Purpose

Acting with clarity of purpose appears in the data almost 200 times. It is with this recognition of purpose (consistency) that the data also quickly counters with its balance, progress (agility), to provide the complete nature of this movement. The challenge the data present is how does supporting sustainability emerge from the ability to maintain clarity of purpose while being in motion?

Consistency, as the data reveal, is about clarity in message, in philosophy, in core tendencies, and is a key means of engaging people in the cause and actions of their facility. In examining the data around the theme of consistency, phrases emerged such as "we're focused on principles", "we have clear shared expectations" and "we are built on a sure foundation". Many study participants' commented on how members

across their organizations were "all on the same page" and "focused on the same goals". It should also be noted that that the data did not equate purpose to simply having an organizational vision or defined set of goals, in fact the term 'vision' only showed up sparingly in the data.

In the example below the subject, a unit director, talks about when she first joined the organization she was unaware of the concepts of mission, vision, or values. Yet, when she was able to experience them in action they took on a life of their own and created a motivating factor for action among herself and her peers. It exemplifies the difference in having vision as an item on your management "how-to" checklist and having an active and living purpose for the organization.

> Thirteen years ago, I wouldn't have had the slightest idea what was a mission, vision, or value. But when it became part of the expectation, the language, everybody got this is [our hospital's] vision, this is our mission. Every forum, every community forum that was nurses and the PCA's, everybody goes to, the first thing he does, mission, vision and value is up there. And it's amazing, you look around the room and you see people repeating it with the executive team, because we know the mission, vision, and values. We're always going to strive to be that. It's just like nobody had to say that, but you see it. We want the best scores and our pride when you stand up there and they have a picture of your unit as having world class patient satisfaction. That's pride. So see what they found is the tool to grow that pride, and it's really from within. All they're doing is putting the education out there, communicating the bottom line, making sure everybody is empowered to buy into it. It's just like fertilizer; it's going to grow that pride and that loyalty

The powerful imagery of this story presents a very organic picture for clarity of purpose itself. The vision, mission and values of this organization were not static

documents on the wall of the administrative suite or a break room; they were living statements and in essence calls to action for members of the facility. The subject talked about them as catalysts to achievement and pride, with the powerful metaphor of fertilizer for growing pride and loyalty.

A key component of this clarity of purpose, implicit in the story above, is how a common framework created a means for great achievement. It is even more evident in the following two examples in which core sets of standards and principles are grounded in a common organizational language that creates a solid foundation for purposeful action in these organizations. The idea of clear standards or guiding principles carries only as long as they are lived day-to-day and take on the essence of the organization they serve.

All too often in non-sustainers and other organizations, just as mission, vision and values can become just words on a wall, principles and standards too can meet that same fate. It is in the joining of the pride of "going above and beyond" with the consistency of purpose that these ideas take on life for an organization in action. This first example, provided by a longest tenured executive, is more of a commentary than a story, but it exemplifies the way in which an individual can link pride and purpose and the way people in an organization engage with one another.

> We've been very careful about communication. I think there were several facets. We have not allowed an organization to come in here and use their vernacular. For example, I know Studer is a great organization, I know he's got some great things, but we looked at

> Studer and we said no way, this is not rocket science, these are basics, basics, basics, and we should not have to hire somebody from the outside to tell us how to do our jobs as leaders. So from that standpoint I think that we've been very clear about it needs to be our vernacular, our culture.

This statement expresses the great intention and consideration the organization takes on in supporting its own language, a language that encourages its culture and constancy in purpose. This is further exemplified in the story below, told by a department director, about a standard shared in one of the subject facilities. The critical element of the story, once again is not only that the standard is living and guides the organization towards action, but it shows us the important interplay between the movements in sustaining high performance. The standards described in the story, and understood by all in the organization, serve as a means to express autonomy and ownership, collaboration and individual excellence, linked with a clear focus on purpose and commitment to excellence.

> We have something called elevator etiquette. It's one of our service standards. So the elevator door opens and this housekeeping cart just comes in before anybody can get out, and I was in the elevator with some radiology transporters and the first thing one of them said before I could say anything was guys, elevator etiquette, you never gave us an opportunity to get out before you came in. And they were like oh, you're right, and backed out to let everybody else out. You've got a nurse, you've got a radiology transporter, and you've got a housekeeper, and all three knew elevator etiquette. So to me, as long as you communicate it and give them their road map, let them know just how it affects them, hold each other accountable, it will work.

"Acting with clarity of purpose" is exemplified by this story as all staff members in the elevator knew the standard at play. The power in the story is not in the knowledge

or understanding of the standard, but rather in how the individuals in the elevator all chose to respond to it. It comes from the recognition of this director that the people in the elevator were not administrators reinforcing rules, but peers holding one another accountable to the core purpose of the organization. Also key in supporting the idea of clarity of purpose is an individual's realization that if the pieces are put in place, then "it will work."

In looking at "acting with clarity of purpose" in the data, much of it comes down to the fundamentals of the work being done each day in the hospitals in the study and beyond. There is recognition by both staff and leadership that what they do is more than run a business or do a job, but they touch lives in powerful ways. When interviewees talk about things such as "it's just what we do" they are touching on this fundamental idea of core purpose. As this longest tenured member of one of our facilities shared in telling the story below, "at the end of the day what really is important is the difference we make to our patients".

> There was a very well-known pediatrician in this town who probably took care of the majority of the people who ended up taking care of him while he was here in our hospital. He actually took care of both of my girls. He ended up in our rehab department and could not walk. He is elderly now and had had some health issues, serious issues, and I realized he was here. I had even said to my girls one day that I wondered if he was still alive. I'd lost touch, I hadn't heard about him anymore. This was a personal thing for me too, as well as just a wonderful story, but I went to his room and I reminded him who I was. He recognized me immediately and he started asking how my girls were, and I said I'm so glad to see you, I had told my daughter just the other day that I wanted to tell you what a difference you made in their lives and how much I appreciate what you do. And bless his heart, he kind of teared up and I teared up. But he came in here depressed,

> discouraged, couldn't walk, he'd had severe cancer, severe health issues. He walked out of this hospital. He was in our rehab, and his family was not sure they would ever see that again. Both of his children are in the medical field, one is a physician and I've forgot what the other one is, but they wrote an endearing letter. That's truly why we're here. All the minutiae that we deal with daily is [not as] important because at the end of the day what really is important is the difference we make to our patients, in a positive way of course, and we did for him. I will never forget that…

This moving story is just one example of the values and standards that participants in the study shared. It seems that caring is an integral part of the work setting, and relationships among staff and leadership are critical to the ability to be successful as a facility. The data suggest this success is supported by a constant focus on purpose.

While as in the story above, purpose helps us provide and support positive outcomes, it is also critical in times when outcomes may not be as positive. In the story below, a tenured director talks about a family that faced a difficult loss, but saw the experience as a strong example of how purpose drives all they do at her facility. In the story she reflects on the positives of the situation and how the staff and nurses responded by "living their core philosophy" and trying to "do it all".

> I think the story in NICU, where we have all the technology and we can keep people alive, and we offer the best in care, but a baby was dying and there wasn't anything more they could do for the baby. We have a great program here where we have trained a group of nurses to give bereavement care to families, so one of the nurses went and started talking with the family and ascertained that the thing that family wanted most was that the baby be outside at least once in its life before he died. So they made arrangements to take everything off and take the baby out to our little garden area, and the baby died out there. But it was outside, and that was important to the family. So it just kind

> of showed me that we can do all the technology stuff, but the most important thing is people in their hearts. So I think we never sacrificed one or the other, we try to do it all.

While a sad and touching experience, this example allows us to see "acting with clarity of purpose" in the toughest of times. In the midst of all that healthcare has to offer, there was something greater this facility could provide in meeting the needs of the baby and his family. While we most often think about healthcare as the administering of direct clinical care, it is just as often focused on the patient and family experience. This idea is found throughout the data and in numerous stories shared such as the one above.

The other critical element that arises often in the data is the discussion of "acting with clarity of purpose" that extends beyond the boundaries of the facility itself. While the original high performance study found community outreach to be a common characteristic (Wolf, 2008), the discussion of community involvement and presence emerged in the data embedded in the concept of purpose for the subject facilities. Stories about staff being approached in the Wal-Mart while wearing their facility shirt, being thanked for helping a loved one, or providing a 10-by-10 tent for a child's soccer team with the facility name on it show how people encounter and engage with these facilities in the community. Yet, the following story digs a little deeper and exemplifies how the subject facilities tend to not only be present in the communities in which they reside, but also act in powerful ways to exert a community influence.

The following story was shared by the longest tenured executive of a facility as I asked her what best represented how people experienced her hospital.

> Just recently we helped a childcare group. We renovated their facility for them and we were sitting there in this tiny center, it was no bigger than, I'll bet that place is maybe 1200 square feet, it's a tiny little childcare center. There we are; they bring us out for the showing of the place. And so the director gets up and they have us sitting in the foyer because it was supposed to not rain, but it did, and so they had these little folding chairs. So there we were, the executive team, sitting there listening to this, and the children come out and they sing this wonderful song and this little girl Lilly comes out and she gives us a tour of the center. The confidence in this little girl, and she's just showing us everything about the center, but the impact that we have had on those people, the maintenance man got up and number one, maintenance men aren't normally known for their verbal ability. I mean let's just face it, that's typically not their thing. This man got up, he's got his John Deere hat on and he's sitting there, he was so profound and so well-versed. The way that he communicated about his thankfulness, and what he said basically in basic terms was you know what, a lot of organizations say they want to help, and they'll do the nice things, they'll do the new carpet, new tile, that kind of thing. He said but you know what, what worried me every day when I came out here was how long are the gas pipes going to hold, how long is this air conditioning going to keep the place air conditioned for these kids? He said I worried about the security of when these kids walked into this building, there was no security camera, there was no security lock on the door, there was nothing. We're in the middle of [the city] on a main street. And he said to know that you cared enough that you allowed us to not fix just the amenities about the place, the cosmetic side, but your money went toward fixing the gas lines, and putting in the security, and making sure the air conditioning works, and putting a new roof on the building. The things that people don't see every day. He had tears in his eyes, it was unreal. But again, outside the boundaries of this organization, the impact that we can have, these are the kinds of things that transcend anything that you'd ever imagine. And we hear it over and over and over again.

Perhaps the most profound moment was when the interviewee herself was moved in the closing sentences of this story. The powerful statement "these are the kinds of

things that transcend anything that you'd ever imagine" seemed to be both comforting and shocking to her. Comforting in that it was who she believed her facility to be and what she was committed to as a leader in the organization, but shocking in that it truly had a feeling of transcendence and of doing something greater…"over and over and over again".

This commitment to doing greater for patients, families and the community is all wrapped up in the idea of "acting with clarity of purpose" as exemplified in the stories above as well as many others shared. The focus this requires of the subject facilities emerges not in the dictums and directives of leadership, but rather as the data show, it is embedded in the principles and foundations of the sustaining high performers. This may be no clearer then in this humorous example provided by one of the longest tenured staff members of one facility as he tells us about his mom's visit to his facility.

> Let me tell you something funny about the way people are around here. My mom had hip surgery up here and my mom's old, and she thinks everybody in the hospital works for me. She thinks it should be Smith Hospital. So she was leaving, and I don't know if it was our CEO or the CFO, came in and introduced himself, I'm Mr. So-and-so, you're Billy's mom. Yes I am. Do you work for Billy? Holy crap, you know? But they just laughed it off and just kept on going. These people, they just take it and roll with it. When she was up here she was in room 324, I'll never forget it, I could hear over the intercom, Billy Smith, call 324. I thought holy crap. I don't know if you've ever had your mom where you work, that's not a good thing. Not only that, she's telling people stories about when I was little. I mean it's embarrassing. But these people treated her so special, and every time I talk to her about it she goes on and on about how people treated her up here. She said I bet they treated me that way because I was your mom.

> I said no mother, they treated you that way because that's the way they treat everybody.

I am not sure "acting with clarity of purpose" can be any better summed up than Billy's comment to his mom, "they treated you that way because that's the way they treat everybody." While it is unrealistic to expect that every encounter with patients, families or physicians will go perfectly, and the data in fact support this, it can be seen from the stories shared above that the sustaining high performers have a clear focus on ensuring consistency as supported by Billy's last statement. While a clarity of purpose alone is not something that only the sustaining high performers can lay claim to, the data suggest it is their ability to be in action, with consistency, on this purpose that distinguishes their ability to excel.

The balancing element of the ability to act consistency is the idea of organizational agility (Shafer, 2001). This emerges from an organization's freedom and ability to challenge "the 'why' things have always been done". It is in "going above and beyond" and in moving the purpose of the organization forward, that these organizations willingly and regularly challenge the status quo.

Challenging the Status Quo

The concept, "challenging the status quo" showed up in the data just over 200 times, being represented by such in-vivo codes as "willing to change as required", "responding in real time" and being "willing to do what it takes". It was seen in the words of participants in describing the need for rapid change, to be nimble and to act with agility. In the sustaining high performers "challenging the status quo" emerged

from the data as synonymous with the idea of always wanting to be better. It is represented in the participants stories about having the freedom to question the way things are done, having the ability to offer new ideas for how they might be done moving forward, and having the opportunity to make a difference through these changes on a day-to-day basis.

The data present us a picture of environments of continuous improvement and organizations in which complacency is not an option. Staff seems to not only be engaged at all levels to solve problems, but also they have the flexibility to act. Through our participants we see how these facilities have been able to adjust in real time to the constantly shifting environment in which they exist. As issues arise and crises or errors emerge, the participants talked about how they do not linger in the need to solve problems looking backward, but rather they look to continually improve and do things better in the future. It also shows up in the understanding that while in healthcare rules and procedures are tantamount there are times when rapid responsiveness puts care and "doing the right thing" first.

The first example provides us with a taste of the effect the freedom to act in challenging current process can have on a facility's ability to perform. It also shows how integral the interplay between the movements is as in this example "challenging the status quo" links with "acting with ownership and autonomy". In this story, told by a longest tenured executive, we get a sense of how the freedom to act and the

ability to challenge can help support constant improvement. Through the collective efforts of three individuals a significant improvement was made rather than being trapped in a state of "that's the way things have always been".

> One of the guys from central supply was up on the ICU floor and just noticed that they used something different from the lab. The ICU and the lab manager got together and realized it wasn't really a difference and were able to move to the cheaper item, and that all occurred just among the managers and that staff person. They took care of it. They thought ahead, researched it themselves, and just did it. They challenged things. I guess that empowerment maybe keeps them from thinking that's the way things have always been, and they challenge status quo.

In the story above, the individuals were able to act quickly and move beyond the way things have always been to a new solution. One of the things shared by many of the participants and exemplified by the story, is that making change quickly is about getting the right people together, and in doing so quick decisions can be made and quick actions taken for change. This is also evident in the following story, told by a longest tenured staff member at one facility who spoke about the way things "used to be" versus the way things were today. She spoke of the critical nature of collaboration and the speed with which changes need to be made compared to the more individual and structured processes of the past. The following example provides us a look into the strengths she sees in this type of progressive and inclusive process.

> We decided that we would pull the group together and say what can we do to make this process work better for everybody? And so that included nursing staff, pharmacy staff, we had [leadership] involved, we had quality involved, and we all sat down at the table and said what do we need to do to make this data be more valuable so the results are going to be helpful for somebody instead of just throwing numbers out

> there. And what do we need to do to make it easier for you all to be able to get it done. So we revamped the whole form. The next quarter we looked at other components, to try to make it simpler and have the data be more beneficial to everybody doing the work. So I think whatever the issue is, instead of one or two people being involved, we're pulling in lots of opinions. You don't want to get it too big, but the key people that are really having to do this job and be responsible for us, to make sure that they have a voice and have an opinion, and get that opinion out there on the table. So I think that is one of the things happening, whatever the issue is here.

This story portrays the collective efforts taken to address ongoing opportunities for improvement identified by members of the organization. It also represents the clear juxtaposition of "challenging the status quo" and the idea of connecting in *collective/individualism*. By acknowledging changes were necessary and bringing the right people together, decisions that were acceptable to all parties, and easy to put into action could be made quickly. The example shows us that key to this was that it was not a month, quarter or year-long committee decision-making process, or one that required multiple levels of approval. Instead the right people came together to make the best decisions and create change as it was needed.

This "need for speed" as one nurse shared in her interview came out in the following story, where acting on needs and making appropriate changes trumps long committee-based decision-making processes. The nurse was able to distinguish what made this facility a sustaining high performer different from her "frustrating" experiences at her previous hospital. What is also provided in this story is an insight shared throughout the data; that "challenging the status quo" is not about change for the sake of change.

It seems in situation after situation, as exemplified below, the sought after changes were aligned with the purpose of the facility.

> One of the things that attracted me to come here to begin with was that I was frustrated at my previous hospital by the fact that in order to get something changed or to do something you had to submit it to this committee. Then it went to this committee and that committee. Our CEO here told me if you need to change it, do it, if it works fine, if it doesn't that's okay too, you tried. If we need something for patient care that improves patient care, you don't have to justify it. I don't even have to tell her what it is, I just tell her what I need and she says well get it. If it's for patient care, for staff, if it is improvement related, we don't have to go through committees or submit a financial statement on why it's important. That was very frustrating at the other facilities, you want to change a process and six months later they may agree to go ahead and let you change. But [our CEO] is like well do it. Everybody knows that, if we want to try something we can, as long as it's for the right reason.

Another interesting take-away from this story has appeared across the data and is woven into all three movements. It is both the freedom to make decisions on needed change and also the freedom to make mistakes—"if it works fine, if it doesn't that's okay too, you tried". The CEO the subject describes above also made a comment to this effect during our interview telling me she would rather her "kids" (a term she uses to address her staff) challenge what they do to make it better and mess it up (not too bad of course), than leave things as they are and never achieve their purpose.

This willingness to step up and take on what needs to happen sits at the very balance of *agile/consistency*—where "acting with clarity of purpose" is balanced by "challenging the status quo". In holding this paradox throughout the data respondents

said, "we are ready to change" and "we can make changes quickly". One participant profoundly noted, "Our facility is a work in progress". This simple statement perhaps is one the most powerful in framing this entire concept. That though rooted in principle, and committed in direction and purpose, these organizations report in the data that standing still is simply a definition for falling behind.

In the statement below from a long-time nurse, she shares how this idea of the need to keep moving forward, or as she puts it "we have bettered rather than set stale", has played out in her facility. Her words also draw together the many elements of *agile/consistency* in linking purpose, change, and above and beyond as integrated parts of a successful strategy.

> Because we have strived from day one to work there. we have bettered rather than set stale. We're always moving ahead, we're going to do this; we're going to do this, and trying to keep up with technology. That's just all you have to do. You can't be a stale hospital this day in time. You can't be; you'll die; you'll close your doors. We've had a few around that did not keep up with it, the technology, the bookkeeping department, the insurance department, the admitting department, the surgery department or whatever. It all has to keep up with modern standards. This thing today, in today's world, is to be the best, and if you're not striving to be the best, you're going to fall short. You've got to strive to be the best. We've just always had the opportunity, the people that's been over us have always said well let's do this; this doesn't seem to be working, let's do this.

In this nurse's story whether focusing on technology, process or services she stresses the point of being the best in the context of keeping pace, rather than falling short. Her powerful metaphor of becoming stale and dying as a hospital is all too real for many facilities that have not been able to challenge their own status quo and address

the rapidly changing healthcare market. But whether with technology or any other macro issue, some of the most powerful opportunities to challenge the status quo appear once again in the day-to-day actions of caregivers.

In the final story of this section, told by an ICU director, I share a touching example of how "challenging the status quo" at times may not make the best "business sense". But then I have never said in the findings that sustaining high performance is simply about business outcomes. In this case we return to the fundamental values of work in healthcare in an example of how "challenging the status quo" can make a profound difference in the life of others.

> We had a patient that was in her 30s, young girl with three small kids. Cancer brought her into our unit on a vent. It was recurrent cancer. She was a very sick young lady. The rules on little kids going into ICU ain't easy. They kind of closed their eyes and said keep your mouth shut. They let the husband stay in there, those kind of things, but what they also did was when it got down to day 22 and the bill was a half a million dollars...what are you going to do? Are you going to send them to a long-term acute-care facility? We could. We didn't. We kept her here, set her up, got things worked out and kept her until we were ready. They didn't push us to do that. That says a lot, they're human too. They didn't do that. She got to go home with her little girls, the little girls got to stay with her. She did die. But it would have been easy for them to say out, do something. I did not feel that pressure. My staff did not feel that pressure. I've worked in a lot of case management places where length of stay and the money is the biggest issue. I can say stuff to the administrative team like he's sick, you need to do it. We follow the proper channels, we've checked and made sure it can't be done somewhere else, but if I say you need to do this, they don't argue with you. And I think everybody feels that. I think that shows.

This powerful story allows us to experience that "challenging the status quo", while about change, is also about agility and the ability to respond in the right way. In this case the director felt supported in responding in the right way in the face of a very compelling financial "status quo". In situation after situation caregivers find themselves with these types of decisions in today's healthcare system. When does the caring mindset overtake the business mindset and vice versa? The story also shows how sustaining high performers can actually shift the status quo and respond with agility to situations they face; the women's children were allowed in and when it became cost prohibitive she was not kicked out.

"Challenging the status quo" as the data reveal is more than just about change. For the sustaining high performers it is about what is changed and how change is made. It is about adaptability and agility and the ability to rapidly respond. It is about the willingness to keep moving forward while never losing sight of your purpose.

Non-sustainers and Agile/Consistency

While *agile/consistency* covers the ability to focus on purpose as well as initiate change while striving to be the best, the data provide us a view into non-sustainers that are struggling with this very issue. From leadership changes to other occurrences, the control mechanisms in these facilities seem tightened to a level where *agile/consistency* has little to no chance of existing to its fullest potential.

In the first example provided in talking to the non-sustainers we experience the power that negative actions have in tearing at the fabric of staying committed to purpose. In the statement the very idea of purpose is challenged as people are watching units close and rather than being aware of the rationale or circumstances, were allowed to bathe in rumors that undermined the purpose of the organization. Progress and change also took a hit as the situation described led to battles versus collaborative change.

> We hit a low point a little over a year ago when we closed our labor and delivery unit, and then we closed our wound care unit. So the rumors were flying that the whole place was going to close down, so we had some battles there.

You can only imagine how committed to purpose, willing to go above and beyond and open to change people are in a situation as described above. Instead of an environment of growth, you can almost sense the grayness of this situation in just this short comment. *Agile/consistency* allows for forward motion. The events described above represent the opposite, instead insinuating a facility in decline.

This comes out in the second example of non-sustainers and *agile/consistency* as well. In this statement of a long-tenured leader, the sense of having their "hands tied" and not having the ability to make decisions has a critical effect on any ability to have either clarity in purpose or challenge the status quo. The idea in this example that they "would have done things differently", but in essence were unable to, shows how *agile/consistency* was stopped before it could even take root.

> Yeah, well the problem is that from where I sit leadership doesn't always get to make the decisions at their facility. And so I think if you look at what we do here, would we have done some things differently or maybe a different way, yeah, I think we would have. Does that lead to some sense of not following through? Yeah, I think so, because I think what ends up happening is we want to do it a certain way and well I'd like to see you do it like this. So I think some of the dynamics in the last year or so have probably contributed to that a little bit, that we're not as independent as we used to be, that we can't make our own decisions like we used to.

This example shows, like shared in the comparison section of *collective/individualism* above, the very fragile nature of *agile/consistency* in these organizations. Not only is it direct decisions that can take the sense of purpose and progress out of a facility, but also external factors can have a significant effect on the facilities ability to perform. Like every movement, *agile/consistency* requires support, nurturing and constant effort. When those things falter, the movement itself is at risk.

Conclusion

In sharing the stories revealed in the data it seems to be the balance of purpose and progress in these facilities that leads us to the movement *agile/consistency*. Consistency, represented by the clarity of purpose side of the balance, shows up in the data as having clear mission, vision and values; and the data also revealed that it was something more. Participants spoke of a "consistency in language" and a "consistency in how we do stuff" as well as "a shared organizational identity". The results of the 2005 survey of the high performing facilities reviewed in Chapter Three seem to support the words of the participants. The data suggest that it is not just enough to "have" clarity in purpose, but it is critical that facility actions and processes are

consistent with that purpose. With that, it seems the critical factor here is not having a purpose, but rather doing something with it.

This seems to be the case in examining the data around the idea of agility as well. Often we hear of the need for organizations to be "flexible", but when we consider flexible is about having the ability to bend without breaking, it also insinuates that we will ultimately return to and/or maintain our original state. The data collected provided a very different picture. It was filled with phrases such as "willing to change as required", "the ability to evolve" and "challenging the status quo". This idea of adaptability and ultimately agility appeared in both the data and stories more as a fundamental shift or change, yet still wrapped closely with its balancing component, to "keep moving the organization forward".

The idea of this dynamic balance - *agile/consistency* - was expressed by one subject as "not a program" (or thing we do), but rather "a way of being". The participants consistently made the point that this was more than just about culture, but that culture was a factor. Instead as one CEO said in reviewing the data, "this is really about how our organization lives and moves" supporting the idea that these concepts are about action and movement. One participant described this way of being as being "ready day-to-day" for whatever we may need to change to continue getting better. One subject acknowledged "change is progress" and another added we must "change to remain competitive" while perhaps the most significant recognition of the balance of

consistency with agility was the tenured executive who said "we will always be a work in progress". The movement *agile/consistency* represented through these words begins to provide more scaffolding for the idea that sustainability is not about remaining in one state, but rather trying to continuously achieve new ones.

Informative/Inquiry

Informative/inquiry is the third of the movements discovered in the data. Like its' counterparts, this movement presents a key paradox and required balance that emerged from the stories of the sustaining high performers. It was represented in the data over five hundred times and is comprised of three core concepts: "seeking input and sharing information", "caring about our people" and "walking the talk" (Figure 10).

The stories supporting this movement cover the affect that leadership has at all levels across the sustaining high performers. In particular it touches on the critical balance of two key components. The first, a willingness to inform and share critical information, or as one subject said, "they're willing to share the good, the bad and the ugly"; the second, an openness to inquire, which is different than simply "listening". As some participants defined it, it is the accessibility to leadership and the active gathering of input that brings leaders closer to their people. One interviewee said with great pride that "they actually listen", while another expressed that leadership truly "wants to hear from people".

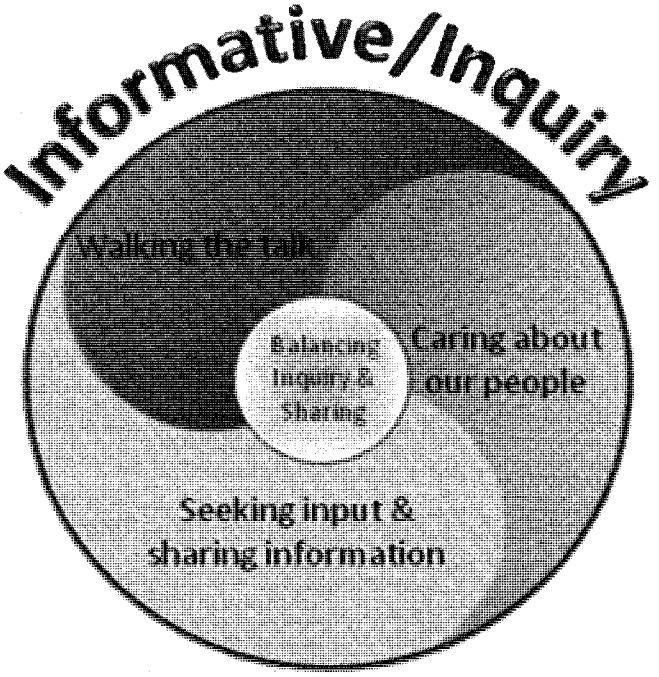

Figure 10. Informative/Inquiry

This effort to both actively seek and share information appeared in the data not simply in standard examples such as rounding or an open-door policy, but rather as clear and sometimes very unique efforts of leaders at all levels to engage with and show they care about their people. As one executive I interviewed shared, "I have to walk the talk". In the end, the data seem to suggest that it is a very personal and intentional action of building strong relationships.

Seeking Input and Sharing Information

The concept of "seeking input and sharing information" showed up in the data just shy of 170 times. It emerges from the data as an active integration of both input and

output. The concept represents a dynamic found in the facilities studied where the waters do not stagnate and the information flow is positive and strong.

The delivery of honest and frank communication, supported by the visible presence of leadership, not just visible leadership, seems to generate appreciation from and provide a sense of respect to staff. As one interviewee commented, it allows us "to make the connection of the 'whats' and 'whys' to the actions taking place in the organization". In balance to this, leaders "actually listen", actively seeking input in a way that one subject commented, the leaders here "want to hear from people".

The following example provides a representation of how inquiry and actively seeking input can have a powerful affect on organizational outcomes. It also supports the concepts above shared in *collective/individualism* in developing ownership for facility outcomes. In this story, told by this facility's longest tenured staff member, inquiry is not simply about learning from asking, but it is about acting on what is learned.

> We've had an issue with wait time [in our outpatient area] with the patients being frustrated with wait time. So we engage all of the employees, all the nurses, the techs in outpatient, we don't just say to them we want you to do better, we meet with them and say what do you think will help, you all are the front line workers, what do you think? And it's just amazing. We did that a little over a year ago and outpatient has steadily improved [their satisfaction scores] for a solid year.

The story shows us how the direct act of inquiry, leads to the valued act of acknowledgement. This also leads to the support of greater autonomy and freedom to

contribute, and encourages more complete collaboration between staff. This is where the data showed us this was not just a senior leadership action, but was something that was being taken on by leaders at all levels in the organization. In the next example, a director of food services followed the cues of his CEO in working to gather greater input from staff in the facility and in the end building a greater sense of "connecting and caring".

> We started a cafeteria focus group about three months ago basically to find out what [the staff] wanted to see in the cafeteria, because the best way to make your customers happy is to find out exactly what they want. Sometimes the simplest things are the easiest to miss. So we invited anyone in the hospital to send us their suggestions, or come down personally and meet with us, and they do that every other Wednesday. We've gotten a lot of good feedback out of that, and last week I got an e-mail from a nurse manager on 4th floor and she said on weekend staff one of the things we've done was brought in Chick-Fil-A. She said the weekend staff, they would like to know if it would be possible and do Chick-Fil-A, their breakfast, 3rd shift, they come in and they'd like something fresh. So starting this Saturday I've got the Chick-Fil-A biscuits for breakfast and also homemade waffles, Belgian waffles, each morning. She sent me back an e-mail about that and she said wow, we were really blown away, not only did you listen to us, but you guys actually acted and changed it for us, we greatly appreciate it.

This story provides an example of the power of seeking information and inquiry as actions that can change a facility. Not only did the individual in the story feel acknowledged and listened to, there was a level of respect you could feel reflected in the nurse manager's response. In sharing this story you could see the pride in the food service director in repeating her words, "we were really blown away, not only did you listen…but you actually acted".

The consistent finding in the data is the connection of some outcome with the active seeking of input. This effort is more than simply being "visible" or "listening", but rather subject after subject shared with great energy the results that occurred because of these interactions. In the next story we have another example by a longest tenured executive who acknowledges she is "always listening to employees". What distinguishes her example from simply listening is the willingness to try a new way or make an appropriate change. The data seem to suggest that it is this opening in communication, where a leader listens for outcomes and provides a safe space for staff to offer new ideas or "challenge the status quo" that is a critical element of these sustaining high performers.

> Something real simple is we have an outpatient department that when they put patient charts together they would use one chart, and then when the patient went up to the floor they had to switch it out and put it into a new chart. One of the secretaries said wouldn't it just make sense if we all used the same one, so we did switch, we made a process improvement, and now all patients use those charts and it's saved several minutes per patient when they come up to the floors. Another one was one of the employees thought that we could identify charts easier by putting dots on them, and each dot would represent a different physician. So we started putting dots on charts, and now the physicians can just look for their colors and pull their charts. Another big one we had was with our supply rooms, they were very disorganized, so we had a meeting between the nurses and our materials management department, and between the two of them we had a nurse that volunteered to do a total system change, and she has things categorized according to patient care items and ID items, they're color coded and she made a booklet up. This is something that the staff pretty much came up with amongst themselves, and that was something that we did last year as a result of our employee survey, and there were several verbatims on this survey about how much better our supply system is because of this process we put in place. Had another one with Pharmacy and how we store narcotics, we just switched to containers so that it's mounted in our med room instead of having to count two places, we only have to count one. I'm always listening to

> what the employees have to say, and if it makes sense and it's the majority of employees that want to try it a different way then we'll try it, and if it doesn't work then we'll go back to the drawing board.

Perhaps one of the most powerful points in the story is the attitude of this executive in her final statement, "If it doesn't work then we'll go back to the drawing board". This message is one that shows up over and over especially in the data from the executives in the study. It is their willingness to "try" things, to gather input and be open for feedback from staff, while alleviating any fear of repercussion. In-vivo codes from staff participants ranged from I am "not afraid to speak up" to "can say anything without fear". These statements and others speak to the type of organizations represented by these sustaining high performers in which people seem to feel they can openly interact with leadership and provide feedback, input and ideas.

In the following story we see how sharing does not only occur in formal settings, such as forums or meetings. A department director provides an example of how seeking input and sharing can occur across the organization in many ways. The following story shows one of the impact points of seeking input and sharing occurs at the point where the work is being done day to day.

> I'll give you an example of just how open the communication is. It's nothing for a unit secretary to send [our CEO] an e-mail and he responds back. He's tied into us; he's got the same e-mail. I can sit at my desk and send him an e-mail. My secretary can do the same thing. We've got a chain of command, but there's no fear. Bob is Bob, there's no fear. I always thought that was a positive. When they're out on the floor making rounds he tries to get so involved. I laugh because my unit secretary is still talking about, he likes to come out on the unit

> and spend time, well he decided he would come on over here and he was going to be the clerk, he was going to be the secretary that day, and she got to instruct him for a couple of hours. He put in orders and he met with the doctors, and she had to go to the mail room, he went to the mail room, and everybody that talks to her, you know, that's the high. There's no fear from the housekeeper down, and to me that is important. Because that means it's okay for them to say you know, I don't understand how that's going to work. And it's okay for me to say well this is what we were told and this is how we're going to do, so tell me, what part don't you quite get, and if I can't provide that answer then my response is always I tell you what, let me just go to [administration] and get us some answers. It's okay. It's okay to say I don't know guys, let me see what I can find out. That's us. I think that to me is what keeps people here. When we go back to what makes our hospital, it's the people. When you got that type of openness, that type of no fear, man, you'll work harder than anything to keep it.

The powerful words of this director speak to how people at all levels of the organization have interacted with leadership, be it the CEO or with each other. This visibility described in the story is not simply management by 'fly-by', but it is leading by "walking a mile in their shoes". The actions of the CEO in the story provide a whole new platform for inquiry and sharing, as it breaks the leadership bubble and provides for the personal connection that allows greater ideas to be shared and input to be provided. As the director says, "When you got that type openness, that type of no fear, man, you'll work harder than anything to keep it."

The data reveal active efforts of leaders across the sustaining high performers to support the type of positive spiral of communication and connection described above. As seen in the example, the CEO was secretary for a day. As another staff member commented on her CEO, "she takes the time to get to know me". The power in this

connection and these actions is that they do not seem to be difficult for leaders at these facilities to carry out. Rather, it just takes a commitment to making these types of interactions a priority.

In looking at the commitment of leadership to the core concept of *informative/inquiry*, there is an intentionality with which leaders approach their outreach and inquiry. The following example from one CEO demonstrates a sense of humility that was apparent in my ongoing interactions with the leaders of the sustaining high performers. While they are driven and serious leaders, they recognize their role is more than a title. They provided example after example of relating to their people, describing the behavior as critical. In the story below the CEO actually takes outreach to a whole new level, breaking the CEO aura in a way few may actually be brave enough to try. While this example is at one end of the spectrum, the time that leaders took to connect with their "kids", "associates", and "bosses" (all terms they used to describe their staff) was tied over and over again to examples of seeking input and sharing.

> Well we found that our service standards sometimes get forgotten. So we had this employee forum on all the service standards and demonstrated them. We had forums every three months, or four months, we were concerned that maybe at the next forums, which the focus on the next will be employee pride and engagement, maybe they'll forget about it. So we didn't know how to reignite it, not to commit the entire forum to it, but to remind them. So our COO came up with this idea and we put a video together. That's [CEO]man. And what happens in this video is I'm sitting around the table and they're videotaping and I say [COO], I'm worried. We talked about service standards, but how do we make sure that they're part of the fabric of this organization? Holy service standards, [CEO]man, I don't know.

> And I said to the [CEO]cave. So we videotape it and run down the hall, and in a previous service standard that we had taught, one of them was elevator etiquette where you talk with everyone in the elevator. We had my desk in the elevator, and it was like Candid Camera. So we put my desk in the elevator with a telephone, and we had people walk in the elevator and get surprised because I was hey, good afternoon, welcome to the elevator. So we raced to the [CEO] cave, which is the elevator, we run in and then we come bursting out, I'm in a Batman outfit and he's Robin, then we're on a motor scooter and we start flying through the hospital and we have signs, appearance, attitude, telephone etiquette, elevator, and at the end we go back to the [CEO] cave. Well I share that point with you because I'm not stoic, I'm not embarrassed to make a fool of myself if it's for really communicating the service standards in a fun and light way. Others would feel uncomfortable doing that because they want some sense of decorum at the executive level. Well why? Well you know the respect for the office. Well okay, but which would you prefer; the respect for the office or moving the organization to greatness?

Perhaps the rational in this story can be best summed up by the CEO himself in saying, "Which would you prefer, the respect for the office or moving the organization to greatness?" This leader changed the paradigm of sharing information in a way that both made him more accessible to people and had a significant effect on the ways his people interacted with him. The willingness to step beyond the typical framework of interacting with staff is at the heart of this concept. On each occasion the data seem to suggest that in their own style, leaders reached out to their people in ways unlike what many of the staff experienced in previous hospital experiences. Interestingly enough, even as in the example above, where the CEO interviewed was willing to challenge decorum, the data reveal one common goal shared by each of these leaders: move their organizations to greatness. These leaders found that

"seeking input and sharing information" was a critical step in their facility's success. In the following quote from a facility CEO, he reinforces just that point.

> We've had some tremendous success here, but there's nobody that takes that for granted around here. I tell them you may be coming from school, you may be coming from a not for profit, you may be coming from a doctor's office, you're a stay at home mom who's just coming back into the workforce, I don't care who you are, you're bringing new perspectives to us so tell us what we can do better.

"Seeking input and sharing information" as the data seem to reveal through the voices of these leaders, is key to sustaining ongoing success.

Caring About Our People

"Caring about our people" can be found in the data over one hundred and twenty times and is based on a series of in-vivo codes including "care", "care about people", and "care above all else". What needs to be clarified with regard to this concept is that it is not focused on the provision of care, but as the data seem to suggest, it is focused on the sense of caring provided to employees. Phrases such as "we take care of our people" from the executive perspective, to "we are people, not just employees" from staff, support this idea of care and is exemplified in the quote below from a long tenured unit director.

> I think that's the key to [our hospital], if I invest in my people, I empower them, I support them, I reward them, they're going to be happy, they're going to stay with me, and they're going to have mutual pride in taking care of what we need to.

The central idea found in the data to support the movement *informative/inquiry*, caring about our people appeared in such statements as "our leaders do the best for

people" and "they make people feel like they count". This commitment to people was reported over and over again in the interviews.

The following stories paint a picture, from multiple angles of what "caring about our people" sounds like in the data. It emerges as examples of leadership action and of staff expressing appreciation for actions taken. This idea of care can be seen in other points in the data as well, for example in the story of the CEO turned unit secretary above. The leaders in the sustaining high performers act both to challenge and support their people.

In this first story, one of the subject CEOs expresses a commitment to an individual's development that in the short-term may actually have a negative impact on his facility. In acknowledging this, he also shares his perspective about the long-term value this interaction will have for the individual, the CEO, and ultimately the facility. It is based on the idea that this CEO is first committed to what is best for his employee.

> I was on the phone this morning with an executive who he's interviewing with a very prestigious group. He said wow, I feel a little uncomfortable having this conversation. I said you know what, I want your best. Will we miss you? Absolutely. Will we grieve your loss? No question. Will we be successful into the future? But we want you to be even more successful, so that's why I would take the time as opposed to trying to protect him, because if he were to leave it would be tough and the selfishness of me would want to keep him, but that's not right for him. Which then as he moves on, other folks take his place and they see that he was encouraged. So I think it gets back to the CEO's role to inspire, motivate, and encourage the organization.

In this short, but powerful example the CEO shows a sense of caring we are rarely exposed to from a senior executive. In the conversation the employee expressed he was even a little uncomfortable. The CEO was open, honest and fair in expressing his feelings and his encouragement, "Will we miss you? Absolutely…but we want you to be even more successful." The conversation not only portrays a strong sense of care for this individual, but it also serves to support an earlier point raised in the data, about people in "uncomfortable" situations still feeling safe in having critical conversations with leadership.

Another critical element expressed in this story is the leader's eye to the future; is it selfish to want to keep his employee? He acknowledges yes it is. Yet, he also recognizes the value of encouraging this employee to move on and in doing so, the CEO can provide new opportunities for others and for the organization overall. This is a bitter-sweet decision for leaders who see their role as the CEO above mentioned to "inspire and motivate". With this, they also exemplify the idea that in caring for your people you create new opportunities for them to succeed. Even so, in the quote below, the leader believes that in caring for her people, they will remain committed to her. As the data seem to suggest this is the thin line that leaders in the sustaining high performers face. They develop people with one eye on what they can do to contribute to the organization and another eye on where their development will lead them. This speaks both to the critical nature of retaining talent and committing to

the development of staff that is embedded throughout the data and is particularly relevant in this concept.

> I think that's the key to [our hospital]. If I invest in my people, I empower them, I support them, I reward them, they're going to be happy, they're going to stay with me, and they're going to have mutual pride in taking care of what we need to.

The idea of caring for employees shows up in the data not only with a focus on business or career issues, but also links to the idea of family discussed in the movement *collective/individualism*. The data show that the concept of "caring about our people" is representative of the idea of caring for one another outside of the work context. The story below shows how the actions of leadership in caring for people can be part of significant life memory, even in the face of a tragedy. It is not about a work project or even a town hall meeting, but a personal connection that had significant affect on the life of this nursing director.

> I can tell you a personal experience with the leadership team here. I'll try not to cry. My boyfriend a couple of years ago, we'd been together 11 years, and he got sick. He worked out, wasn't ever sick, we went everywhere together. He got sick and the management team came to me and said don't worry about it we'll take care of him. He died 21 days later with cancer. I can't tell you how many cards I got, how many voice mails I got, the administrative team would call, and then I looked up at the funeral and they were all there…They went above and beyond. Someone would say you've done so much for us, we'll do back for you, we're just thinking of you. It was just unreal to me. I wouldn't have believed it if you'd have told me.

In caring about our people, we again see elements of both *collective/individualism* and *agile/consistency*, for example when the nurse talked about how her leaders went "above and beyond" in supporting her. As the nurse told this story with tears filling

her eyes, she wore a smile at what it seemed to represent. For her this care from her leaders was "unreal" and "unbelievable" only because it is not the way she expected administrators to act. Yet, in story after story participants talked about these simple, yet powerful acts of care they experienced, not only from their peers as discussed in "connecting and caring", but from their leaders in "caring about our people".

In a similar and equally powerful example below, the care of leadership left an indelible mark on this longest tenured staff member. She talked of how in all her years in healthcare she had not experienced this type of care from leadership. It was as surprising to her as it was to the nursing director above. I must note that this was curious to see with such consistency in the data, the sense of surprise expressed by recipients of care from leadership. It was not that they had negative perceptions about the individuals, but rather they expressed true appreciation that their respective leaders, as people, took the time to show they cared.

> My husband had to have open heart surgery at 50, which was unexpected. He did wonderful through surgery and everything. I cannot tell you what it meant to me when those people came to ICU to see us and said whatever you need, and when we got to [another Medical Center] and he had his heart surgery, the CEO and the medical staff director came to that hospital to see us. I was just overwhelmed. I mean I knew they cared, but I never thought they'd come to the hospital up there to see us. But they did come to see us, and that did more for my husband than anything.

Again, as in other examples in the data, the subject was "overwhelmed" by the caring actions of leadership, especially to show up at a sister facility to check on her. In this

story and others, as one subject shared, leadership teams clearly "treat people not as commodities, but rather as human beings". This sense of caring and support becomes an integral component in the success of the movement of *informative/inquiry* where connection, trust, and openness are central to its success.

From supporting the development of staff, to caring in times of tragedy or need, the data reveal that it is also the day-to-day actions of leaders that potentially helps to bolster this sense of caring. As one subject expressed it is the "little things" that express a sense of "loyalty to employees" that also under-gird the concept of "caring about our people". The story below, told by the longest tenured member of one facility, expresses how the "little things" often times make a big impact. In this situation, the hospital provided a unique emergency service to support its staff. The interesting point is that not only did this service support the staff, but also it enabled them to be of greater service to their community in a time of need.

> I can't remember [exactly] why we did this, but all the schools were closed for some reason, I don't know if it was an ice storm or a tornado, whatever, but we opened up an area upstairs for employees that needed to bring their children that had no daycare because of the town being shut down. We let them come in and basically took care of those kids for three days so that they could come on to work. And our work did that.

The story, while simple in nature has far reaching implications across the data. It reveals the critical linkages between the three movements: *Informative/inquiry* is exemplified by actions taken in "caring about our people" with the opening of this

special place for children of employees; *collective/individualism* is exemplified by connecting and caring with how staff pitched in to care for one another's children; and *agile/consistency* was exemplified with "clarity of purpose" as the facility took the necessary actions to ensure it was effectively staffed to meet the needs of the community it served during this weather crisis.

While we can assume that decisions were not made to specifically address these concepts found in the data, it is powerful to see how this simple idea of "caring about our people" supports a chain of events that encompasses the biggest picture of what good healthcare is about. The data seem to suggest that this effort is not one that requires a great deal of effort, but more so calls for a clear choice by leadership to take action that may not necessarily seem congruent with business needs, yet ultimately has that same or greater affect. In summing up what distinguishes the sustaining high performers from others, the data reveal one simple, but powerful statement from an experienced nursing director. "I've been to a lot of other places in my 35 years and this one does more for the employees than anyone I've ever seen."

Walking the Talk

Walking the talk as a concept is closely linked to many aspects of positive leadership and appears in some way in the data over 200 times. It also represents an in-vivo code as you will see below. I share this concept now, as the last of nine, not because it is any less important, but because stories that exemplify the concept have been experienced throughout this chapter. As in the story of the CEO above, who sat in as

the unit secretary in one facility, there were numerous stories of leaders at all levels who stepped in to clean patient rooms, scrubbed-in for surgeries, returned trays to food services, cleaned and prepped exam rooms, transported patients and yes, even cooked.

"Walking the talk" as a concept, seems to show up in the data as stories where leaders live the words they speak and show this consistently through their actions. The data seem to suggest that it is the willingness of these leaders to express a sense of humility, exemplified as one subject shared "not asking someone to do what they wouldn't do themselves." This data reveal that "walking the talk" may connect these leaders to their people in a way hard to achieve through any other means.

As one participant said when they *"walk in my shoes"* I know they truly care about what we do day-to-day. It appears in story after story; leaders seem to do as much to support the sustainability of performance by simply "walking the talk" as they do with their most critical business decisions. An interesting note here is that this concept seemed to be a significant challenge in those facilities that did not sustain their high performance status from the original study.

The following story told by a longest tenured executive, is just one example from the data in which leadership has had influence through their actions outside of the administrative suite or director's office. In this story, the CEO shows up to work the

night shift. In fact, he and his executive team have a commitment with the facility to work rotating shifts throughout the year. In this example we see how walking the talk provides the opportunity for *informative/inquiry* to be realized. The commitment this story expresses is about leadership not just being visible, but about turning visibility into input, and input into results.

> There's simple little things like when [our CEO came in to work] the night shift, he went into the ICU and said hey, how's it going, what do you guys need? We need a microwave. The next day he orders a microwave. How simple, but guess what, how timely was that? They want a microwave, get a microwave and get it in there today. That's a simple example. The ER still talks about the time that he pushed patients down to the room [when he worked a shift in the ER], where he actually said okay, here I am, can you help us move this patient? The CEO of the hospital moving the patient...that is walking the talk.

As this subject says, "that is walking the talk" and perhaps in some ways this concept touches on the core 'mechanics' of this movement, walking and talking. The data seem to suggest that we need to be cautious in not accepting the concept of "walking the talk" as simply being visible. The data also seem to show us that what is most appreciated is when leaders engage with their people as a person first, meet them where they work, hear from them where they hurt ,and share with them what is critical to move the organization forward.

These efforts appear in the data not only in the domain of executives, but in the critical role of the facility manager and directors. As one CEO admitted in his interview; while he was the CEO he believed that the people who ran his hospital and

ensured its success were the department directors. This critical role played a challenging dual function. First, they lead departments that in some instances are too large to fathom, playing the role of field general. Second, they lead the facility on a cross-functional team with competing interests and needs in the role of diplomat. The data seem to support the CEO's notion that the directors are as equally important in ensuring the concept of "walking the talk".

In the following story, we experience the commitment of this department's leadership team in living to the same standards critical for leadership success as the data above suggests. In the example, actually shared by the facility CEO, she acknowledges how the leaders were fully committed to the success of a new Cardio-Vascular (CV) program. She expressed with pride, the ownership they exemplified by their showing up in the middle of the night to support the team. As she says below, the leaders "role-modeled…the importance of the program" and in doing so they were truly "walking the talk".

> Let me tell you about opening the CV program. That was one of the biggest challenges we've had here. We planned that program for 18 months before we started the program. We had a team that was so committed to that program, people put in hours of time to make sure every aspect of the program was correctly thought through. But the real test to me was when we did the first few patients, our manager and director came in, and this is in the middle of the night, and circulated in the OR for these patients. They were here. It was so important to them that they role modeled the importance of that program. They wanted to be there to support the team…because they knew the team was at risk. Anytime you start a new program. And I think probably for the first year they were here for every procedure. And we've now done about 80 I guess. So I think it shows how the team comes

> together from the very top to the very bottom, and that they were willing to do whatever they were asking the team to do.

As the CEO shared this story, she paused for a moment to stress the point that these leaders were there for every procedure in that first year to support the team, which was on 80 different occasions. She also recognized how important it was that the leaders "were willing to do whatever they were asking the team to do". This effort is a powerful example of all that "walking the talk" actually represents.

In this next story, told by a department director, we experience the efforts of a CEO and her COO using the results of an effective inquiry into the needs of her people to make a significant shift, "challenging the status quo", and ultimately being present for her staff in a whole new way. Often in healthcare the night shift/3rd shift feels somewhat slighted as they are on duty when most of the administrative and support staff is at home. As hospitals are 24-hour operations and do not close, these folks are often left to fend for themselves in ways day shift employees do not have to do. It is perhaps for this reason that these stories have such meaning. The affect of efforts to support night shift were exemplified by the two stories above. In the following story, based on input from the staff, the CEO and COO change the order of how appreciation meals are delivered, now honoring 3rd shift as the kick-off of the appreciation process.

> When [our CEO] first came here, we had an appreciation meal for the staff. We do all three shifts, [and now] we do 3rd shift on the first day, and we do 1st and 2nd shift on the second day. [When we started] 3rd

> shift felt like [they were] on the back burner because they're not here when most things happen or most things go on, and [they are] used to their meal being the day after, and they felt like it was just leftover food. So when we spoke to the CEO about it we moved the 3rd shift to the night before. That way they got served first. The CEO came in and greeted them at the door, she and our COO, and she spoke with them. They really felt a charge out of that because they'd say no one comes to see 3rd shift, nobody feeds us, we eat sandwiches, and they really felt left out. [This changed that.]

This example shows how acting on input as described earlier, can have a significant effect on the people in a facility. It also provides us a view from the data into the effect a leader who is willing to walk the talk can have on a facility. It was one thing to make the subtle, but important change in the schedule; it was quite another to be there at night as an administrator to greet third shift when they arrived. As the subject described, these employees "really felt a charge out of that, because…no one comes to see 3rd shift." After this experience, it seems that perspectives were changed.

In the final example for this concept, a longest tenured executive who recently became the CNO of her facility tells of the surprised reactions she received from staff who 'caught her in the act' of helping them. This reality, as discussed above is still one that stands out in the data. Even in the sustaining high performance facilities, where there is story after story about leaders at all levels of the organization taking the initiative to help, participants describe the surprised reactions that occur when they see this happening. In the story below the CNO talks of how staff looked at the CEO like he had "three-heads" for moving beds to where they needed to go. If this level of surprise occurs in facilities where these types of actions take place on a more

regular basis, I can only imagine the shock experienced in facilities that do not have these concepts in play. In this story we again see examples of leadership not being above the work of their staff, and instead pitch in to help, ultimately *walking the talk.*

> Yesterday I was here just walking around because it was [quality review] and I happened to go into the utility room and started getting sani-wipes to wipe down med carts. One of the nurses came up to me and she said what are you doing? I said I'm wiping down these med carts. She said well you don't have to do that anymore, you're the CNO. Well, I bleed the same way you do, and just for someone to make a comment to me like that, like it needs to be done, you guys are busy, I'm here and so I'll do it. And we all need to be able to do that, and not say that's not my job. It makes everybody look good. I know our CEO got caught moving a bed down the hall one day because it needed to be moved, and people looked at him like he had three heads. But that goes a long way, and people notice that.

One phrase that seems to permeate the data both in this study and in the initial research is what the CNO shared above in saying "we don't say that's not my job." In many ways this phrase not only stands out in this story as representing the willingness of the executives to do what is needed, but represents in some way all three movements just explored in the data. The willingness to do what is needed be it by executives, directors, managers or staff is a fundamental recurring theme throughout the entire high performance research process. It represents, in some capacity critical actions that take place in each of the three movements discovered, from *collective/individualism,* to *agile/consistency,* to *informative/inquiry* and it is a fundamental element of the concept just explored, walking the talk.

Non Sustainers and Informative/Inquiry

In exploring *informative/inquiry* we saw in the data example after example of leadership being more than visible and actively engaging their staff not only in formal settings, but also actually involving themselves in the day-to-day activities of their respective facilities. As discussed above, people were surprised by the regular occurrence of these types of activities in the behaviors of sustaining high performers. Is the conventional wisdom across organizations on the issue of leadership, that leaders do not tend to be in the trenches and are not regularly seen as individuals who are willing to do themselves what they ask of others? If so, this presents a significant implication for leadership across all facilities in this study. The data indicate that in the sustaining high performers, leaders are doing something to address such perceptions. The limited data acquired from the non-sustainers provided a very different picture.

In the example provided below the challenge is raised almost immediately. While the director makes an effort to connect with his team, he follows this with the fact that "you always hear the administration never comes up." This lack of visibility and the resulting inability to either inform or inquire, make this movement impossible to implement in these facilities. And as we will explore in looking deeper in to the theory in Chapter 5, missing any of the movements discovered will impede the ability to sustain performance.

One positive in the example is that amongst non-sustainers, there is an intentional effort to address this challenge and turn these perceptions around. This action probably springs from the roots of high performance that remain embedded in the organization from the period of the original study. If properly nurtured, these roots may provide the opportunity for sustained high performance to reestablish itself in the future.

> I know on my unit it helps that I do spend time getting to know them, you always hear that administration never comes up, they don't know us, so on this last survey one of the problems my staff had still was on communication, and that one I jumped on in a staff meeting and said okay, here's your problem that you all have that I can't fix, you have to tell me what this problem is. I said is it a communication problem from the floor level, from me, or are you still talking about administration? And it was administration. I said well, the first thing we're going to do then is every month for our staff meeting we're going to invite somebody different to come to the meeting that you can talk to and get to know, because we do have some people who have been here a fairly short time, we've got a new CFO, and our CNO has been here about a year now, so it just takes a little while, especially on the night shifts, to think they know everybody.

This example still unveils a challenge this facility faces in comparison to what the data reveal about the sustaining high performers. The data seemed to suggest that in our subject facilities leadership, especially administration, was the catalyst and driver of leadership communication. In the situation described above, it is the department leader who has to reach up to engage the executive leadership in opening lines of communication. As discussed at the start of this section, *informative/inquiry* is primarily a leadership accountability. Until the leadership discussed in the example

above begins an active effort of outreach to both inform and inquire, the data suggest that sustainability of high performance will remain out of reach.

Conclusion

The concept of *informative/inquiry* provides an interesting and sometime precarious balance that leadership must hold between sharing critical information and seeking input from staff. While this movement is not about the style of the leader, it is about the actions of the leader. This is represented first in the willingness to inform or as one subject said "share the good, the bad and the ugly". The movement also reaches beyond the basic idea of being visible which is often addressed by unstructured "rounding" or the sharing of information via "required" forums. It is not simply declaring an "open-door policy". Instead there is an authenticity to it, where a leader leaves the mantle of leadership to inquire and inform at a personal level, yet brings the strength, resolve and commitment to act on critical information gathered and input received.

Beyond seeking input and sharing information, the importance of action in making something happen seems to be a key element of this movement. This action includes leadership's ability to "connect the 'what' with the 'why'" and then ensure people know how their input made a difference. Closing the loop was a critical action of leadership found in the data and helps to ensure people feel valued for their contributions.

The last thought pulled from the data touches on what participants described as a leadership commitment to "do the best for people", "keep us happy" and "make people feel like they count". This idea of caring for people is a critical component of *informative/inquiry* as it is through this movement that the actions of the leaders touch on their ability to "take care of the people" in their organization. While leaders are not responsible for handholding, the sustaining high performers provided strong examples of leaders who were willing to express a deep sense of compassion and care for their employees in a way that affected lives.

As leadership reaches out to inform and inquire they create the opportunity, as the data show, for people in the organization to take committed action and actively support the direction the organization wishes to take. In story after story, leaders shared and CEOs specifically stressed that the importance of ensuring "people know they count". A key way they achieve this as the data suggest is the leaders willingness to "walk in others shoes" and live out a commitment to "walking the talk". This last factor provides the power behind the information gained and shared in *informative/inquiry* and supports its ability to help realize the sustainability of performance.

From Data to Generative Theory

I propose that it is the active interplay of *collective/individualism, agile/consistency* and *informative/inquiry* in which we find the potential for sustaining performance. While there are many characteristics that have been uncovered to describe the 'whats'

of high performance, it has been something quite different to look at how this performance is sustained. The findings suggest and the sampling of participants confirms that rather than a simple static checklist, there is an active commitment required to sustain performance over time. It is through this examination of the data that the potential for sustainability as movement, first discovered in the foundational data analysis reviewed in Chapter Three, frames the possibility for a new theoretical perspective.

Chapter 5: Discussion

A New Conversation

In reflecting on the findings of the question, *what supports the sustainability of high performance*, I am struck by the powerful simplicity of the theoretical potential discovered. One may admittedly be hard pressed to call the individual components of the findings in this research "unique" if they were to stand alone. Yet, I assert in the act of sustaining they do not stand alone. Rather, it is in the powerful combination of simple actions and potentially challenging juxtapositions and the paradoxes they pose, that a potential for a new conversation on change and sustaining performance emerges. That recognition offers a significant contribution in its own right.

The choices to be made and the actions to be taken by organizations to support their success are not complicated. Yet, even in the face of potentially simple actions, the challenge I have seen organizations encounter is what I have come to call the *performance paradox* (Cohen, 1998).

> In essence, things that we know are the good or right things to do are not always the easiest to accomplish. In framing this concept, if we examine the words *simple, clear, understandable, easy, trouble free,* and *painless,* they are all synonymous as literary terms, yet in organization practice, we find that *simple, clear,* and *understandable* is not always *easy, trouble free,* and *painless* in action. For instance, we know good eating habits and exercise help us to become healthier people. However, how many of us choose to do these things daily? The same can be asked of organizations, and with more significant implications. More often than not, it seems the basic things that lead to healthy and effective organizations seem the most difficult to do. (Wolf, 2008, p. 38)

But what is it that has us stopped by this performance paradox? This chapter helps us to explore, answer and move beyond that very question. In bringing together simple actions, it is potentially the very intricate and paradoxical framework they form and discovered in our high performers, that while an impediment to movement for some, has been an engine for their great success.

In this chapter, I first examine how the literature suggests paradox itself can serve as a means to move performance forward (Cameron, 1986; Quinn, 1988). It is important also to recognize the challenges this paradoxical framework poses to organizations "stuck" in the conventional management mindset. The discussion moves to the idea that while being in paradox itself can lead us to "stuckness", we also have the conscious choice of movement (Smith & Berg, 1987). It is in movement that we find the potential for the taking of "simple" actions that together can build an organization capable of sustaining performance. In taking on these actions, framed by the three movements in the findings linking people, culture and leadership, a new consciousness and collective spirit emerges from an organization creating a transcendent (Lewis, 2000; Pascale, 1990; Schumacher, 1977) capacity, where paradox is no longer seen as an impediment to progress; rather complementary polarities seem to create an engine of creative tension (Eisenhardt, 2000) first suggested to drive performance itself. This tension calls for an intricate and dynamic balancing (Cameron & Quinn, 1988; Ford & Backoff, 1988), for the eclipsing of convergent and one solution responses (Schumacher, 1977), to holding the possibility

of a state of both/and (Pascale, 1990). It is in movement and action, in transcending paradox, living in the dynamic balancing and holding the creative tension of polarities, that sustaining high performers thrive. This brings us back to the very essence of the performance paradox itself. That while simple may ultimately not be easy, we now have a conscious path to transcending paradox and a metaphor of movement for action in sustaining success.

The biggest challenge is the willingness of organizations, leadership, and people to take the first step beyond the old management mindset into the intricacies of this world in constant change. Yet, it may even be simpler than that. Perhaps we should simply be doing less of what doesn't matter and more of what does (Jensen, 2000). I suggest a first simple step, reframing how we look at paradox itself.

Paradox and Sustaining High Performance

High performance is not a fixed state to be achieved by following a certain "recipe" (Quinn, 1988) or even an end it itself (Pascale, 1990). Quinn (1988) suggests instead that "excellence is a paradoxical phenomenon that emerges under conditions of uncertainty and creative tension" (p. 12). Cameron (1986) contends that to be effective an organization must possess attributes that are "simultaneously contradictory". Without tensions between simultaneous opposites, unproductive "schismogenesis" (a process of self-reinforcement where one action/attribute perpetuates itself and becomes extreme and dysfunctional) occurs. Paradox, on the other hand, calls for mutually exclusive opposites (e.g. strong individuals and

powerful collaboration as found in *collective/individualism*), not those that are mutually reinforcing (e.g. dominance and submission). It is then paradox that provides the tensions deemed critical to organization performance?

Jantsch (1975), as cited in Ford and Backoff (1987), stresses that the potential for action itself is realized in the tensions created by the opposing ends of paradox. Eisenhardt (2000) adds that vibrant organizations drive change and performance by their ability to simultaneously hold the two states in a paradox. She asserts that this action is not simply finding a "bland halfway point" between the two extremes, but rather it is being in constant flux in exploring and capitalizing on this creative tension. This movement, the pursuit of simultaneous contradiction, counters the extreme outcomes of schismogenesis and can serve, as Cameron (1986) suggests, in supporting organizational effectiveness. In order to build the capacity to hold this tension, we must first revisit and understand the potential challenge paradox poses to organization performance.

The Challenge of Paradox

While a selection of the literature contends that paradox is a means by which effectiveness can be realized (Cameron, 1986; Quinn, 1988; Quinn & Cameron, 1988), paradox is still a topic both organizations and theorists alike tend to avoid. In the preface of their 1988 book, *Paradox and Transformation*, Quinn and Cameron suggest that organizational studies have been remiss in addressing the issue of paradox. They assert there is a prevailing tendency towards winnowing down

theoretical explanations of complex phenomena to linear models (i.e. cause and effect) and the achievement of equilibrium or balance. Paradoxical thinking is often not tolerated by researchers and authors. With this I suggest that a significant portion of organization and management theories today support a schismogenic mindset. For example, Collins (2001) "the right people on the bus" speaks to only one aspect of the paradox found in sustaining high performers in which not only the right individuals, but powerful collaboration potentially exist as "simultaneous contradictions". So what causes this unwillingness or inability to embrace paradox?

A general mindset of paradox as a potentially negative factor in organizational performance can be seen in the sheer numbers of methods proposed to address, manage or resolve paradox (Lewis, 2000; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989; Smith & Berg, 1987; Van de Ven & Poole, 1988). These multiple methods cluster around these central ideas:

- Reducing the intensity of the opposing forces and live with it
- Pitting one duality against the other to determine which emerges as the most powerful
- Ignore the distinction and use time as a means to avoid addressing

Smith and Berg (1987) suggest it is these types of efforts to avoid coexisting opposites (paradox) that leads to the potential for "stuckness". Using their analysis of groups as a basis for their definition (and which I suggest offers a view of broader

organizational dynamics as well), they see "stuckness" as the result of the numerous ways groups and their members cope with paradox and attempt to change paradoxical circumstances. Methods undertaken to "address" paradox, such as those suggested above, have groups engage in a vicious spiral in which, while attempting to resolve the contradictory elements of a group, they also reassert them.

> As a group struggles to "solve this problem" by reconciling the opposing forces or eliminating the contradictions, pressure is created in the opposite direction in order to ensure that the full range of contradictory reactions can be expressed. The more the group tries to eliminate contradictions, the greater the pressure to reassert them. (Smith & Berg, 1987, p. 211)

The desire to remove or avoid contradictions is an understandable group response, as they seem to stand as impediments to action. Yet, it is in acting to eliminate contradictions that we create even greater roadblocks. As with schismogenesis, in avoiding the contradictions and trying to remove the tensions of opposites, we are forced to the extremes. Looking at the example of dominance and submission, which can be prevalent in group experience, in asserting dominance there is the submissive reaction, which elevates dominance and reinforces greater submission. This attempt to remove contradiction ultimately results in a greater inability to progress, i.e.,"stuckness".

Cameron (1986) addressed this in his first principle of paradox. That extremity in any criterion creates linearity and dysfunction. Supporting this suggestion, Ford and Backoff (1988) believe attempts at resolution often end up emphasizing one extreme

over the other; a response that may increase stability, at least perceptually, but ultimately reduces resilience. This raises the potential that in contrast to the conventional wisdom of paradox as a problem, it may actually be the avoidance of paradox that serves as a major impediment to the sustaining of performance.

This presents us with a significant challenge based on the belief laid out in Chapter Two that paradox is a fundamental part of organizational experience. "Organizational theory and research can no longer ignore [paradox] if they are to explain organizational and managerial behavior adequately" (Cameron & Quinn, 1988, p. 13). Paradox may be something very different in action than a performance impediment or organizational dysfunction needing to be avoided or requiring some sort of resolution.

It is this recognition, that paradox can serve as a healthy, welcome and necessary component of organizational life, that is central to the idea of paradox as a means to move performance forward. I suggest that it is not just the acceptance of paradox that matters, but the ability to see beyond paradox as we conventionally experience it today that provides us the greatest potential for new thinking. This reframing of paradox begins with a set of actions that release us from the "stuckness" of paradox to the possibility of movement within it.

A Metaphor of Movement

There is more than one way to live in a world of paradox (Smith & Berg, 1987). While "stuckness" is often the fate faced by groups, there is also the potential that

efforts to engage in coexisting opposites will lead to movement. Smith and Berg (1987) define movement as "the exploration of new ground [and] the leaving of old patterns" (p. 215). This definition returns us to some of the very fundamentals I believe organizations face today; the nature and pace of change in today's world requires a continuous, transformational (Marshak, 2002, 2004; Woodman, 1993) capability.

Accepting this, the exploring of new ground and leaving old patterns is not just a "nice" thing to do, it is the necessary thing to do in order to compete and sustain performance in this environment. Can it be then that the concept of movement itself is a critical component of a model of sustained performance? In returning to the survey data in the research we see that very possibility, that it is movement and action that are the distinguishing characteristics of sustaining versus non-sustaining performers.

The question then is how is movement achieved? Smith and Berg (1987) suggest this results from one thing—living within paradox. This statement may seem paradoxical unto itself (Cameron, 1986) notes in his third principle that paradoxes themselves are paradoxical). However Smith and Berg (1987) offer:

> By staying within the paradox, by immersing oneself in the opposing forces, it becomes possible to discover the link between them, the framework that gives meaning to apparent contradictions in the experience. The discovery, emotional and intellectual, of the link provides the release essential for group movement. (p. 215)

Movement is the result of two major psychological processes. The first is a reclaiming of emotions and reactions that may have taken the group off course. The second process has significant bearing on the very theory emerging herein, immersion in and exploration of the polarities facing the group. This is an opportunity to reframe or create new ways of looking at the polar extremes in order to see the important connection between them. This reinforces that the either/or mentality prevalent in most means of "addressing" paradox is directly counter to the transcendent mindset of living in a paradox.

Movement is the willingness to face paradox head-on. Smith and Berg (1987) propose three basic principles by which movement can occur. The first is to move towards, rather than away from the anxiety caused by paradoxical issues. The emotional responses should be seen as indicators of critical issues that need to be addressed, not items to be avoided. Avoidance in itself is an action that detracts from an organization's ability to progress. The second principle is for leaders to hold the space for the exploration of paradoxical tensions as they arise. The leader's role should be to help find the relationship between opposite or contradictory positions and to use this understanding as a means to address the very issues of "stuckness" that arise. The third principle is in the willingness of individuals and the group to recognize the way in which they use others to define themselves. The tendency they suggest is for our definition of "self" to be the opposite of the defined "others". In

doing this we lead to splitting and disconnect rather than connection and collective strength.

While Smith and Berg's thoughts are limited to the analysis of group life, I suggest that these fundamental principles show up in a much more significant manner in core consciousness, representative actions, and determined leadership of organizations sustaining performance. The three movements themselves represent not just a way of being for an organization looking to sustain performance, but they encompass the central actions organizations can take to move performance forward. While many of these concepts may seem familiar in their own right, perhaps even the cornerstone of one management fad or another, what theory has failed to do is integrate these ideas in a model of constant motion, where leadership, people and culture (organization consciousness) are all integral and interrelated components of sustained success. As the research showed even facilities in the study that were recently considered high performers could as easily slip from that stature. It was not that all the characteristics fell away, but it was that some significantly shifted.

If we were to investigate those that did not sustain it is almost certain, as the data showed, that there would be some evidence of the sustaining key actions. What this tells us is that it was not just one key action that led to success, but rather it was the important integration and focus on all the dynamic movements that enabled the organizations to sustain performance. For example, while *collective/individualism*

could be represented partially by Collins (2001) idea of getting the right people on the bus, getting the right people is not the complete answer to sustained success. It is simply a recommended action in an organization that if addressed on its own has limited affect. It is but a piece in an integrated and complex set of movements that while seemingly paradoxical (and therefore an apparent impediment to most), results in movement and powerful transcendence for some.

Smith and Berg's (1987) principles have an interesting connection to and hold significant implications for the three movements discovered in the research. Each movement is comprised of key actions (Table 5) that represent what an organization, its leaders and people can put in place, support over time, and focus on with relentless determination and vigor. These are not items to simply be accomplished. They are actions to be taken on day after day. Sustaining performance is a never-ending journey that requires great stamina, resolve, and a commitment to these fundamental actions.

The first movement, *agile/consistency*, represents the culture, or consciousness, of the organization. It is both the focus on purpose and a balanced commitment to progress that provides people in the subject organizations the ability to move towards moments of anxiety, but without fear. They have the capacity to engage in organization efforts and participate in guiding organizational outcomes not as contradictory to purpose, but rather as contributing to cause.

Table 5. The Nine Key Actions in Sustaining High Performance

Movement	Key Actions
Agile/Consistency	Acting with clarity of purpose Going above and beyond Challenging the status quo
Informative/Inquiry	Caring about our people Seeking input and sharing information Walking the talk
Collective/Individualism	Committing to who Connecting and caring Acting with ownership and autonomy

The first of three key actions in place in these organizations that supported this capacity is "acting with clarity of purpose". These organizations all have a strong sense of collective self, of organizational pride instilled and supported by a sense of personal connection to the organization and the contribution these individuals offer. This is supported by the action, "going above and beyond", which represents the ability of individuals throughout the organization to do what it takes to create peak experiences for customers and for one another. One CEO annually challenges the staff in his facility to list what recognitions they will strive for in the year ahead. These recognitions, such as "Best Place to Work" or "Magnet Status" or "Baldridge" are not simply nice goals; they are taken on as critical commitments aligned with the purpose of the organization. This is reflected in the sheer number of times people in the study referred to their organization as wanting "to be the best". The third key action in moving towards moments of anxiety is in challenging the status quo. The

ability to challenge the status quo is reinforced by an environment that supports people's efforts in trying new things. Most importantly, it is the ability to try these new things with the knowledge that mistakes are not career-ending and with the potential that the discoveries they lead to are seen as organizational gifts. This belief, that it is far better to fail trying than not to do at all, supports the idea of being in motion. It is following a consistently clear purpose, while maintaining the agility to alter course, trying new ideas and taking on new endeavors that can support an organization in moving forward.

The second movement, *informative/inquiry,* represents the important influence of leadership in sustaining organization performance. As in Smith and Berg's second principle where the leader holds the space for the exploration and understanding of paradox, this movement focuses on the critical leadership role in sustaining high performance. This is not leadership as simply characterized by traits or styles such as transformational or visionary, but rather it is in the constancy in actions in how leadership at all levels act in the organization. One of the most resilient of the sustaining organizations, in fact had a change in CEO two times over the course of the years examined yet maintained their results. Leadership is not necessarily about the individual, but rather about how the fundamentals of leadership are applied in the organization.

The first key action, "caring about people", can be no better described than showing a sincere interest in and respect for people across the organization. While fundamental

in nature, this simple action carries great weight in supporting the engagement of people in supporting performance. The second action, "seeking input and sharing information", also seems fundamental in nature. This is not just the willingness to communicate, but it represents the consistent effort to reach out to people in the organization for their thoughts and ideas, concerns and excitements. The formal nature of this process, while well documented in such ideas as town halls, newsletters, or all-hands meetings, is overshadowed by the informal nature of the process in which leadership invests the time in connecting with, engaging with, and understanding and incorporating the information gathered from people across the organization. This action links closely to the third key action in leadership, "walking the talk". This may be the very lynch pin of effective leadership in sustaining high performance. Again seemingly fundamental, the effects of doing what you say, of living your words in actions in a leadership capacity, captures the essence of the simple, yet powerful nature of the movements in sustaining high performance. It is in walking the talk that commitment is realized and respect is delivered. It is where commitment to and respect for leadership is earned. These fundamental actions, while simple, carry great weight and deliver significant results while generating the outcomes of sustained performance.

The third movement, *collective/individualism,* represents the powerful element of people in the organizations. This touches on Smith and Berg's (1987) third principle of how people use others to define themselves. Interactions and their resulting

sentiments (Homans, 1951/1992) continue to have a significant effect on how people contribute to and act in their organizations. This movement represents the polarities of ensuring the right people are part of your organization, people that are aligned with, understand and are committed to the organizations purpose and direction, who can serve as strong individual contributors, and who recognize that in spite of individual strength, that only can carry you as far as one's ability to collaborate across individual and organizational boundaries. This engages us in the systemic perspective that while organizations represent a collection of individuals, it is the organization that provides the framework for accomplishment. The idea of collaboration does not diminish individual contribution, but rather expands organizational capability. In this movement there are again three central actions, fundamental in nature, but critical to success.

The first, "committing to who", is grounded in the idea of getting the right people on board, but it is not only the attraction and acquisition of talent. It also takes us to the next level of our commitment to each of those individuals with an investment in development, growth opportunities, new experiences and the potential to contribute to the organization. An un-watered plant can only survive for so long. Filling a garden with the most magnificent flowers may initially flourish in life and beauty. If left on their own for feeding and watering, flowers face a potentially quick demise, and have almost no opportunity to sustain.

The next action builds from this idea, but turns the focus from outside in to inside out. "Connecting and caring" is about providing the opportunity for people in an organization to connect with one another and weave a network (that many referred to as family) that is supportive even in the face of critical work demands. This action is about ensuring one's basic needs are met, not as mandatory management action, but from the groundswell of collegial support. This is not to paint the picture that every individual will embrace one another in any organizational setting, but sustaining high performance was grounded in the level of care shown for people across these organizations. From outreach in moments of crisis to celebrations in moments of joy, the support for and encouragement of personal connection has a profound effect on the sustaining of performance. The final, but no less important, action is "acting with ownership and autonomy". This is the freedom and ability of members of the organization to make significant decisions at the point of contact. These actions come from people who feel they are not at risk for doing the wrong thing, but rather are given the opportunity to continuously do the right. Decision hierarchies may be necessary for significant expenditures or fundamental strategy shifts, but providing the space for individuals to make contributions through their daily interactions and individual decisions without the fear of retribution or punishment plays a significant part in supporting the movement of *collective/individualism* and its role in sustaining high performance.

In sustaining high performance Smith and Berg's (1987) principles of movement play out in powerful ways and begin to show us a path beyond paradox. A conscious effort structured by leadership, supported by strong culture, and enacted by the right people is what seemingly enables performance to be sustained. While these actions begin the process that allows us to move beyond paradox, we must recognize they are framed by the three paradoxes found at the core of sustaining performance. This raises the potential for paradox to again act as an impediment to success.

The existing paradoxes and their key actions will only carry us so far. It is in our ability to begin a comprehensive effort of integration and action that allows organizations to engage in a more effective conversation with the paradoxes they face. So how does an organization move from simple actions and ensure the transformation of these movements from potential roadblocks to a pathway of sustained success. I suggest it comes down to the ability to reframe the paradoxes they face, experiencing them as complementary polarities, as continuums of good organizational behavior all of which contributes to success. This starts with the simple choice of being in movement and taking on the key actions discussed above. Yet, it calls for one more step in facing paradox, which is found in the ability to reframe it, create a new consciousness in action and move towards the transcendence (Lewis, 2000; Pascale, 1990; Schumacher, 1977) of paradox itself.

Transcending Paradox—Beyond Contradiction to Continuum

Schumacher (1977, as cited in Cameron, 1986) takes us one step closer in engaging with rather than being stopped by paradox, framing it as one of two distinct types of problems organizations face. Convergent problems are those that are solvable based on logic or single solution responses. As discussed above, this would be the selection of one key action as our sole means to achieve outcomes. In the face of challenges now facing the current organization and business climate, single solution responses fall short of providing the comprehensive responses organizations need today to stay on top of the churning whitewater. This is why sustaining high performance begins by being in action on all the items above. Yet, being in action and fundamentally changing the way the organization works, takes one more step.

In facing these turbulent times Cameron (1986) suggests that the "paramount attribute characterizing organizations that have the capacity to adapt successfully (to turbulent times) is the presence of paradox" (p. 545). As discussed earlier, he and others suggest this capacity is fundamental to achieving high performance. Cameron's statement in some ways seems contradictory in its own right. He suggests that to succeed and adapt organizations actually need to capitalize on the presence of paradox while acknowledging that conventional thinking still positions paradox as a potential impediment to progress. This is exactly what most organizations fail to do. They tend to focus only on the latter by maintaining a mindset of convergent problem solving; looking for the single solution or "appropriate response". I would assert a

world in constant, transformational change requires a dynamic perspective in which single solutions no longer work. Operating with this management philosophy today would be like simply bringing a watering can to a forest fire; you underestimate and underplay the complexity of the situation and the dynamism required in the response.

Perhaps the strongest step the sustaining high performers take is in facing the very challenge raised above and recognizing the paradoxes that frame their actions. They seem to understand that organizations are nothing less than dynamic entities that live in a world wrought with paradox. While this stops most, the sustainers' very willingness to be in motion and take on simultaneous, complementary actions holds the key to sustained success.

Schumacher (1977) offers the counter to the convergent problems facing organizations, which he calls divergent problems, i.e. problems that are not easily quantifiable or verifiable and do not seem to have a single solution. He suggests that when we are stuck in a convergent mindset we return to the challenges of either/or, of contradiction and extremism and in doing so can "kill" problems. Divergent problems on the other hand take on a different quality, leading to higher levels of thinking, of self-awareness. It is at this level where one can begin to hold opposites as not conflicting, but as complementary. He suggests that divergent problems cannot be "killed". Instead they can be transcended.

This concept of transcendence has significant implications in looking at how organizations sustain high performance. It brings us back to our earlier discussion that high performance is not a state to be achieved, but a perpetual movement. It is the willingness to be in action and the taking on of broader consciousness. While I have asserted that there is a physical aspect to sustaining performance, of being in action around the key actions above, there is also a conscious or almost spiritual nature to how these organizations hold the three movements.

For the sustaining high performers this spiritual, conscious level of transcendence comes from the "higher level thinking" of their organization. How does this happen? I believe that the organizations' willingness and ability to take on the key actions creates a shared conscious and collective spirit in these organizations. The intricate web of actions aligned people, leadership and culture, providing a greater level of shared self-awareness and broader sense of humanness in which opposites cease to be opposites and transcendence occurs.

Pascale, (1990) in his book, *Managing on the Edge* presents a challenge to the management principles of the day, warning us of the complacency of organizations in today's business environment. He suggests that with operational excellence seemingly an end unto itself, organizations have the tendency to believe they have achieved and in essence, stop moving. He believes the biggest challenge we potentially face is the tendency upon reaching perceived achievement to set and stand

fast with the status quo that helped us to achieve success. This seemingly contradicts the reality of the turbulent environments we face.

Organizations today often seem stuck themselves in searching for convergent solutions as Schumacher suggests, finding the one solution that achieves the desired objective. We are challenged still with what keeps successful companies healthy, but perhaps as Pascale (1990) alludes to and Schumacher (1977) supports, it is the organizational tendency to drive to one solution, to take one action that leads to the diminishing of a dynamic state. Instead the "answer" replaces action, and eventually "stuckness" overcomes movement. If organizations are unwilling to move to keep pace with constant change, it is easy to see how sustaining success would be virtually impossible.

The challenge for organizations is to have the willingness to take the bold step into the fray, to address paradox head on and in doing so transcend its potential drag and thrive in its potential. This brings us back to the creative possibility found within paradox itself. Pascale (1990) proposes a framework based on four factors of increasing ability to hold and capitalize on the creative tension of paradox that supports self renewal in today's organizations and in doing so presents a means by which paradox may be transcended.

The first factor, *fit*, addresses an organization's need for internal consistency and alignment. In our data we saw how consistency alone was not a distinguishing factor in sustaining performance. The second factor, *split*, allows for the separation of distinctions. While supporting autonomy and diversity, this action deters broader systemic action.

It is with the third factor, *contend*, that Pascale begins to address the effects of paradox on organizations. When constructive conflict between organizational contradictions is harnessed rather than suppressed, it can start to become part of organizational solutions. This idea represents the duality that we see in most conversations on paradox and perhaps is why we often get stuck at this point. In contending with dualities, especially in the framework of western thought, they are often seen as contradictory versus complementary. The resulting conflict tends to drive us back to the safer ground of unity (schismogenesis and convergence). Instead, it is through the managing of contention, of the tensions that arise, that we deal with the intricacies of human interaction. Pascale (1990) offers that organizations themselves are nothing more than interactions among people.

Is it possible that, as Schumacher (1977) proposed, if we are able to move to a higher level of engagement and thinking (a divergent level) and if we can move the interactions among people to this divergent level, they too can become transcendent? This concept of t*ranscend* is Pascale's fourth factor. In transcend, the tensions of

opposites shift from dualities (either/or) to polarities (ends of a continuum). Interactions shift from either/or, to and/also, moving beyond static state to dynamic tension. So how do we make this shift?

As discussed, central to the consciousness and shared spirit experienced in the sustaining high performers is their ability to hold this tension. They do so by being in action that lets them move between the poles of the paradoxes that support their success. This is "dynamic synthesis" (Pascale, 1990, p. 53), the taking on a new mindset of embracing paradox, versus the prevailing mindset caused by tending towards one end of the continuum or the other.

Pascale suggests a simple path to reaching this transcendent capacity, asserting the potential, rests in our imagination. This is a powerful and profound suggestion, that our problem has been a failure of imagination. He cites the fact that until the four minute mile barrier was surpassed, we did not have the belief it was possible. I would expand on Pascale's thought to suggest that it is in creating a powerful organizational consciousness/spirit, built on the release of a collective imagination of shared possibility, and grounded in the continuous movement of the key actions that the sustaining organizations were able to transcend paradox.

This transcendent consciousness allows organizations to make the choice of either moving towards a state of stability, again a convergent solution that limits capacity,

or a mindset of resilience, which is the capability of a system to absorb change and effectively adapt. This is the continuous, transformational "state" of change that sustaining high performers have been willing to live in and have in essence, capitalized on over others. Quinn and Cameron (1988a) support this notion, suggesting that beyond paradox, long-term survival is dependent on the balancing of polarities and being in dynamic action. It was this very idea of collective action that was part of the experience of the sustaining high performers.

In follow-up interviews focused on addressing the effects of the three movements and the polarities they represent, a selection of the original interviewees were asked how they experienced the movements in their workplace and how they potentially affected daily work and organizational outcomes. The participants' responses did not deny the experience of tension around these polarities. One respondent acknowledged, "Tensions do show up, but we embrace them and have to own them directly." This person suggested that in fact she saw the ability of members of her facility to manage the tension as a critical "way of being". This "way of being" points us to the recognition of a shared consciousness/spirit that clearly permeated these sustaining organizations. But again, how was this achieved?

The participant suggested the very actions identified as central to the discovered paradoxes served as the means by which they were transcended. Perhaps transcending paradox in the sustaining high performers was the ability to see the component parts

of the paradox itself. It was the balancing of the polarities each movement represented. It was being in movement around the key actions. All of which, when combined were potentially the key to sustained performance.

Another participant supported this observation adding that inherent tensions were addressed by engaging people at all levels in the organization. When asked how this was accomplished, she used the example of the movement *collective/individualism* as not only a polarity held by the organization, but also the means by which it was addressed. She suggested that while individual efforts and collaboration may seem contradictory, it was committing to having the best people, the ongoing focus on caring and connecting, and the sense of ownership that supported staff in working together that enabled her facility to transcend the potential paradoxes they faced.

In responding to the question, how did the findings show up as tensions in his organization, one CEO said that the items were not viewed as conflicts. He continued to say the tension posed by the pull between the two ways of being represented in each movement, was not experienced as a contradiction, but rather, "they are complementary and provide invigorating, vibrant opportunities." This perspective validates in practical terms the suggestion of Pascale (1990) that, "what have heretofore been regarded as hardships (owing to their paradoxical nature) or chronic sources of aggravation to managers are, in fact, the wellspring of organizational vitality" (p. 52). Pascale adds, "Polarities provide an ongoing vehicle for sustaining

constructive disequilibrium" (p. 52). This constructive disequilibrium is a product of the actions of the organizations themselves. In being in constant movement in the nine key actions, these organizations have been able to develop a shared consciousness and spirit, supported by leadership action, culture, and the people that comprise the organizations. The elements of the three movements themselves have provided the capability for the organizations to transcend paradox and find a place of dynamic balance, constant action, and shared spirit.

The idea of "transcending" paradox shifts the thinking about paradox from a convergent problem- solving to a reframing of the tensions inherent in paradox; contradictions become complementary and integrated polarities. The link between potentially opposing forces (Smith & Berg, 1987) instead allows for dynamic movement and an oscillation between two continuous poles. This transcendent link is what releases the individual, group, and organization into a space of movement, into the ebb and flow between the polarities. This supports the findings that in continually balancing change and stability, collectivism and individuality, and informing and inquiring, these organizations take on sustaining themselves as movement. Ford and Backoff (1988) conclude that "the steering of a viable course requires that opposites such as these be balanced dynamically, rather than hold to one side or the other (p. 88)." It is this idea of dynamic balance that represents the transcendent state.

Smith and Berg (1987) in a quote used by permission of its author, Mary Morrison also support the idea suggested by Pascale (1990) that we explore potential paradox not as either/ors, but rather as complementary polar both/ands. They offer the thought that the "mastering of contradictions" is really the "art of balancing". In doing so, they open the door for a new way to explore dynamic relationships.

> We stand in turmoil of contradictions without having the faintest idea how to handle them: Law/Freedom; Rich/Poor; Right/Left; Love/Hate—the list seems endless. Paradox lives and moves in this realm; it is the art of balancing opposites in such a way that they do not cancel each other but shoot sparks of light across their points of polarity. It looks at our desperate either/ors and tells us they are really both/ands—that life is larger than any of our concepts and can, if we let it, embrace our contradictions. (Mary Morrison cited in Smith & Berg, 1987, p. 3)

The Art of Balancing

Embracing our contradictions describes the art of balancing taking place in each of the three discovered movements. The movements remain in a constant state of adjustment and oscillation (Smith & Berg, 1987), "the inherent pulse of nature" (Guerra, 2005, p. 136). The pulse between polarities is where I believe we find the answer to our search for what supports the sustainability of high performance.

In this model, balance is not a state to be achieved, but rather it is continuous and dynamic change as suggested in Marshak's (2004) concept of morphing. It is not movement with the intention of achieving equilibrium, which systems theorists would suggest in many ways equates to the death of a system (Bertalanffy, 1950; Blegen, 1968; Katz & Kahn, 1966). Rather, it is the "maintenance" of a steady state of non-

equilibrium (a seemingly paradoxical statement in its own right) that requires the constant art of balancing. Much like breathing, where one cannot inhale, without exhaling, or exhale without inhaling, it is the combination of both polarities in each movement that enables the sustaining of performance.

This idea of wholeness of actions and perpetual balancing challenges much of western philosophical and management thinking. Polarity and duality in Western thinking has us see opposites as contradictory, disconnected or unrelated. Polarity in the context of Eastern philosophy, as represented in the principle of Yin-Yang, has us experience the existential interdependence of the dual aspects of one unity (Coward, 1996; Karcher, 1999; Marshak, 1993a; McGregor, 1960; Sun, 1999). This is an important distinction seen in the sustaining high performers as exemplified by their responses to questions on the tensions in the follow-up interviews. They had the inherent ability to hold this interdependence and live in each of these dynamic balances managing, for example with *collective/individualism*, the ability to ensure strong individual contribution, while supporting work through powerful collaborative actions.

In his investigation of Yin-Yang and management, Sun (1999) introduces three pairs of characteristics that specifically support the polarities represented by the movements in the sustaining high performers. The first, "co-existence and unity", provides the framework for the whole. While each concept is unique, they are not distinct. Without one, the idea of the whole disappears. The second, "change and

exchange", provides for the interaction of the polarities. While one may be the guiding process for a while, they will invariably shift roles over time. Environmental factors, organizational choice, and other circumstances all influence these shifts. The third, "balance and harmony", leads us again to the art of balancing. While Tao is about the achievement of harmony, we should not mistake this for equilibrium. This resulting static state, as we learned above would render the polarity lifeless. Instead harmony is about the constant interchange and relationship between poles. It is about movement.

Is it fair then to say that sustaining itself is about movement, be it morphing, the art of balancing, or the constant dance of harmony? The following quote from Ch'eng I and translated by Chan (as cited by Marshak, 1993a, p. 402) reinforces this point in suggesting that if we are to be long lasting (sustaining) then we can not risk being static.

> Thus being long lasting does not mean being in a fixed or definitive state. Being fixed and definitive, a thing cannot last long. The way to be constant is to change according to circumstance.

A Metaphor of Movement Redux

While sustaining by its definition is "the act of maintaining" ("Random House Unabridged Dictionary", 2006), it is the focus on sustaining as the "act of moving" that the findings seem to suggest. If we accept that standing still at today's pace of change is falling behind, we are already shifting to a mindset of movement. But the

participants in the study did not talk of change for the sake of change and the motivation for their movements did not seem to be simply to keep pace with others. In fact, there was little discussion in the data about planned change programs or initiatives. In asking people if their facility made a decision to intentionally change and become a "high performing facility", almost every subject responded that they did not. Instead they spoke of the continuous effort to align key ideas, supported by key leaders, and enacted by key people.

This is an interesting discovery. Most people said they did not undertake an intentional change program, yet the stories they shared show a pattern of intentionality in their decisions and actions to be the kind of healthcare facilities they hoped to become. Rather than talking about what these facilities achieved in sustaining their performance as a decision to change, they simply made a decision to act, to be in movement towards a "state" they believed was not an endpoint, to take on a continuing journey.

The participants revealed in their words that high performance was not a destination, and in fact may not even have been a goal. Rather, it was about moving forward, or as one subject said "we can't stop here!" These words and the many others shared by the participants in this study are representations of actions that together paint a picture of movement represented by the interplay of *collective/individualism, agile/consistency* and *informative/inquiry.*

A Model for Sustaining High Performance

In framing a model for sustaining high performance, I first ground it in a fundamental understanding of the power of an almost unconscious, continuous, transformational (Marshak, 1993a; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996; Weick & Quinn, 1999; Woodman, 1993) and morphogenic (Marshak, 2004) change process; incorporated with an understanding of the relational nature (Gergen, 1999; Gergen & Walter, 1998; Homans, 1951/1992) of humanness and a consideration of dynamic balance (Bertalanffy, 1950; Blegen, 1968; Evans, 1992; Guerra, 2005; Katz & Kahn, 1966; Smith & Berg, 1987). I then mix in the potential for unity in polarity (Durlabhji, 2004; Karcher, 1999; Marshak, 1993a; Sun, 1999).

In pulling these elements together, it is possible to move past the frontiers of typical change paradigms (Kuhn, 1962) and beyond the typical thought processes of bureaucratic management models (Morgan, 1997; Weisbord, 2004) into the generative realm of theory development (Gergen, 1978). The result is the connection of our three central movements, *collective/individualism, agile/consistency* and *informative/inquiry*, as individual polarities linked in a state of dynamic balancing and ongoing interaction.

As represented in the model (Figure 11), each movement maintains the unity of its own "trilarity" of concepts, while contributing to the overall whole. Each part of the model represents movement and the continuous balancing of polarities. As the data

show the power of *collective/individualism* (people) enables strong individuals to interact and collaborate in powerful ways. The strength of *agile/consistency* (culture) provides unwavering purpose and the ability to rapidly respond in a moment's notice. The reach of *informative/inquiry* (leadership) supports an internal dialogue that not only informs, but continually learns and supports the very ability of its counterparts to operate most effectively.

Central to the model is that the movements coexist and are in a mode of continuous action. While at times one movement or another may ebb and flow, it is only together that they are effective in sustaining high performance. As one subject said, "We can't really have one without the others if we are going to be successful." As with our understanding of the Yin-Yang, it is through the complementary nature of the movements and the interconnectedness of their individual strengths that the system gets its power and the potential exists for the sustaining of performance.

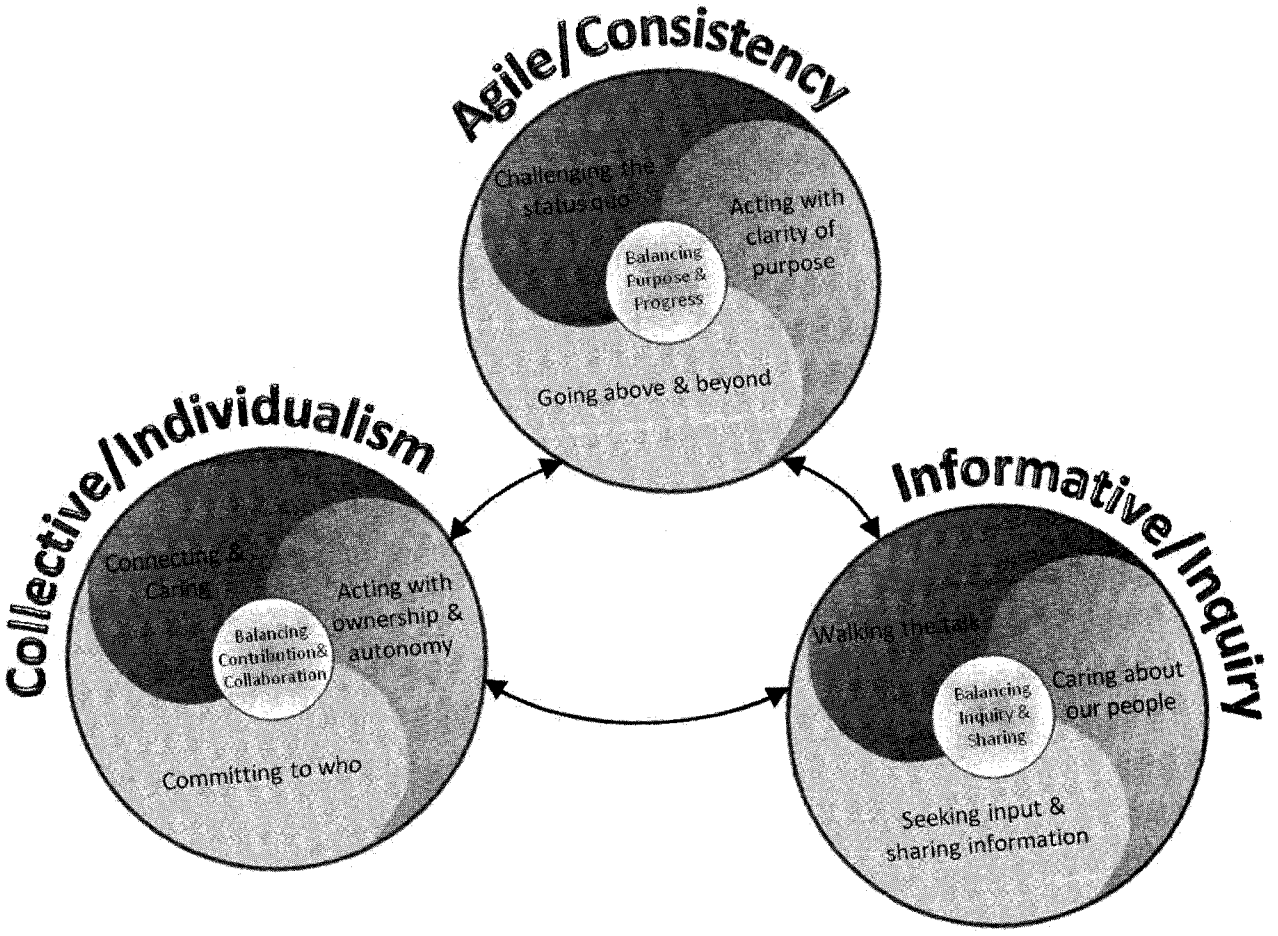

Figure 11. Model for the Sustaining of High Performance

To reverse the question, does this also mean that anyone can easily reach the "state" of sustaining high performance? If the word "easily" was removed perhaps the answer is yes. It was determined through the data collected in two rounds of studies that there is a proven effect to these movements and concepts. It was also shown that these movements had a lasting effect on outcomes for a period of almost seven years.

In addition, the day-to-day relevance of this model was validated with some of the top leaders, directors, managers and staff at these facilities.

The model is grounded in the challenges posed by paradox in organizations. It is supported by the potential that there is more that can be accomplished than simply managing paradox. If we shift perspective and begin to look at these extremes, not as contradictory impediments, but as polar complements, we reframe the ability for organizations to address these seemingly conflicting issues. It is a shift in organizational consciousness, driven by a focus on keys actions. It is recognizing that transcending paradox is about a willingness to be in a state of continuous balancing and disequilibrium.

The elements of the model, the three movements of sustaining high performance, provide a framework of possibility for the subject facilities to do just that. As one CEO injected, this is not "rocket science", it is rather about intentional action and the willingness to hold the key actions found in the data as a central part of what the organization does every day.

> When we transcend a paradox there is often a quality of obviousness that produces a shock of recognition. No longer held captive by the old way of thinking, we are liberated to see things we have known all along, but couldn't assemble into a useful model for action. (Pascale, 1990, p. 110)

As suggested by Pascale, some could say this model represents things we have known about organizations, management, and leadership for some time. While on the surface I could not argue, I would warn those with that frame of reference to be cautious before they set off again on the trail of checklists and shallow assumptions. As I have tried to show, there is a significant distinction between establishing a set of "successful" characteristics and actually taking action to ensure the three movements flourish in an organization in a state of dynamic balance and continuous movement.

The process requires an intentional choice, an unwavering focus and a lasting commitment. As the literature framed and the data exemplified, to be in movement toward sustaining performance is a never-ending journey requiring hard work on the part of everyone in the organization. It is an adventure that has proven to be greatly rewarding.

Chapter 6: Implications and Reflection

Introduction—A Consideration of Implications for Theory

In exploring sustainability as movement, the challenges that paradox presents to conventional thinking in management science were raised. While paradox is recognized as part of daily organizational life (Cameron & Quinn, 1988; Lewis, 2000; Quinn, 1988; Smith & Berg, 1987), it still, more often than not, creates a sense of discomfort causing lack of clarity, conflict or simply complacency. Perhaps, as suggested above, a shift in perspective is needed to reframe paradoxical thinking as the means by which we can best address the very challenges facing human systems today. It was suggested above that this could be achieved by transcending the contradictions found in paradox and working in the dynamic balance between the complementary edges of polarities.

The exploration of paradox in research seems mostly clustered in a flurry of literature in the late 1980s. The works of Quinn (1988), Quinn and Cameron (1988), Poole and Van de Ven (1989), Smith and Berg (1987) and Pascale (1990) among a few others expanded the conversation of paradox, only previously receiving cursory recognition in such works as, In Search of Excellence (Peters & Waterman, 1982). Since that time, as a review of literature revealed, only a few writers such as Luscher and Lewis are continuing to raise the banner of paradox as a critical aspect of management theory.

The discovery of sustainability as movement in this study has again raised the critical issue of paradox in organizations. It calls us to revisit the way in which we view paradox and how it can be used as a critical research lens. It also has implications for how researchers use paradox as a means to delve deeper into the increasingly complicated intricacies of organizations today. Eisenhardt (2000) admitted some surprise when the concept of paradox emerged from a special issue on change she was editing. In that issue, as shared earlier, Marianne Lewis (2000) offers the following:

> Indeed, the rising intricacy, ambiguity, and diversity of organizations place a premium on researchers' abilities to think paradoxically: to live and even thrive within the plurality and changes of organizational life and help practitioners do likewise. Building this capacity requires confronting our own defenses—the desire to over rationalize and oversimplify the complications of organizational life—and learning to explore the natural ebb and flow of tensions. (p. 774)

Lewis touches on the very essence and implications of the findings discovered in this study. The power of thriving in the plurality, confronting our own defenses and exploring the ebb and flow of tensions is not only the need of the researcher; it was discovered to be a critical ability of the sustaining high performers. In developing theory, the implications push us more to a space of holding ambiguity, of enabling a place for continuous systemic alignments (Marshak, 2004), of providing the opportunities for polyvocal constructions (Gergen, 1999) and expanding our capacity to act with agility (Shafer, 2001).

The discovery of sustainability as movement shifts our thinking from finding states to be achieved to building stamina for action. It calls for new means to engage people in organizations as active contributors to a collective success. It challenges us to live in the very space organization theory has attempted to help us avoid. Eisenhardt (2000) perhaps sums it up best in suggesting:

> Rather than compromising between the two in some sort of Goldilocks fantasy, vibrant organizations, groups, and individuals change by simultaneously holding the two states. This duality of coexisting tensions creates an edge of chaos, not a bland halfway point between one extreme and the other. The management of this duality hinges on exploring the tension in a creative way that captures both extremes... (p. 703)

With this I suggest that sustainability is change. By holding the tension between two states in a polarity, by acknowledging and living between the two edges of paradox, we do move to the edge of chaos. This is not chaos as something to be feared, but rather it is the space of balancing in which energy is released, the generative capacity expanded, and movement is inspired. It is the space in which the sustaining of high performance truly occurs.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Limitations

While acknowledging the contributions of the theoretical challenges discussed above, it is also important to identify the limitations of this study and the additional research questions it raises. As a qualitative, generative study, the most evident limitation comes in the interpretive nature of the methodology. Following the grounded theory conventions of coding and data review to provide structure, the process itself is still

subjective. While validated at multiple points in the study, the potential for other angles or slices of the data allow that other perspectives are possible. With that, the validation process of engaging participants in the researcher's findings served as a potent method by which to ensure accurate reflection and representation of the data as interpreted.

A second limitation of the generative theory process is in fact, a characteristic of the process itself. While a theory does emerge, the constructionist perspective deters one from identifying it as "truth". The power of a generative process may in some ways also present its weakness. With a focus on developing persuasive and compelling, collaborative and dialogic, and pragmatic and applicable outcomes, some might say it attempts to evade an empirical nature. In contrast, I contend the generative process capitalizes on the best of the empirical process by engaging the very participants affected by the research and in uncovering raw, vibrant and real data.

An additional process limitation also came in the small size of the comparison set of facilities. The original twelve facilities provided a good size subject set to look for common characteristics in the initial research, but did not provide an extensive size comparison pool when looking at what was occurring at sustaining versus non-sustaining facilities. While the data did show there were some distinct differences between sustainers and non sustainers, additional data would have added to a more comprehensive picture of the nature of the non-sustaining facilities.

In moving from the process limitations, there are also both interpersonal and organizational limitations in this study. As an employee of Healthco, the potential for personal bias exists, but I believe this was tempered by the fact that as a researcher, I was examining performance across the whole system in comparison to itself, not versus external sources. This served as a means to manage personal bias. It also limits the ability to test the findings outside of a one company system.

Healthco, as the largest for profit provider of healthcare services, offers a broad sample of facilities to investigate, but the nature of this being one system may have cultural implications that have some influence on the findings. This begs for additional exploration of these same factors as they pertain to independent hospitals, not-for-profit systems and smaller regional systems. It would be bolstered by taking the inquiry beyond healthcare to manufacturing and other service industries (such as banking or retail) to determine the prevalence of these findings in those settings. This leads to a broader conversation about the potential for future research that this inquiry uncovered.

Recommendations for Future Research

As in any good research process, when answering one question, you inevitably raise others. In picking up from the discussions on limitations above, one critical area for further exploration in the idea of sustainability as motion is to move beyond the realm of Healthco and healthcare in general. Is there a means by which transcending paradox and dynamic balancing creates a culture of outperformance (Guerra, 2005)

across an industry? And in which industries does this theoretical framework have an effect and are there others in which it does not?

This also raises the issues of cultural implications of this thinking. The challenges to paradoxical thinking contained in this work were based on a western management mindset, which as the literature showed, tends towards the need to resolve problems, reduce conflict, avoid tension and squelch contradictions. With an interest in global interrelationships, the implications of how transcending paradox (or even, if it happens or needs to happen) in other global regions, such as Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America, could have far reaching implications for multinational corporations looking to achieve cross-organizational performance in a shrinking global business environment.

A question raised in the discussion of limitations above is around a deeper exploration of non-sustaining facilities. There are potentially powerful insights into what the specific trigger points are between non-sustaining and sustaining performers. In addition, an expanded comparison of low and moderate performers would help in further clarifying the distinct nature of what it means to be a sustaining high performer.

Potential leadership implications are also raised in this research. It would be interesting to examine the comparative leadership styles/characteristics of the senior

leaders, specifically the CEOs and CNOs at the subject facilities. Is there a certain leadership style or set of traits that are common among the leaders of these organizations? Are there certain actions that these leaders take in guiding the direction of their respective organizations?

As discussed above, the qualitative nature of this study provided for one interpretation of the data collected. This leaves open a list of potential inquiries that could be grounded in the existing data. In following the constructionist perspective that words create worlds (Gergen & Gergen, 2003), are there language patterns that occur in the sustaining facilities? While the analysis, leading to the identification of themes and ultimately the three movements was grounded in the words of the participants, a deeper analysis into the role of language and organizational discourse could reveal patterns of discourse prevalent in sustaining high performers, as well as common words and phrases and their influence in the day-to-day activities of these organizations. Another opportunity is to compare the language and responses across role, for example comparing CEO responses to those of longest tenured employees. Are there certain roles different members of a facility take on as part of sustaining high performance?

An additional possibility raised as a question in my exploration, is the nature of relatedness between the three movements. The research seems to suggest that these movements occur simultaneously, which leads to a greater question of their potential

symbiotic nature. Does one movement need the other two to "survive" or rather, do they only exist as each one exists? If one were to vanish, would that lead to the demise of the others? This question gets to both the life giving and interconnected nature of the three movements. While the movements appear in the conversations of the participants, does one item take precedence over another or have a greater influence over the others in leading to sustaining performance?

As good research should, in attempting to answer one question, it reveals many more questions to be explored. While the ideas shared above were raised in the course of this study, there are potentially others yet to be discovered. If as Pascale (1990) suggests, inquiry is the engine of self-renewal, then in continuing to ask provocative questions we can continue to stretch the boundaries of organizational science.

Implications for Practice

In turning my attention now to practice, I am faced with the academic dilemma of translating a theoretical framework to potential for action. This raises an interesting twist in the ongoing research of high performance facilities at Healthco. While the first round of research led to a set of seven characteristics, the research into the sustaining high performers focused on delving into what actions supported those characteristics in coming to life. While reviewing the findings of both studies in considering the implications for practice, the linkage between the two became evident. The seven characteristics portrayed the experiences at an organization's surface of what the three movements were driving underneath.

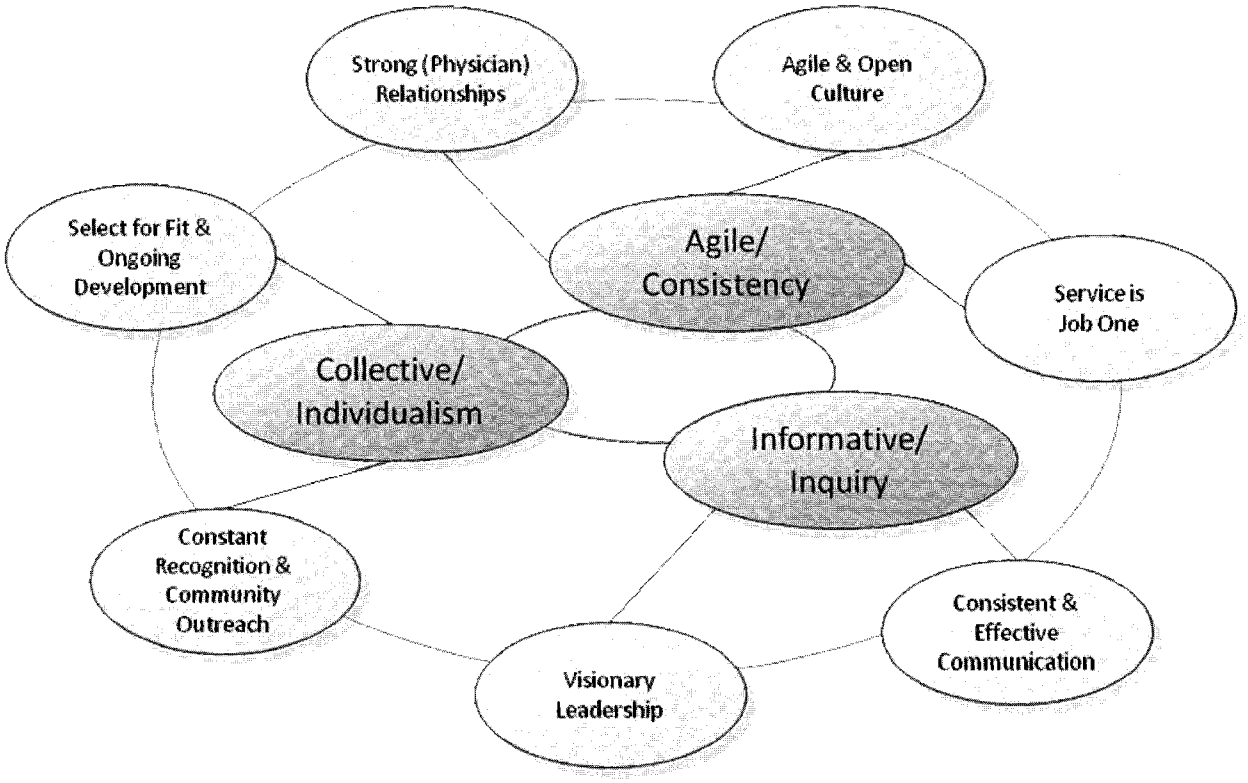

Figure 12. Sustaining High Performance

Figure 12 represents the linkages between the three movements and the seven characteristics found in the original study and shows the potential connection between the findings. The implications here are that each movement, supported by its key actions, can be enacted via the activities associated with each of the seven characteristics as well (reviewed in Appendix A). In suggesting specific applications for practice as it relates to the findings herein, it is important to return to the key actions discussed in Chapter Five. The following summary frames the three key

actions of each movement in a way that the actions themselves offer a potential path organizations could take in transcending paradox and a sustaining performance.

Collective/individualism is focused on the people aspects of the organization. It calls for the balancing of strong individual contributors working in powerful collaboration. The key actions associated with this movement call for the following:

- *Connecting and Caring*—taking care of one another in the facility and working collaboratively to achieve goals
- *Acting with ownership and a sense of autonomy*—acting with ownership and freedom to do what is "right"
- *Committing to who*—ensuring the right people are on board and those that do not fit, do not stay

Agile/consistency is focused on the cultural aspects of the organization. It calls for ensuring a clear purpose and direction while maintaining the capacity to rapidly respond to the changing environment. The key actions associated with this movement call for the following:

- *Challenging the status quo*—effectively questioning the status quo and suggesting new ideas
- *Acting with clarity of purpose*—acting with a clear understanding of direction and purpose of the organization

- *Going above and beyond*—always working to exceed expectations and striving to be the best

Informative/inquiry is focused on the leadership actions at the facility. It calls for a willingness to share information while encouraging an effort to gather and be open to input and ideas from all levels of the organization. The key actions associated with this movement call for the following:

- *Walking the talk*—leaders at all levels roll up their sleeves and do not ask anyone to do what they would not do themselves
- *Caring about our people*—leaders actively and consistently show an expressed interest in staff
- *Seeking input and sharing information*—leaders at all levels work to understand issues and provide key information about the facility to all

A key consideration in discussing implications for practice is the recognition that while providing critical steps in the process, this information is more than a simple checklist of activities. It is critical that the implementation of these items be part of a comprehensive organizational strategy that takes on all actions as central to its effort. As one facility CEO noted, it takes "unbelievable courage" to be willing to take on these actions and put these seemingly paradoxical ideas in motion.

As discussed above, the tendency in organizations remains focused on reducing conflict and driving to linear cause and effect problem solving. Getting in to action, transcending paradox, and moving towards sustaining high performance is not a gradual dip in a pool, it requires a courageous leap. In follow-up interviews with a sampling of the participants, I asked how they addressed the tensions raised by the potential paradoxical nature of the three movements. They all offered responses in which they acknowledged tensions, but were not stopped by them. They offered instead that progress and success came from being focused and in continuous action in each of the movements. They did not experience the "stuckness" of paradox avoidance, but rather, as another CEO added, "we just continue to do what we do". This is the continuous movement and dynamic balancing between polarities these facilities live in each day. From the outcomes they achieve, it seems their actions are quite effective.

Through the use of the three movements as a guiding framework, and the key actions as central steps an organization can take on the road to sustaining performance, I offer a set of quick start actions that can help an organization begin its journey to transcending paradox and sustaining high performance. These actions can serve as a catalyst as you work to implement the key actions and develop a spirit and shared consciousness of transcendence. These actions are found in Table 6.

Table 6. Simple Actions to Start the Journey towards Transcending Paradox and the Sustaining of High Performance

Movement	Simple Actions
Collective/ individualism	• People introduced to and often sign off on behavioral standards as part of the hiring process. • Strong onboarding/orientation processes ensure new employees are quickly integrated into the organizational culture. • Broad selection of people involved in both solving critical problems and planning for longer term solutions. • Cross-departmental communications are reinforced and people are made aware of what resources exist across the organization that can assist in accomplishing goals.
Agile/ consistency	• Clear and shared organizational mission is in place and guides the daily actions and decisions of the organization. • Problems are addressed as they occur in real time by the people necessary to resolve the issue. • Organization structure is not an excuse for inaction. Need for control and/or organizational politics should not be an impediment to expediency. • Performance is not measured by achieving goals, but rather by efforts to exceed them, partnered with a reputation of supporting effort, rather than punishing failures.
Informative/ inquiry	• Leaders perform consistent rounding (walking the floors and engaging employees in their own work environments) they meet the employees where they are. • Employee input is sought and encouraged, both individually and through formal employee groups. • An environment of openness is reinforced ensuring feedback can be delivered to leadership without fear of punishment or retribution. • There is a willingness to share good and bad news, reinforcing employees' knowledge of, ownership in, and accountability for the organization.

While moving towards an organization focused on transcending paradox and capable of balancing in the chaos in the midst of polarities sounds potentially intimidating; perhaps it is considering the consequences of not doing so that should be the motivating factor. In a world where, as discussed above, the pace of change is now the pulse of organizational life, the ability of an organization to hold tensions as creative opportunities versus impediments to progress will be vital.

The participating facilities provided simple, yet powerful examples of what is required. The outcomes are painted in story after story shared by staff at all levels of what they have been able to accomplish. Thanks to the discovery of these organization's subsurface activities beyond basic checklists of non-committal activity, the implications for practice can be significant. It all comes down to a choice to act.

Reflections on Experience

The doctoral journey is a life altering experience, not only for the learning it provides and rigor it presents, but for the opportunity it offers to explore the richness and depth of a specific concept. I have been fortunate to work in an organization comprised of individuals who are committed to the care and well being of others. I have been blessed in this experience to encounter and engage with people from all walks of life, career levels, geographies and experiences. In the multiplicity of their differences I found great commonality. Whether it was a result of the industry in which my research was conducted I am not in a position to say, but what I experienced was the

powerful compassion of pure humanness. The concept of care permeates this research and profoundly moved me during the journey. Individuals shared their stories and experiences and in many cases exposed their souls. It was through just these types of personal encounters that the results discovered in this study were made possible.

The journey is one in which I explored my own inner humanness, capacity for stress, understanding of limitations, discovery of weaknesses, and appreciation of strengths. The support of colleagues, classmates, peers and family is a critical factor. The guidance and coaching of committee and faculty is a must. I think perhaps most powerful in the experience is the belief in what I was exploring, not simply as science or curiosity, but rather for the potential impact it can have on the world.

That may be a lofty consideration and bold intention, but the experience calls me to follow with passion that sense of purpose. As I examined the inner workings and paradoxes at the heart of the subject facilities, I too was examining my own. The experience represents nothing less than a poetic process of discovery.

Conclusion

I began this journey before I knew it had commenced when I first looked to find patterns of performance among our hospitals at Healthco that could be shared and implemented to help create stronger, healthier, more productive healthcare facilities. I did not expect it would result in an over four year journey, inclusive of conference

presentations, articles, a second major research project, and a completed dissertation. Perhaps that is what transcending paradox is all about.

In discovering the three movements at the heart of sustaining high performance, I do not suggest that these concepts themselves are unique in their own right. Their power emerges from a willingness to hold them in dynamic tension; the paradox through which sustainability as movement is realized. In transcending paradox, we accept the wholeness that each of these concepts and their key actions represent, individually and collectively. We comfortably find that space in balancing polarities that keeps us forever moving. It is an idea that arises directly from the chaotic nature of the world in which we live today. As discussed at the outset of this work, change now "is" and it is up to us to accept it. "There is nothing in the whole world that is permanent…the ages themselves glide by in constant movement" (Ovid).

Appendix A: High Performance Facility Study Methodology, Findings and Implications

Research Methodology

The initial research on which this study is grounded was conducted in the summer of 2005. The research methodology of the initial study consisted of visiting twelve facilities across the country, from small specialty hospitals to large urban medical centers. The criteria used for selecting the participants of the study included employee engagement, patient satisfaction, nursing measures, employee turnover and comparative financial measures. In each of these areas the facility had to be performing at the top levels of the company overall and show consistent or improving performance in the three year period from 2002-2004.

Once the facilities were identified, a series of site visits took place over the summer of 2005. Each facility visit was two days in length and included a series of interviews, focus groups and a facility-wide survey. Over the course of the study 160 one-on-one interviews with senior leadership and directors/managers were held, 64 focus groups including over 700 staff level employees were conducted, and over 1800 surveys were collected.

The Findings

Visionary Leadership: Leaders at all levels are available, approachable and open, and operate with minimal micro-management.

- Leaders lead by example, they do not ask people to do something they would not do themselves.
- Leaders perform consistent rounding (walking the floors and engaging employees in their own work environments) and also maintain an open-door policy (making the administrative offices a welcoming place to all staff).
- Employee input is sought and encouraged, both individually and through employee groups, and is supported by a non-punitive environment (i.e., feedback can be delivered to senior leadership without fear of punishment or retribution).

Consistent and Effective Communication: 'Multi-way' communication which includes not only 'what' needs to be communicated, but also the 'why' it is important to the organization.

- Leaders are consistent in both sharing critical news and seeking input from employees and allowing new ideas to be heard without fear of punishment.
- Cross-departmental communications and relationships are positive and strong.
- Key messages are delivered with simplicity and consistency.

- There is a willingness to share both good and bad news creating a greater level of ownership and accountability.

Select for Fit and On Going Development of Staff: An unwavering commitment to wait for the right person in the hiring process versus simply hiring a 'warm body' and a corresponding courage to let people go who do not fit.

- People introduced to and often sign off on service standards as part of the hiring process.
- Strong onboarding/orientation processes ensure new employees are quickly integrated into the organizational culture.
- Leadership takes the necessary time to interact with new hires early and often in their tenure.
- A solid focus on learning and development is central to the organization culture and supported by both internal programs and support for outside learning.

Agile & Open Culture: A sense of pride, collaboration, respect and a strong focus on quality are central to the organization's "way of being", and a constant sense of reflection and continuous improvement allow these organizations to keep pace with and lead change.

- A culture that staff consistently refers to as "family", with all the intricacies that come with that distinction.
- A "blame free" environment in which issues are addressed in real time by individuals at the point of the problem or need rather than waiting to be told what to do or pointing to others.
- The phrase "it's not my job" is not part of the vernacular. People are readily willing to do what is needed for their peers and the organization.
- Individuals take accountability for both good and bad outcomes leading to greater staff ownership, learning from mistakes, and greater overall quality.
- A laser-beam focus on being the 'best' is exemplified at all levels of the organization.

Service is Job One: The central focus of all efforts is to provide unparalleled service.

- Strong and shared service standards put patients first and are inclusive of patient's families, physicians and colleagues.
- Clear and shared core values are present and exemplified in daily actions.
- Patient satisfaction/putting patients first is clearly the top priority.
- A defined set of service standards and behavioral expectations are explained during the hiring process and often as part of the interview process candidates are required to read and commit to these standards even prior to a job offer.
- Service recovery occurs at the bedside/point of contact and is supported by the culture of ownership and individual accountability.

Constant Recognition & Community Support: Constant recognition and appreciation of staff by leadership and of staff for one another through both formal and informal means.

- Celebrations are a central part of organizational life.
- Staff understands the value of their organization's place in the community and plays significant roles in community outreach, ensuring their facility is experienced both as a quality hospital AND as a resource center for the community they serve.
- Facility logo wear and other gifts are provided to show constant appreciation for a job well done. People wear these items in their communities as a strong example of facility pride.

Solid (Physician) Relationships: Collaborative relationships between all members of the facility family were central to organizational success.

- Strong relationships exist between leaders, employees and physicians.
- There is a strong service focus on physicians and in return physicians take ownership for facility outcomes and accountability for their behaviors.
- Senior leadership is willing to address issues of challenging behavior with physicians and physicians also 'self-police', addressing behavior among members of the medical staff.

Study Implications

The initial study was taken one step beyond identifying the characteristics of high performers to determine the impact of the findings on actual organizational performance. To do this, a "hard results" comparison was conducted between the high performers in the study and a second group whose performance using the same selection criteria, ranked them at the opposite end of the spectrum in performance. Comparisons were run over the three-year period of the study (2002-2004) and the numbers revealed in some interesting ways the potential that the "soft stuff" had in helping drive "hard results". The most significant results are shared in the figures below.

High performing facilities had significantly higher employee engagement scores (Figure 13); having over 4 more engaged employees for every one at the low performers. Gallup, a leading researcher in employee engagement, has shown that engaged employees are more productive employees. Engaged employees are more profitable, more customer-focused, safer, and more likely to withstand temptations to leave (Coffman, 2002).

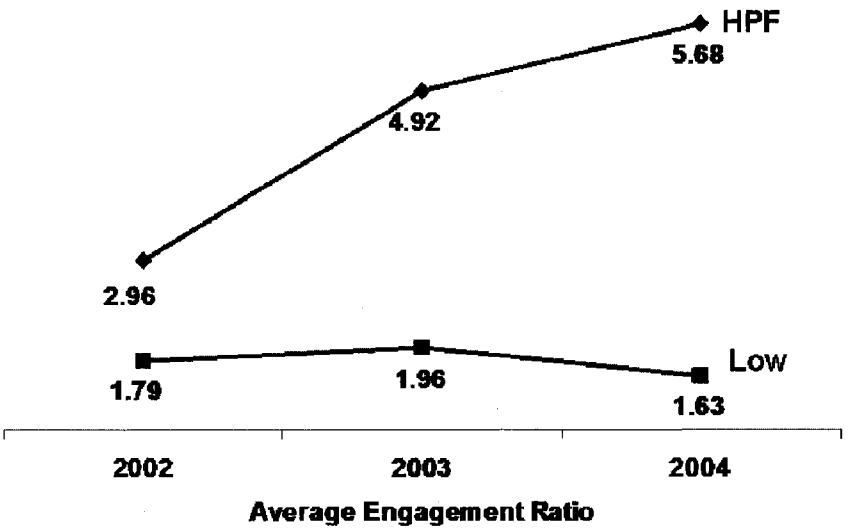

Figure 13. Employee Engagement Comparison

High performing facilities were also found to have a significantly greater retention of employees, with a seven percent gap in turnover between high and low performers (Figure 14). There are significant costs associated with turnover in organizations from conservative estimates for a percentage of salary to as much as two times an individual's pay. Regardless of the measure you choose, it has been shown that there are significant financial and cultural implications to turnover in any organization.

A third measure and perhaps the most significant for those financially-minded readers, is the comparison of margins (Figure 15). We based this measure on earnings before depreciation, income tax and amortization as a percent of net revenue (EDBITA % Net Revenue). High performers were found to have around five percent higher margins on average than the low performers over the period of the study. This was exhibited in solid top line revenue generation through the providing of facilities in which physicians chose to practice and patients chose for care. It also showed up in effective expense management driven by greater staff efficiencies which were supported by a commitment to open communication, service and quality.

The "so what" about the "soft stuff" ultimately becomes a "hard results" conversation about dollars and cents. The results above are just an example of the impact a high performance culture had in driving productivity through healthy engaged cultures, managing costs by reducing turnover, and showing efficiencies in driving higher margins.

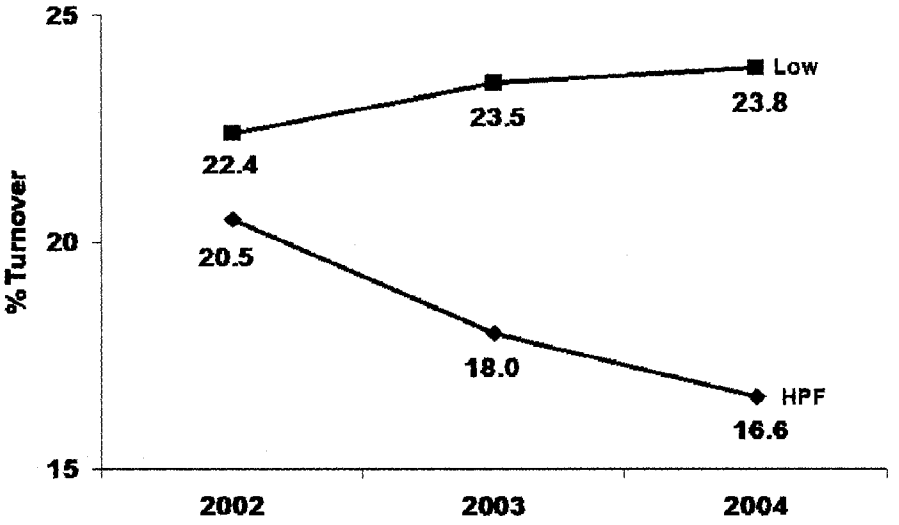

Figure 14. Turnover Comparison

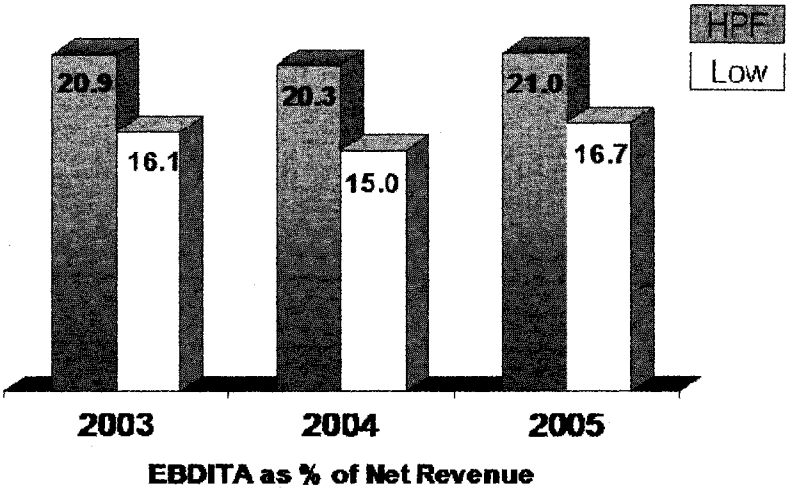

Figure 15. Margin Comparison

Appendix B: Research Interview Protocol

Introduction:

- Discuss process, confidentiality, recording
- Provide brief background of the HPF Study, criteria used to select and define 'high performance' facilities.
- Any questions, concerns or clarifications needed

Questions:

Why do you think your facility was originally selected as a High Performing Facility?

What are the top five factors you believe have allowed your facility to both achieve and sustain a level of high performance over the last 5 years?

If you were to rank these factors from most influential to least influential on achieving and sustaining high performance how would you rank them?

Let's dig deeper into the top 2-3 factors you identified. Tell me the story about [factor 1/2/3].

- What were its causes?
- Who was influential in leading, initiating, supporting it? What key individuals or roles?
- What were people thinking, feeling, or saying in its support?
- What new concepts/ideas/processes were introduced?
- What specific actions/activities took place in your facility to support it?
- What allowed it to take root, flourish and be sustained over time?

Would you say your facility made an intentional change in becoming a high performing facility? Tell me about the change, from catalyzing event or other cause that sparked it, or if not intentional, tell me about what was happening at your facility to move in this direction.

- Tell me about the time you first became aware of this change?
- Who led, initiated, supported it? What key individuals or roles?
- What new mindsets, processes, phrases emerged in the process?
- What specific actions/activities took place in your facility to support it?
- How quickly did the change occur? Tell me about how you knew a change was underway and how you knew it was complete.
- What allowed it to take root, flourish and be sustained over time?

Tell me about how the way people talk with one another and talk about the facility has shifted over the last 5 years (during this period of becoming a high performing facility)?

- How have the key words/phrases/sayings/metaphors that people use changed during this period? What are they? Which have had the greatest impact / had the most influence on "who" your organization is today?
- Tell me about when you first noticed these words in use?
- Did the shift occur before or after the [factors] occurred or changes took place?
- Where did the shift originate from - leadership, staff, specific individual?
- How has this language helped in creating/sustaining high performance?
- What words/phrases/sayings/metaphors represent who your facility is today and/or are core to your organizational culture?

Can you think of one story or vignette that is representative of your facility and best exemplifies who you are as a high performance facility?

What have we not discussed today that would be helpful in painting a complete picture of your facility?

Appendix C: Sample Supercategory Tracking

Challenge The Status Quo / Agile									
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Category
Ability to change directions	1								Ability to evolve
Ability to evolve								1	Ability to evolve
Adjust as you go						1			Challenge the status quo
Agile				1					Ready for change
Agility				1					Ready for change
Asking for change					1				Ability to evolve
Challenge the status quo	1								Challenge the status quo
Challenge us	1								Challenge the status quo
Change is progress							1		Ability to evolve
Change to remain competitive	1								Ability to evolve
Change what needs to be changed						1			Work in progress
Exploration/curiosity/ inquisitiveness					12				Work in progress
Flexibility								1	Ready for change
Flexible staff	5								Ability to evolve
Good programs								1	Have tools to meet expectations
Have tools to meet expectations								1	Have tools to meet expectations
Innovative							1		Make changes quickly
Inventive for new ideas					1				Make changes quickly
Keep the old stuff fresh						1			Work in progress
Keeping it fresh		3							Work in progress
Keeping pace with technology	2								Have tools to meet expectations
Make changes quickly	1								Make changes quickly
Making changes based on employee/patient input								3	Ability to evolve
Move the org forward	1								Challenge the status quo
Nimble					1				Work in progress
Not just one path						1			Ready for change
Not the norm /something different here					1				Challenge the status quo
Nursing practice standards					1				Have tools to meet expectations

Open to change	3				1				Ability to evolve
Open to change/new ideas							1		Make changes quickly
Open to experimentation							1		Make changes quickly
Quality improvement			1						Have tools to meet expectations
Rapid change					1				Make changes quickly
Rapid change	1								Make changes quickly
Ready for change	1								Ready for change
Real changes, real time					1				Ability to evolve
Recognizing the need to keep pace	2								Ability to evolve
Respond in real time	1								Make changes quickly
Think of new ways		1							Work in progress
Variety		1							Challenge the status quo
Want to be better/ challenge status quo						1			Challenge the status quo
Willing to change as required / ability to change / adapt	1							1	Ability to evolve
Willing to do what it takes (across levels)								1	Work in progress
Work in progress	1								Work in progress

Appendix D: Key Theme Master Sheet—Sample

Key Theme	Staff Connectedness and Care	342
Super categories	Care About Each Other / Respect One Another Work Together	
Categories	• High level of respect • People / caliber of… • Respect one another • Treat other as we want to be treated • Accountability • Balance • Care above all else • Cohesiveness • Care about one another	• Strong staff connection • I walk beside you • Fun Collaboration (across areas) / interaction • Get it done together • People working together • Work together/collaboration • Team effort • Looking at the whole picture

Codes

Accountability (x2)
Accountability (at all levels)
Address issues directly with one another / talk about problems directly
Addressed cross departmental bickering
All goes back to the employee
Avoid silos
Balance
Believe in one another
Brainstorm together
Break down silos / interdepartmental communication
Building relationships / develop relationships
Camaraderie
Care about one another
Care for one another (in all roles)
Caring (x2)
Caring / care for one another / care values
Caring for one another
Change in relationships between dept
Closeness/relationships
Cohesiveness
Collaboration (across areas) / interaction
Collaboration, not blame
Collaborative process improvement / collectively address and solve problems
Colleagues and friends
Commitment to each other
Communication between/interchangeable leadership
Community outreach / service
Connected no matter the size
Connection between people
Connection of staff
Cover each other's butts
Cover for each other
Cover for one another
Cross department work / work across departments
Cross departmental leadership
Cross departmental work
Departments help each other out
Desire to be a team
Do it every day
Do the right thing (x2)
Doing things for the right reasons
Don't take it personally
Don't tolerate disrespect – staff or docs
Employee responsibility
Employees appreciate need to be competitive
Employees/people
Everyone knows everyone
Everyone willing to pitch in
Family (x2)
Family / family-like
Family, take care of one another
Family-oriented
Focus on people's desire to be good
Follow-through
Foundation of (expected) behaviors
Friends and coworkers
Fun (x3)
Fun outside of work
Fundamental behaviors
Get it done together
Good relationships
Got to be measurable
Grow because of people here
Healthy competition
Help from above and below
High level of respect
Hold each other accountable/accountability
I walk beside you
Interdisciplinary
Interdisciplinary team
Internal customer service
Involvement at all levels
Know everyone
Know who you are working with
Level of accountability
Looking at the whole picture
Make it personal
Managers reinforce expected behavior
Multidisciplinary
Mutual support
Natural team work
No blame cross departments
No hidden agendas
No it's not my job
No it's not my job
No pointing fingers
Not just about money / not just financial
Open and honest
Openness
People / caliber of…
People are go-getters
People are my friends
People care for one another
People care for one another e.g. Funerals/family crisis
People connect outside of work
People cover for one another
People pick up the slack
People say hello to one another
People talk to each other
People talk to one another (across hierarchy)
People willing to help out one another
People working together
Personal interactions
Personal relationships
Positive attitude
Positive staff interaction
Professional respect
Pull together in emergencies
Pulling together as a team
Real life
Recognize one another
Recognize the human condition
Relationships (x2)
Rely on each other
Respect (x4)
Respect – for individual and skills
Respect begets respect
Respect one another
Respected
Respecting other people
Sense of community
Share staff resources openly
Staff always willing to help
Staff connection
Staff holds each other accountable
Staff relationships
Staff support of one another
Staff takes care of each other
Strong staff connection
Support one another across facility
Support each other – across departments
Support each other when things get rough
Support of leaders outside facility
Support one another
Systems perspective / broad perspective
Take care of one another
Taking care of one another and the patient
Team effort
Team focus
Team/working together/teamwork
Team-centered
Teamwork (x2)
Treat everyone equally / fairly
Treat others as we want to be treated
Treat others as you want to be treated
Trust (x4)
Trust / building trust
Unspoken language of pure attitude
Watching each other's back
Way people interact
We don't eat our young
Welcoming environment
Whole team effort – systemic service?
Willing to do what is needed
Willing to help across departments
Willing to work beside them
Work across departments
Work as team (x2)
Work as team
Work out issues with one another
Work together/collaboration
Working as a team/work together
Work-life balance
You don't meet a stranger

References

Adler, P. S. (1988). Managing flexible automation. *California Management Review, 30*(3), 34.

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. (2006) (Fourth Ed.). Houghton Mifflin Company.

Anderson, D. L. (2005). "What you'll say is. . . ": represented voice in organizational change discourse. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 18*(1), 63-77.

Barczak, G., Smith, C., & Wilemon, D. (1987). Managing large-scale organizational change. *Organizational Dynamics, 16*(2), 23-35.

Bartunek, J. M., Rynes, S. L., & Ireland, R. D. (2006). What makes management research interesting, and why does it matter? *Academy of Management Journal, 49*(1), 9-15.

Beer, M. (2001). How to develop an organization capable of sustained high performance: Embrace the drive for results-capability development paradox. *Organizational Dynamics, 29*(4), 233-247.

Beer, M., & Walton, A. E. (1987). Organization change and development. In *Annual Review of Psychology* (Vol. 38, pp. 339-367).

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday.

Bergson, H. (1998). *Creative evolution.* London: Dover Publications; Unabridged edition (originally published by Henry Holt and Company, 1911).

Bertalanffy, L. V. (1950). The theory of open systems in physics and biology. *Science, 3.*

Blegen, H. M. (1968). The system approach to the study of organizations. *Acta Sociologica, 11*(1-2), 12-30.

Bohm, D. (1996). *On dialogue*. London: Routledge.

Bouwen, R., & Fry, R. (1996). Facilitation group development: Interventions for a relational and contextual construction. In M. A. West (Ed.), *Handbook of Work Group Psychology*: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Bradford, D. L., & Burke, W. W. (2004). Is OD in crisis? *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 40*(4), 369-373.

Brown, S. L., & Eisenhardt, K. M. (1997). The art of continuous change: Linking complexity theory and time-paced evolution in relentlessly shifting Organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 42*(1), 1-34.

Burke, W. W. (2002). *Organization change: Theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Burke, W. W., & Litwin, G. H. (1992). A causal model of organization performance and change. *Journal of Management, 18*(3), 532-545.

Bushe, G. R., & Kassam, A. F. (2005). When is appreciative inquiry transformational? *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 41*(2), 161-181.

Calori, R., Baden-Fuller, C., & Hunt, B. (2000). Managing change at Novotel: Back to the future. *Long Range Planning, 33*(6), 779-804.

Cameron, K. S. (1986). Effectiveness as paradox: Consensus and conflict in conceptions of organizational effectiveness. *Management Science, 32*(5), 539-553.

Cameron, K. S., Dutton, J. E., & Quinn, R. E. (2003). Foundations of positive organization scholarship. In K. S. Cameron, J. E. Dutton & R. E. Quinn (Eds.), *Positive organizational scholarship: Foundations of a new discipline*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Cameron, K. S., & Quinn, R. E. (1988). Organization paradox and transformation. In R. E. Quinn & K. S. Cameron (Eds.), *Paradox and Transformation: Toward a theory of change in organization and management* (pp. 1-18). Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.

Chia, R. (1999). A "rhizomic" model of organizational change and transformation: Perspective from a metaphysics of change. *British Journal of Management, 10*(3), 209-227.

Coffman (2002). The high cost of disengaged employees. *Journal*. Retrieved from http://gmj.gallup.com/content/247/High-Cost-Disengaged-Employees.aspx

Cohen, H. B. (1998). The performance paradox. *Academy of Management Executive, 12*(3), 30-40.

Collins, J. (2001). *Good to Great*. New York: HarperCollins.

Cooperrider, D. L., & Sekerka, L. E. (2003). Toward a theory of positive organization change. In K. S. Cameron, J. E. Dutton & R. E. Quinn (Eds.), *Positive organization scholarship*. San-Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Cooperrider, D. L., & Srivastva, S. (2005). Appreciative inquiry in organizational life. In D. l. Cooperrider, P. F. S. Jr., T. F. Yaeger & D. Whitney (Eds.), *Appreciative Inquiry: Foundations in positive organization development* (pp. 61-103). Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing.

Copley, F. B. (1923). *Frederick W. Taylor: Father of scientific management*. New York: Harper & Row.

Coward, H. (1996). Taoism and Jung: Synchronicity and the self. *Philosophy East & West, 46*(4), 477.

Cresswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (Second Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Davis, M. S. (1971). That's interesting!: Towards a phenomenology of sociology and a sociology of phenomenology. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences, 1*(2), 309-344.

Dell, P. (1981). Paradox redux. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 7*, 127-134.

Drucker, P. (1995). *Managing in a time of great change*. New York: Truman Talley Books/Dutton.

Durlabhji, S. (2004). The Tao of organization behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics, 52*(4), 401-409.

Eisenhardt, K. M. (2000). Paradox, spirals, ambivalence: The new language of change and pluralism. *Academy of Management Review, 25*(4), 703-705.

Evans, P. A. L. (1992). Balancing continuity and change: The constructive tension in individual and organizational development. In S. Srivastva & R. E. Fry (Eds.), *Executive and Organizational Continuity: Managing the Paradoxes of Stability and Change* (pp. 253-283). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Fiol, C. M. (2002). Capitalizing on paradox: The role of language in transforming organizational identities. *Organization Science, 13*(6), 653-666.

Ford, J., & Backoff, R. (1988). Organizational change in and out of dualities and paradox. In R. E. Quinn & K. S. Cameron (Eds.), *Paradox and Transformation: Toward a theory of change in organization and management* (pp. 81-121). Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.

Ford, J. D. (1999). Conversations and the epidemiology of change. In R. W. Woodman & W. A. Pasmore (Eds.), *Research in organizational change and development* (Vol. 12, pp. 1-39). Stamford, CT: JAI Press.

Ford, J. D., & Ford, L. W. (1995). The role of conversations in producing intentional change in organizations. *Academy of Management Review, 20*(3), 541-570.

Friedman, T. L. (2005). *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century.* New York: Picador.

Gergen, K. (2008). *Workshop on social construction, relational theory and organization change*. Wallingford, PA.

Gergen, K. J. (1978). Toward generative theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 36*(11), 1344-1360.

Gergen, K. J. (1999). *An invitation to social construction.* London: Sage Publications.

Gergen, K. J., & Walter, R. (1998). Real/izing the relational. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships, 15*(1), 110.

Gergen, M., & Gergen, K. J. (Eds.). (2003). *Social construction: A reader*. London: Sage.

Gersick, C. J. G. (1991). Revolutionary change theories: A multilevel exploration of the punctuated equilibrium paradigm. *Academy of Management Review, 16*(1), 10.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research* Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Guerra, D. (2005). *Super performance: New profound knowledge for corporate leaders*. Houston: Old Live Oak Books

Hardy, C., Lawrence, T. B., & Grant, D. (2005). Discourse and collaboration: The role of conversations and collective identity. *Academy of Management Review, 30*(1), 58-77.

Homans, G. C. (1951/1992). *The human group*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Janstch, E. (1975). *Design for evolution: Self-organization and planning in the life of human systems*. New York: Braziller.

Jensen, B. (2000). *Simplicity: The new competitive advantage in a world of more, better, faster*. New York: Perseus Publishing.

Karcher, S. (1999). Jung, the Tao, and the classic of change. *Journal of Religion & Health, 38*(4), 287.

Katz, D., & Kahn, R. L. (1966). *The social psychology of organizations*. New York: Wiley.

Kimberly, J. R., & Bouchikhi, H. (1995). The dynamics of organizational development and change: How the past shapes the present and constrains the future. *Organization Science, 6*(1), 9-18.

Kofman, F., & Senge, P. M. (1993). Communities of commitment: The heart of learning organizations. *Organizational Dynamics, 22*(2), 4-23.

Kotter, J. P. (1996). *Leading change*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Kuhn, T. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Lawler, E. E., & Worley, C. G. (2006). *Built to change: How to achieve sustained organizational Effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Levin, I. M. (2000). Vision revisited. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 36*(1), 91.

Lewis, M. W. (2000). Exploring paradox: Toward a more comprehensive guide. *Academy of Management Review, 25*(4), 760-776.

Ludema, J. D., & DiVirgilio, M. E. (2007). The role of energy-in-conversation in leading organizational change. In W. A. Pasmore & R. W. Woodman (Eds.), *Research in Organizational Change and Development* (Vol. 16, pp. 1-42).

Luscher, L. S., Lewis, M., & Ingram, A. (2006). The social construction of organizational change paradoxes. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 19*(4), 491-502.

Marsh, S., & Macalpine, M. (1999). The search for reconciling insights: A "really useful" tool for managing paradox. *Journal of Management Development, 18*(7/8), 642.

Marshak, R. J. (1993a). Lewin meets Confucius: A review of the OD model of change. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 29*(4), 393-415.

Marshak, R. J. (1993b). Managing the metaphors of change. *Organizational Dynamics, 22*(1), 44-56.

Marshak, R. J. (2002). Changing the language of change: How new contexts and concepts are challenging the ways we think and talk about organizational change. *Strategic Change, 11*(5), 279-286.

Marshak, R. J. (2004). Morphing: The leading edge of organizational change in the twenty-first century. *Organization Development Journal, 22*(3), 8-21.

McGregor, D. (1960). *Human side of enterprise*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Morgan, G. (1997). *Images of organization* (rev ed.). London: Sage.

Orlikowski, W. J. (1996). Improvising organizational transformation over time: A situated change perspective. *Information Systems Research, 7*(1), 63-92.

Pascale, R. (1990). *Managing on the edge: How successful companies use conflict to stay ahead.* New York: Simon and Schuster

Peters, T. J., & Waterman, R. H. (1982). *In search of excellence: Lessons from America's best-run companies* New York: Harper & Row.

Poole, M. S., & Van de Ven, A. H. (1989). Using paradox to build management and organization theories. *Academy of Management Review, 14*(4), 562-578.

Porras, J. I., & Silvers, R. C. (1991). Organization development and transformation. *Annual Review of Psychology, 42*(1), 51.

Porras, J. L., & Robertson, P. J. (1992). Organizational development: Theory, practice & research. In M. D. Dunnette & L. M. Hough (Eds.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (2nd ed., Vol. 3, pp. 719-822). Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Purser, R. E., & Petranker, J. (2005). Unfreezing the future. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 41*(2), 182-203.

Quinn, R. E. (1988). *Beyond rational management: Mastering the paradoxes and competing demands of high performance*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Quinn, R. E., & Cameron, K. S. (1988a). Paradox and transformation: A framework for viewing organization and management. In R. E. Quinn & K. S. Cameron (Eds.), *Paradox and Transformation: Toward a theory of change in organization and management*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.

Quinn, R. E., & Cameron, K. S. (Eds.). (1988b). *Paradox and transformation: Toward a theory of change in organization and management*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.

Quinn, R. W., & Dutton, J. E. (2005). Coordination as energy-in-conversation. *Academy of Management Review, 30*(1), 36-57.

Random House Unabridged Dictionary. (2006). New York, NY: Random House, Inc.

Robertson, P. J., Roberts, D. R., & Porras, J. I. (1993). An evaluation of a model of planned organization change. *Research in Organization Change and Development, 7*, 1-39.

Romanelli, E., & Tushman, M. L. (1994). Organizational transformation as punctuated equilibrium: An empirical test. *Academy of Management Journal, 37*(5), 1141.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (Second Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Schumacher, E. F. (1977). *A guide for the perplexed.* New York: Harper & Row.

Shafer, R. A. (2001). Crafting a human resource strategy to foster organizational agility: A case study. *Human Resource Management, 3*, 197-211.

Smith, K. K., & Berg, D. N. (1987). *Paradoxes of group life: Understanding conflict, paralysis, and movement in group dynamics.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Strauss, D. F. M. (2002). The scope and limitation of Von Bertalanffy's systems theory. *South African Journal of Philosophy, 21*(3), 163.

Suddaby, R. (2006). From the editors: What grounded theory is not. *Academy of Management Journal,* pp. 633-642,

Sun, H. (1999). Yin-Yang theory and its implications for management. *International Journal of Management, 16*(3), 439.

Tsoukas, H., & Chia, R. (2002). On organizational becoming: Rethinking organizational change. *Organization Science, 13*(5), 567-582.

Tushman, M. L., & O'Reilly, C. A. (1996). Ambidextrous organizations: Managing evolutionary and revolutionary change. *California Management Review, 38*(4), 8.

Tushman, M. L., & Romanelli, E. (1985). Organizational revolution: A metamorphosis model of convergence and reorientation. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 7*, 171-222.

Vaill, P. (1989). *Managing as a performing art*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Van de Ven, A., & Poole, M. S. (1988). Paradoxical requirements for a theory of organizational change. In R. E. Quinn & K. S. Cameron (Eds.), *Paradox and Transformation: Toward a theory of change in organization and management* (pp. 19-63). Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.

Volberda, H. W. (1996). Toward the flexible form: How to remain vital in hypercompetitive environments. *Organization Science, 7*(4), 359.

Weick, K. E. (1982). Management of organizational change among loosely coupled elements. In P. S. Goodman & Associates (Eds.), *Change in organizations: New perspectives in theory, research, and practice* (pp. 375-408). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Weick, K. E., & Quinn, R. E. (1999). Organizational change and development. In J. T. Spence, J. M. Darley & D. J. Foss (Eds.), *Annual Review of Psychology* (Vol. 50, pp. 361-386). Palo Alto, CA: Annual Reviews.

Weisbord, M. R. (2004). *Productive workplaces revisited: Dignity, meaning, community in the 21st century*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical investigations*. London: Blackwell.

Wolf, J. A. (2008). Health care, heal thyself! An exploration of what drives (and sustains) high performance in organizations today. *Performance Improvement, 47*(5), 38-45.

Woodman, R. W. (1993). Observations from the field of organizational change and development from the lunatic fringe. *Organization Development Journal, 11*(2).