9. On the Radar? Gendered Considerations in Australia-Based Mining Companies' Sustainability Reporting, 2004–2007

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Introduction

Australia-based mining companies¹ are inarguably devoting more attention and funds to sustainable development—certain companies now contribute one per cent of pre-tax profits to community programs and most undertake some form of sustainable development programs. The social and environmental impacts of mining, however, remain significant and are frequently negative (Atkinson and Community Aid Abroad Australia 1998; Auty 1993; Smith 2008). Academics, mining company representatives, governments and non-government organisations have devoted great attention to recording and analysing mining's impacts (For just a few of many examples, see: Emberson-Bain 1994; Klubock 1998; Vittori et al. 2006; Jones et al. 2007; Walton and Barnett, 2008). The book's focus on 'Mining, Gender and Sustainable Livelihoods' directs our attention to this range of issues—from land ownership and management to changing family or community structures, to increased prostitution or the spread of HIV/AIDS—mining has significant and abiding gendered impacts (Storey 2001; Kunanayagam 2003; Vittori et al. 2006).²

Often, when we consider actions taken to address mining's gendered impacts, we think of the work of non-government organisations, local governments or intergovernmental organisations, such as the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). This chapter takes a different perspective by looking at how mining companies themselves understand and address gender issues.

1 Australia-based mining companies are defined as those companies which are either Australian Stock Exchange listed or which have regional headquarters within Australia, combined with significant Australian and Pacific operations. All companies studied in this chapter are referred to as 'major players' in Australia by IbisWorld (2007).

2 I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to discuss an earlier version of this work at the ANU/World Bank *Mining, Gender and Sustainable Livelihoods* workshop, 6–7 November 2008. Special thanks to Dr Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt and Ms Sophie Dowling for their organisation and leadership of the workshop. Thanks also go to my Ph.D. supervisor, Dr Tim Marjoribanks, University of Melbourne, for his helpful comments on various versions of this chapter.

It examines the extent to which Australia-based mining companies report on gendered issues and how those issues are addressed under the auspices of 'sustainable development' or 'corporate social responsibility' (CSR) programs. To do so, the chapter analyses four years of sustainability reports from five leading Australia-based mining companies to create a snapshot of these companies' contemporary conceptions about and actions on gender issues. The content of sustainability reports is further explored through the application of auditing literature, which helps us to theorise why mining companies address the issues they do, in the ways that they do, through sustainability reporting.

Three central questions shape the study. Firstly, what are Australia-based mining companies putting into the public domain about gender issues, relative to their operations? Secondly, what does this information tell us about the ways in which companies are approaching, prioritising and engaging with gender issues? Thirdly, why might companies address gender issues in certain ways?

The study employs content and discourse analysis techniques to provide a baseline measure of the extent to which gendered considerations are 'on the radar' of Australia-based mining companies. The content analysis provides insight into the degree to which these companies are explicitly incorporating gender issues into their sustainability programs. The discourse analysis further reveals the ways in which gender is understood, approached and situated within sustainable development programs. This analysis also identifies company interests and priority concerns, including key shareholder and stakeholder concerns.

This chapter asserts that sustainability reports reveal a cyclical relationship between internal reporting indicators, voluntary reporting initiatives, mining companies' sustainability programs and sustainability reporting. Specifically, it is suggested that the paucity of gender indicators within commonly used voluntary reporting initiatives, such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), contributes to a cycle wherein gender does not make it onto sustainability program agendas, partly because it is an issue that does not appear to require reporting. In other words, limited gendered reporting indicators arguably influence the prioritisation of gender issues on mining companies' sustainable development agendas, which contributes to a lack of gender-focused sustainability programs, which normalises the marginalisation of gender issues; and so the cycle continues.³

3 Although reporting indicators appear first in the way the cycle is described here, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine where the cycle begins. What is clear, however, is that a relationship between these factors exists yet remains relatively unstudied.

Growth of Sustainability Reporting in Mining

Increasingly, Australian mining companies seek to address the social, environmental and economic impacts of their operations on communities through ‘corporate social responsibility’ or ‘sustainable development’⁴ programs and policies. Sustainable development activities range from adoption of quasi-governmental roles (for example the provision of water sanitation infrastructure) to employee giving programs. These programs frequently target areas of perceived community need (such as HIV/AIDS education) or attempt to address socio-cultural issues (such as recognition of sacred sites on mining lease land). Since the early 2000s, many leading mining companies worldwide have produced stand-alone sustainability reports,⁵ usually released alongside traditional annual reports. These reports detail companies’ sustainable development work and cover a wide range of environmental, occupational health and safety, community health and social issues. In many instances, the reports are used by companies as a vehicle for ‘making the business case’ for sustainable development to company shareholders and other key stakeholders (Wheeler and Elkington 2001).

Sustainability reports are also used as a kind of ‘offensive’ public relations tool, wherein companies proactively take the opportunity to disseminate information about the work they are undertaking to mitigate negative environmental and social impacts of mining operations.⁶ Before sustainability reports were commonplace, it was especially unusual for companies to report on their community activities at operation sites and relatively unusual for them to report on their environmental activities. It was more likely that information would be released reactively, principally when there was an environmental or social crisis requiring response (Wheeler and Elkington 2001). With the advent of sustainability reporting, mining companies (and major corporations in many other industries) created a medium through which to provide regular disclosure of both positive and negative effects of operations on communities

4 The term ‘corporate social responsibility’ was first used in the early 1950s and remains highly contested. Mining companies tend to use the terms ‘corporate responsibility’, ‘sustainable development’, and ‘sustainability’ to refer to those policies, programs and activities which aim to mitigate negative social and environmental impacts of their operations, or to make a positive contribution to the communities in which they work. For purposes of this chapter, and in alignment with the majority of reports examined here, the term ‘sustainable development’ will be used.

5 These reports come under a range of names, including: ‘Health, Safety, Environment and Community (HSEC) Reports’, ‘Sustainability Reports’ and ‘Corporate Responsibility Reports’. Regardless of title, these reports hold in common a focus on environmental, occupational health and safety, and community issues (as opposed to the more financially focused nature of ‘annual reports’). The term ‘sustainability reports’ will be used throughout the chapter to refer to any reports falling under this definition.

6 It is beyond the scope of this chapter to enter into the debate over whether sustainability reports (and related sustainability programs) are mere public relations exercises, however, it is important to note that there still remains much heated debate over the sincerity of company-run sustainable development programs throughout many industries, not just mining (see for example Frynas 2005: 176).

and the environment. For the purposes of this study, the reports also provide an important evidence-base for examining the social and environmental concerns companies prioritise and, specifically, the way they understand and attend to gender issues.

What Does Reporting on Sustainable Development Look Like?

Readers unfamiliar with the field of CSR may wonder why sustainability reports are such a big deal, and, more importantly, what do these reports actually look like? For the most part, sustainability reports are written by corporate communications departments and present a carefully designed, professionally produced image, similar in appearance to the more common annual financial reports. Although there is no formalised or legislated approach to sustainability reporting, reports across industries exhibit key similarities. These reporting conventions have developed in large part because sustainability reporting has become an increasingly competitive aspect of corporate relations (KPMG International and SustainAbility 2008). Sustainability reports are being used to communicate about corporations' competitive advantages, leading-edge practices and risk management in non-financial areas (SustainAbility and UNEP 2006). The use of popular voluntary initiatives, such as the GRI, to guide reporting has also shaped reporting conventions.

Sustainability reports are publicly available documents and are increasingly accessible online (Wheeler and Elkington 2001). The reports are generally structured around the three components of the 'triple bottom line': economic, environmental and social concerns (Elkington 1997). Contents are also heavily based on whichever indicators a company deems relevant⁷ and usually present a wide range of charts and graphs detailing the company's performance against internally and externally set voluntary performance indicators. Much of the information provided is quantified, and text is accompanied by full colour photographs which, in mining companies' reports, tend to depict mine sites, workers dressed in safety gear using equipment, and community members undertaking their usual lives or participating in company-run programs. Often, social issues are presented through case studies (Blowfield 2007), as opposed to quantified graphs, detailing the experiences of individuals or community groups, relative to the company's activities.⁸ Reports may be guided by a range

7 Unlike annual financial reporting where performance indicators are legally defined through financial auditing requirements, the indicators used in sustainability reports are most often part of voluntary reporting initiatives or internal, company policy documents.

8 Interestingly, Blowfield (2007) argues that the reliance on case studies in sustainability reports has the effect of discouraging companies from undertaking more rigorous assessments.

of voluntary principles or indicators, and in some instances, companies may choose to have their performance against these indicators accredited by an external assurance agency. With this description of sustainability reports in mind, we can now think about how best to tap into the information they offer, particularly in relation to gender issues.

Method: Content and Discourse Analysis

This study adopts content and discourse analysis methods to explore the ways and extent to which gender issues are presented in Australia-based mining companies' sustainability reports. The combination of quantitative content analysis with qualitative discourse analysis provides a deeper understanding of the reports' focus and substance. Importantly, both content and discourse analyses focus on text as a site for creating socio-political meaning and revealing agendas and priorities (Eels 1956; Esterberg 2002; Neuendorf 2002). These methods are therefore used together to explore which gender issues Australia-based mining companies include under the mantle of sustainable development, and to unpack the narratives being used to communicate about these issues.

Purposive Sample

This study examined a total of 18 sustainability reports produced by five leading Australia-based mining companies between 2004 and 2007. The sample is not random, nor does it attempt to be wholly generalisable. Instead, a purposive sample was used to construct a data set which allows exploration of sustainability reporting patterns amongst leading Australia-based mining companies. A purposive sample is the most appropriate sample type for this study as it facilitates construction of a data set which meets the specific needs and aims of the research (Neuendorf 2002).

The purposive sample was chosen based on several criteria aimed at creating a data set of mining sustainability reports which represent current reporting practice for Australia and which have comparable sustainable development programs. All companies studied were classified as 'major players' by the 2007 IbisWorld 'Mining in Australia: Industry Report', which is a key summary of business indicators for the mining industry.⁹ All companies are either listed

⁹ I have purposefully chosen not to identify the companies analysed in this research. This is primarily related to the aim of the research. The objective here is to demonstrate what leading Australia-based mining companies are reporting about gender and how gender is narrativised throughout these reports. Naming the companies studied would likely result in politicisation of the research, shifting the focus away from the central issue of gender and onto concern over which companies have said what.

on the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX) and/or have regional headquarters and major operations within Australia and the Pacific, meaning they share similar investment in the Australian economy and operate within similar socio-geographic contexts. Since studies have shown that a company's size, location and ownership structure affect its ability to produce a sustainability report, with 'cost and resource constraints' cited as the major impediments to report production (Australian Department of the Environment and Heritage 2005), the companies chosen are also those most likely to be able to consistently invest in sustainability reporting now and into the future.¹⁰

The 18 sustainability reports which make up the data set included four reports from four companies (a subtotal of 16 reports) and another two reports from a fifth company (total data set of 18 reports). In the case of the fifth company, only two reports were available, as the selected company stopped publishing sustainability reports in 2006, moving instead to production of an annual 'sustainability report' website. The design and technical issues presented by the annual sustainability website meant that data for this company from 2006 and 2007 could not be comparably analysed against traditional reports. To maintain consistency of the data set, it was decided to forego the 2006 and 2007 data from this company.

Most companies produce both 'full' and 'summary' sustainability reports. Where full sustainability reports were significantly longer than 100 pages, and where summary reports were available, summary reports were coded in the interest of time constraints and to forestall 'coder fatigue' (Neuendorf 2002).¹¹ Summary reports present the key sustainability issues, as defined by companies, and therefore also offer insight into prioritisation of issues. In total, the content analysis examined 404 957 words or approximately 1157 pages of sustainability reporting. All content identified as referring to gender issues was then analysed through a qualitative discourse analysis.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is an exceptionally broad method, incorporating numerous possible approaches, including statistical, computer-automated, network mapping and linguistic techniques (Markoff et al. 2008). For the purposes of

¹⁰ The profitability and size of Australia-based mining companies accounts, in part, for the fact that 55 per cent of sustainability reports produced in Australia come from the mining and manufacturing sectors (Department of the Environment and Heritage 2005).

¹¹ In several instances, full sustainability reports were over 500 A4 pages long, making them unwieldy for content analysis. In fact, a recent KPMG International and SustainAbility (2008) survey found that of the majority public who do not read sustainability reports, 35 per cent indicate this is due to the reports being too lengthy or reporting websites too difficult to navigate.

this research, content analysis is defined as ‘any research technique for making inference by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics within text’ (Stone et. al. quoted in Markoff et al. 2008: 270). Despite varied definitions, most social scientists would agree that a content analysis is quantitative, ‘methodical’, and ‘systematic’, and employs specifically defined and carefully followed rules, such as that all text must be coded (Markoff *ibid.*).

In brief, content analysis usually consists of the researcher choosing a specific text or set of texts and creating a ‘content analysis dictionary’ or ‘coding frame’ through which to read and analyse those texts (Stone et al. 2008). The ‘language signs’ named in the coding frame may represent phrases or ideas (thematic content analysis) or a particular word (textual content analysis) (*ibid.*). This study employs both thematic and textual content analyses to provide a thorough reading of the sustainability reports. The textual content analysis included the word ‘women’ or variations thereof, such as ‘woman’, ‘female’, ‘females’, ‘girl’, and ‘girls’.

In relation to the thematic content analysis, the study explores both ‘manifest’ (readily observed themes consistently communicated in similar language) and ‘latent’ themes (Neuendorf 2002). The latent themes represent ‘unobserved concepts that cannot be measured directly but can be represented or measured by one or more indicators’ (Hair et. al. quoted in Neuendorf 2002: 23). Latent themes are particularly important for this analysis, as they allow intangible issues such as community-based gender issues to be coded. Definitions for both manifest and latent themes employed in the analysis are available in the coding frame (see Appendix 9-1).

Great effort was made to ensure that both thematic and textual code definitions have internal consistency and are mutually exclusive, and that data could be coded consistently across reports (Neuendorf 2002). An intercoder reliability check was performed on all gender-related codes, with a total percentage agreement of 0.84 for the thematic codes and 0.97 for the textual code. Reliability beyond chance agreement was also checked by using Cohen’s kappa. The Cohen’s kappa score of 0.72 demonstrates a good level of consistency in the coding frame (*ibid.*) (see Appendix 9-2 for full details of the intercoder reliability check).¹²

The creation of the coding frame is, in itself, an important part of the analysis. A coding frame must be constructed with ‘a view to testing one or more theories’ (Stone et al. 2008: 132), and should be mostly complete prior to undertaking the analysis. This *a priori* creation of the coding frame helps to maintain balance between ‘objectivity/intersubjectivity’ (Neuendorf 2002: 11). In other words, an *a priori* coding frame is based on knowledge deducted from prior research,

¹² My thanks to Dr Kay Cook of Deakin University in Melbourne for donating her time and expertise to test the intercoder reliability of my coding frame.

meaning the codes applied are not inordinately shaped by any one document being analysed. A priori construction of the coding frame does not mean, however, that all codes must be established prior to coding. In some instances, an 'emergent dictionary' of select terms or themes may be established through direct interaction with the texts being studied (ibid: 129).

The coding frame for this analysis was largely developed a priori, with all broad and most intermediate level categories determined prior to reading the reports, and more specific categories defined iteratively through familiarity with the reports' contents. For example, 'environmental issues' was predefined as a broad category within the frame, while the more specific 'product stewardship' was created to reflect the reports' content in greater detail. A priori codes were developed deductively from existing documents and research relevant to this study. These documents included studies of mining's social and environmental impacts (for example Macdonald and Rowland 2002; Banks 2003; Vittori et al. 2006; Smith 2008), corporate social responsibility/sustainable development literature (for example Hilson 2000; Moon et al. 2003; Hopkins 2007; Hutchins et al. 2007) and voluntary reporting initiative frameworks (for example IOS 2004; GRI 2006). Sustainability reports from other industries were also examined to situate the coding frame within relevant sustainable development discourses (see BP 2006; Johnson and Johnson 2006; Chevron 2007; Citigroup 2007; ConocoPhillips 2007).

It is important to note that the gender issues explored here made up an important component of a much broader content analysis of these same sustainability reports.¹³ It is not the aim of this chapter, however, to discuss the results of the full content analysis. Instead, I wish to focus primarily on the gendered aspects revealed by application of the coding frame.¹⁴ At times, however, findings from the broader analysis will be employed to illustrate the ways in which gender is located within a broader sustainability discourse. The selective study of gender through content analysis, like that presented here, is also common amongst other studies, especially those examining mass media texts. Indeed, this chapter's focus on gender reflects a trend among users of content analysis methods, with Nuendorf (2002: 201) noting, 'Perhaps no substantive area has been more frequently studied [through content analysis] across all the mass media than that of the roles of males and females'.

13 The broader content analysis, of which the analysis of gender issues is an important part, was undertaken for the purposes of a Ph.D. research project (in progress) examining the social effects of mining within a corporate social responsibility framework.

14 The full coding frame identifies sustainability issues, including environmental, social and economic effects of mining. The coding frame also examines categories of stakeholder engagement, employment and 'value added' (see Appendix One).

Discourse Analysis

The chapter also employs discourse analysis methods to provide qualitative insights into the ways in which gender is narrativised through sustainability reports. Discourse analysis is used in a range of fields, from linguistics to cultural studies, to investigate the meanings and narratives constructed through choice of language (Johnstone 2008). The discourse analysis method employed here explores the types of language used to communicate about gender issues. The analysis also examines the structure of the reports, surveying where gender issues are situated within the broader sustainability narrative. Questions such as: 'In what contexts do gender issues appear within the reports?' and 'How is gendered language used?' help to shape the discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis views language as inherently political and as shaping both social understandings and identities (Gee 2005). Dissimilar to content analysis, discourse analysis is 'not an algorithmic [quantitative] procedure'; it is far more tractable and adaptive, and involves a great deal of qualitative interpretation by the researcher (*ibid.*: 6). It is important, therefore, to recognise that both content and discourse analyses, such as those presented below, are inescapably influenced by the interests, experiences and proclivities of the researcher undertaking the analysis. For example, in the case of the sustainability reports studied here, I bring my professional experiences of working for a non-government organisation on mining issues, as well as further professional experiences working in the field of sustainability, to the analysis. My academic background in women's and gender studies also shapes the way I define and analyse gender issues.

It is acknowledged that my own experiences mould the 'situated meaning' constructed through the discourse analysis and also shape the issues examined through the content analysis. 'Situated meaning' can be defined as the socio-cultural experiences which readers bring with them to texts. Importantly, situated meaning can help to build understandings of particular concepts and phrases (*ibid.*). Situated meanings are also dynamic and malleable; suggesting that a meaning derived from a particular text at one point in time may be changed at a later date, should the reader bring new or different personal experiences to the reading.

The discourse analysis presented here uses the content analysis as a jumping-off point. References to gender issues or 'women' were identified through the content analysis and surrounding paragraphs were then read to determine the narrative shaping these issues. Photographs, charts, graphs and tables within the vicinity of the text in question were also examined to shape more fully the narrative discourse analysis; that is to say, to ensure that the examined

narrative was analysed within its complete context. Texts were read to search for shared and similar narratives within and across reports, to look for changes in expression about gender over time, and to see whether and how discussions of gender might be framed or limited.

Importantly, discourse analysis allows exploration of text that is 'missing', not only the text that is written down. As Johnstone (2002: 20) explains, 'Even written texts of the most prototypical sort are the result of decisions about entextualization based on culture-specific expectations'. Discourse analysis therefore encourages us to consider why the gender narrative is narrow and to theorise about the decisions made off the page which lead to such a restricted narrative. For example, what socio-cultural expectations have influenced the deficiency of gender narratives within mining companies' sustainable development discourse? Through discourse analysis, the meager gender narratives presented offer something even in their limitations.

What are Sustainability Reports Saying about Gender?

The analysis below presents the key findings of the thematic and textual content analysis and the narrative discourse analysis performed on the 18 reports that make up the data set. Results from the content analysis are presented quantitatively, in graphic format, while the narrative discourse analysis is presented as complementary qualitative findings. Overall, the study finds that gender is on the radar for mining companies, but it remains a peripheral sustainability consideration.

Like many other gender-focused studies, this analysis confronts the challenge of differentiating 'gender' from 'women,' in an effort to keep distinct two closely related but separate concepts. This distinction is particularly tricky when examining mining, as the historical male dominance of the industry normalises the male gender to such an extent that it is easy simply to default to looking for mentions of women as indicators of 'gender.' While much information can be gained from such an analysis, this somewhat easier path hinders more nuanced insights into the ways in which gender—encompassing both men and women—is defined and understood by mining companies. It is equally true, however, that it is often only through a discussion about women that gender issues in mining become visible. For this reason, the gender-focused analysis zooms in on report contents which discuss women or community issues traditionally related to women, such as maternity. It is in these instances where women are made visible, that we gain a clearer picture of the way mining itself is engendered and in which both male and female situations are understood.

Gender Issues at the Periphery of Sustainability Reporting

Returning to the first research question: What are Australia-based mining companies putting into the public domain about gender issues, relative to their operations? Content analysis findings indicate that gender issues are seen as marginal in relation to other major sustainability issues, such as the environment. Indeed, gender ranks among the least mentioned issues, relative to sustainability (see Figure 9-1). Of the total content devoted to key sustainability concerns, gender was the least mentioned issue, comprising only 3.5 per cent of total sustainability issues content, followed by health (6 per cent). Employment (36.4 per cent) and environmental concerns (38.7 per cent) make up the bulk of sustainability issues content.

Figure 9-1: Major sustainability issues as a proportion of total sustainability issues content.¹⁵

Source: Author's data.

¹⁵ Unless otherwise noted, 'n' represents the total number of mentions of the content analysis codes referred to in each graph.

While a comparison of thematic content, like that shown in Figure 9-1, cannot reveal the importance of issues, it does suggest a prioritisation of issues. That is, those issues which appear most often are also those which are most likely to be prioritised as significant by mining companies and, relationally, their sustainability report audience. Indeed, as sustainability reports are a primary means of stakeholder communication, it can be inferred that their content reflects both those concerns in which mining companies are directly interested, as well as those concerns in which companies believe their stakeholders to be interested (Coombs 2001). Hence, the dearth of gender issues addressed through the reports arguably reflects not only company priorities, but those of target audience—shareholders, potential investors, stakeholders and company employees.¹⁶

It is also possible that gender content may appear less often than other sustainability issues not because gender issues are socially insignificant, but more so because the language being used by companies is generally neutered. Throughout the reports, issues, such as HIV/AIDS, which would likely take on a gendered narrative in other contexts, are presented in gender-neutral terms. For example, in a 2005 report by a company with African operations, HIV/AIDS is discussed in business-like language, saying in part:

We train peer educators who run HIV/AIDS education programs, distribute and promote the use of condoms and provide referrals for voluntary HIV counselling and testing (Company B, Report no.6, 2005, 28).

Such neutral language is the norm throughout the sustainability reports studied. Indeed, as Heledd notes in a 2004 study of CSR in mining, companies tend to steer towards more “‘inclusive” language, such as using the word “community” to describe a diverse range of stakeholders, embracing local communities, employees and aboriginal groups’ (Heledd 2004: 28). While by no means inaccurate, this style of language masks the gendered nature of many sustainability issues. It also raises the question of why these issues are being presented in a neutered manner when so many sustainability issues arguably pose distinctly gendered effects? Possible answers to this question are suggested later in the chapter when analysing the indicators used to guide sustainability reporting.

When language within the reports was gendered, the conceptualisation of gender was quite narrow. Only a few, relatively broad, gender issues were addressed through language which evoked vague thematic ideas, such as ‘diversity,’ ‘empowerment’ or ‘equality’. In relation to the content analysis, the lack of specificity used in relation to reporting on gender meant that no emergent codes could be identified; all three thematic codes, ‘gender issues’, ‘gender diversity’ and ‘Equal Employment Opportunity’ (see Appendix 9-1 for definitions) and

¹⁶ A 2006 Sustainability and UNEP study found that many companies write sustainability reports primarily for investors, while others anticipate their use by employees and affected stakeholders within the community.

the one textual code ('women') were defined prior to engaging with the text. Conversely, environmental concerns were written about much more specifically and in far greater depth, allowing for identification of 12 distinct environmental issues codes, including both a priori and emergent codes (see Figure 9-2).

Figure 9-2: Environmental issues compared to gender issues as a proportion of content.

Source: Author's data

The depth to which other sustainability issues are discussed, in comparison with gender, is perhaps best illustrated through a comparison of reporting on 'gender issues' and 'environmental issues.' As shown in Figure 9-2, a range of environmental issues were discussed in the reports, with many specific issues, such as 'mine closure,' and 'product stewardship' regularly addressed across companies and years. Reports generally devote a significant proportion of text to environmental issues, presenting them in their own chapter or section. Gender, in contrast, appears much more sporadically, with only one 2006 report having a dedicated section entitled, 'Gender-Inclusive Community Development' (Company E, Report 3).

The low level of reporting on gender issues appears symptomatic of a broader trend in sustainability reporting, whereby social issues are generally given lesser priority than environmental issues (GRI, HKU and CSR Asia 2008). As Blowfield (2007: 689) notes, while companies of all industries continue to expand efforts to address sustainability concerns, ‘we know much more about environmental impact than social or economic impact.’ Figure 9-3 shows this trend is apparent among the mining companies studied, with ‘environmental issues’ 2.5 times more likely to be reported on than ‘social issues’. This is despite the fact that a recent SustainAbility report found that the extractives industry rates the importance of social and environmental issues as being of almost equal priority (SustainAbility and UNEP 2006). It is important therefore, to begin to investigate why such a distinct gap currently exists between companies’ stated sustainability priorities and their activities.

Figure 9-3: Content on ‘social issues’ compared to ‘environmental issues’

Source: Author’s data.

Figure 9-3 also shows that companies rarely consider gender issues in amongst other social issues, with 'gender issues in community' comprising less than one per cent of all social issues content covered. The majority of thematic content concerning gender appears instead under the guise of employment issues. Indeed, throughout all the reports studied, gender was most likely to be spoken of in relation to employment/employee issues, particularly in regard to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO). In some instances, related gendered employment policies and practices, such as maternity leave provisions or flexi-time options, were also included in the discussion. The discourse analysis further reveals the ways in which gender was most frequently narrativised throughout companies' sustainability reports. The following one-sentence reference to an EEO policy epitomises the most common language style use to convey gender concerns:

The distribution of our employees by gender at 31 December 2005 reflects the effectiveness of our equal opportunity and employment policy in what has traditionally been a male-only industry (Company E, Report 6, 2005).

Most often, statements like the one above are accompanied by charts or graphs which showed a breakdown of the companies' employees by gender. In some instances, effort is made to communicate that the company is making proactive efforts to increase the number of women employees, not simply overall, but specifically in management and senior management roles. Interestingly, when photographs of women employees are used, they rarely depict women doing 'dirty' mining work, but instead show them undertaking environmental studies in pristine outdoor settings or typing at computers. This is in contrast to the majority of photos in the reports which primarily depict men in hard hats, often operating large machinery or posing with an open pit in the background. The narrative around working to increase the number of women employees was present across the four years, but this topic was given greater attention in more recent years (see Figure 9-4).

Significantly, although gender was most often discussed within an 'employment' narrative, gender issues represent only a small portion (five per cent) of total employment issues reported (see Figure 9-5). Again, it is clear that although gender is on the agenda of Australia-based mining companies' sustainability programs, it is a consideration that remains at the periphery.

Figure 9-4: Gender diversity reporting trends: 2004–2007.

Source: Author’s data.

Figure 9-5: Types of employment issues discussed as a proportion of content.

The analysis was able to investigate trends in issues reported, by comparing reports produced over the four-year period. The reports did show that the occurrence of reporting on gender issues has quantifiably increased over the studied period. For example, reporting on 'gender diversity' (see Figure 9-4), has consistently increased since 2004, but gender still remains amongst the least talked about sustainability issues. Again, while a content analysis of this type does not allow for inferences of significance, it seems realistic to assume the consistently increasing number of mentions of 'gender diversity', over the years reflects an improved awareness, prioritisation or concern for gender issues.

So, what does this information tell us about the ways in which companies are approaching, prioritising and engaging with gender issues? In summary, the content and discourse analyses show that gender is only marginally considered as a sustainability issue. Gender rarely appears in discussions of broader social or environmental issues, and where gender concerns are presented, they are given limited attention and appear mostly within an employment context. This minor gender narrative suggests that there is a lack of understanding of the ways in which other sustainability issues, such as resettlement and compensation, present gender-specific concerns. Significantly, the circumscription of gender issues to employment concerns reflects both regulations (for example EEO) and voluntary reporting frameworks. The ways in which these frameworks may be influencing companies' gendered considerations are now discussed in greater detail.

Gender Issues at the Edge of the Screen

The content and discourse analysis findings lead us to the final, but vital research question: Why might companies address gender issues in certain ways? Furthermore, why in an era when intergovernmental agencies prioritise gender mainstreaming and when gender equality is listed as one of eight Millennium Development Goals, is gender still at the periphery of mining's sustainable development agenda?

It is widely accepted that the social issues addressed through CSR programs (in all industries) are limited and do not necessarily reflect the breadth or depth of a company's impact on communities (GRI, HKU and CSR Asia 2008). Limitations concerning which social issues are addressed by corporations, including mining companies, seem to occur in the first instance because firms generally lack a full awareness of their social/community impacts, including gender impacts (*ibid.*). This scarcity of full social impact awareness is likely the case for several reasons, including: lack of evidence-based social impact

data (ibid.); difficulty applying existing means to collect such data (Blowfield 2007); historical patterns of company-community interactions; misdirected measurement tools; reactive responses based on community or NGO complaints (Genasci and Pray 2008); and focus on direct philanthropic giving (Mitnick 2000; Blowfield 2007; Blowfield and Murray 2008). As Blowfield (2007: 686) sums up, 'companies frequently fail to identify their main impacts, so that the most significant consequences of the company's operations are often not the ones given greatest attention'.¹⁷

While all of the above reasons provide plausible explanations for why companies generally fail to report on or thoroughly identify gender issues, there may be another crucial reason. All of the companies studied use the GRI, as well as other voluntary reporting initiatives, to guide their sustainability reporting. For example, all companies also use the ISO 14001 standards for environmental management.¹⁸ In more recent years, companies refer to or are signatories of the UN Global Compact. Companies report against the Millennium Development Goals, International Council of Mining and Metals Principles, and the Dow Jones Sustainability Index survey, among other accountability frameworks. Each of these voluntary initiatives offers companies guidelines or performance indicators against which to benchmark their sustainability performance.

Clearly, companies' usage of these initiatives raises the quintessential 'chicken or egg' question: Which comes first, sustainability programs to address identified social needs which are then reported on via indicators, or sustainability indicators which tell companies what social concerns they will need to address to comply with reporting guidelines? As Power (1997) argues in *The Audit Society*, regulatory frameworks frequently have the unintended effect of shaping the very programs they seek to measure and hold accountable. Like the 'chicken or egg' question, it is impossible to determine with any certainty the extent to which indicators shape the focus of mining companies' sustainable development programs (and, by extension their sustainability reporting), but it is also highly plausible that these indicators are influencing which issues companies prioritise and address.

Along these lines, an examination of the indicators used in the reports studied here reveals a dearth of indicators focused on gender. Firstly, most companies base their sustainability work around internal, 'Health, Safety, Environment and Community' (HSEC) indicators. A review of publicly available HSEC

17 Blowfield's (2007) article focuses on Multinational Corporations (MNCs) operating in developing countries. His comments, however, bear insights which are particularly relevant to the mining industry.

18 Companies use these reporting initiatives to differing degrees. Some comply with certain standards, such as the ISO 14001, and have their reports independently accredited. Others maintain that they have undertaken internal auditing and that they have referred to indicators to guide their report writing.

frameworks reveals that many of HSEC documents do not explicitly incorporate gender indicators. None of the studied companies' publicly available HSEC documents specify gender amongst their indicators. These company based indicators seem to confirm a narrow understanding of gender and the way gender issues affect and are affected by broader sustainability concerns.

Secondly, all of the sustainability reports analysed use GRI indicators to some degree,¹⁹ often in combination with other voluntary initiatives. Following from Power (1997), it seems that these initiatives may very well be influencing not only what is reported on but the types of programs that are implemented. A brief examination of the GRI's indicators, in relation to gender issues, suggests that the reporting frameworks used by mining companies are, indeed, shaping their sustainability programs.

The content analysis suggested that reporting on gender issues, particularly beyond the realm of employment, is weaker than reporting on other key sustainability issues, such as climate change or occupational health and safety. While the discursive concentration of gender issues around employment of women could be seen simply as reflecting a broader social trend, in Australia there has generally been a cultural push to increase the number of women on boards and in senior management, with women currently comprising less than 11 per cent of senior executive roles in ASX200-listed companies, and only 3.4 per cent of total board membership amongst all ASX-listed companies (Sheridan 2001; Braund and Medd 2008)—it also appears very likely that the tendency to report on gender in relation to employment is influenced significantly by GRI performance indicators. In the GRI G3 Guidelines (2006), for example, the only mentions of gender or women appear in indicators which fall under the 'Labour Practices and Decent Work' guidelines.

The GRI is extremely limited on gender indicators, with the three gender-specific indicators appearing under the 'Labour Practices and Decent Work' category (GRI 2008). These include indicators such as, 'Ratio of basic salary of men to women by employee category' (ibid.: Indicator LA14). The trend for ensconcing gender issues within labour/employment issues in the GRI indicators seems to be directly reflected in the ways in which the studied mining companies are approaching gender.

This begs the question, are gender issues just a blip on the periphery of the sustainability radar? Recent action by the GRI suggests gender issues, especially those linked directly to women's experiences, are becoming

19 The GRI is a voluntary reporting framework which 'provides guidance for organizations to use as the basis for their disclosure about their sustainability performance' (see GRI 2007). Corporations may choose to use different 'Application levels', which indicate the degree to which the indicators were applied, and whether external, independent validation of the report was conducted.

increasingly visible. Indeed, a current initiative by the GRI and related groups to address gender issues may help to forestall the negative effects of neglecting gender, relative to sustainable development programs. In September 2008, the GRI admitted shortcomings of its indicators in relation to gender, announcing a 12-month joint research project with the International Finance Council to develop a 'Gender Sustainability Reporting Guide' (GRI 2008). While only just beginning, this research marks an important step in more comprehensive incorporation of gender issues into sustainability reporting frameworks, and it will be interesting to see whether the inclusion of more gender indicators in these frameworks eventually leads to improved gender-sensitivity in mining companies' sustainable development programs.

Specifically in relation to mining, the GRI, in consultation with a multi-stakeholder group from the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM), has developed pilot supplementary indicators for the Mining and Metals Sector (MMS) (GRI 2005). The 2005 pilot supplement included one mention of 'women', in relation to 'community engagement,' positioning them as a 'marginalised' group requiring attention. The proposed engagement with women detailed in the pilot MMS supplement did not constitute a measurable performance indicator, however, but instead appears under the section, 'Aspects to be Reported through Narrative Description' (ibid.).

In early 2009, the GRI released a revised draft MMS supplement. Here, engagement with women has been incorporated within performance indicator SO1: 'Nature, scope and effectiveness of any programs and practices that assess and manage the impacts of operations on communities, including entering, operating and exiting' (GRI 2009). While gender issues are not explicitly raised within the draft indicator, the 'MMS Commentary' to guide reporting against this indicator suggests that:

Reporting on the extent to which community participation processes are socially inclusive and which ensure engagement with women or disadvantaged groups can indicate a company's ability to manage relationships with groups that otherwise might not benefit from its operations (a social responsibility aspect) or which can oppose operations if they do not feel they are treated equitably (a risk mitigation aspect) (ibid.: 55).

Ultimately, it is vital that awareness of gender issues be stretched beyond employment concerns to incorporate those less tangible but still very real gender impacts that mining operations may bring to communities of operation. This may occur through refinement of commonly used reporting frameworks, such as the GRI, to better incorporate gender issues. Refined performance indicators would better focus companies' attention on gender issues,

providing direction as to where to begin when addressing gender concerns. While the GRI's shift towards incorporating 'women' within the description of a community engagement indicator, for example, is an important first step, it does not go far enough. As new indicators are developed, it is vital that gender-specific indicators are developed. The alternative is that gender issues will continue to be seen as an immeasurable or 'soft issue,' and therefore, arguably given less priority than other issues with their own indicators. Similarly, company HSEC policies need to be refined to better incorporate gender issues within their performance indicators.

Although only a cursory insight requiring further examination, it seems fair to suggest that voluntary reporting indicators are, indeed, shaping the ways in which companies are thinking about, incorporating and reporting on gender issues within their sustainable development programs. Future research might use interviews with mining companies to determine the extent to which they feel indicators shape sustainable development programs and reporting, and vice versa. These insights would begin to answer the 'chicken or egg' question, and, if data suggests that indicators do indeed shape sustainable development programs, more concerted effort could be made to create indicators which work to measure the complete scope of mining's effects.

While indicators play an important role in influencing the ways in which sustainability issues are prioritised, production of gender indicators is not the only answer. Companies themselves must be encouraged to address gender issues, and communities must be aided in articulating the gender-specific effects of mining. It is also suggested, therefore, that development of a systematic, reliable and valid means of measuring gender impacts in mining communities, beyond the realm of employment, would improve awareness of the depth and breadth of these issues. Such data could then be used to plan and implement targeted sustainability programs, bringing gender onto the radar.

Appendix 9-1: Thematic and Textual Content Analysis Coding Frame

Thematic Codes		
Broad Level Category	Intermediate Level Category	Definition
Sustainable Development	Sustainable Development Indicators	includes mentions of key performance indicators, sustainable development/ sustainability targets, and measurement of sustainable development
Corporate Social Responsibility	Business case	includes arguments for why and how sustainable development is 'good for business' or provides shareholder, stakeholder or business value. Includes text where direct linkages are made between sustainable practices and financial performance. Includes rationale for investing in sustainable development, where this rationale asserts that 'business' or 'financial' value has been gained for the company
Environment	Pollution	includes air pollution, spills and accidents where chemicals or tailings have affected the local environment
	Safe management of mined materials	includes mentions of the ways mined materials, particularly uranium, are handled, particularly to prevent pollution, hazards or damage to the local environment
	Product stewardship	includes all mentions of 'product stewardship', efficient use of resources, supply chain management, procurement, product life cycle and related concepts of caring for the product from exploration through extraction phases to maximise value
	Water management	includes mentions of storm water drainage, water management, drainage, run-off, and policies and procedures in place to manage these
	Land management	includes mentions of land management, land use, policies and protocols referring to environmental aspects of land use, but not 'land use agreements' or 'land use negotiations'
	Waste management	includes mentions of 'waste management', 'waste disposal', 'hazardous waste disposal', 'hazardous waste', including policies and procedures to deal with waste and protocols for how waste is stored
	Environmental impact	includes mentions of 'environmental impact', 'environmental impacts', including environmental impact assessments, environmental impact mitigation plans, reducing environmental impact and managing environmental risks

	Protection/ Conservation	includes mentions about protecting or conserving biodiversity and the ecosystem; includes 'environmental stewardship'
Community/ Social	Social/Community Impact	includes mentions of 'social impact', 'social impacts', including social impact assessments, social impact mitigation plans, reducing social impact and managing social risks
	Social equity/ Cultural sensitivity	includes mentions of cultural awareness or expressions of sensitivity to local customs; treating others within the community as equals and with respect
	Community relations	includes mentions of 'community relations', including CR programs, policies and staff. Also includes mentions of 'community relations plans'
	Resettlement/ Compensation	includes mentions of 'resettlement', including resettlement plans, resettlement experiences and negotiations, as well as related experiences of compensation, including compensation negotiations and tracking how compensation has been used in the community
	Upholding human rights	includes mentions of 'human rights', 'people's rights', 'rights', human rights doctrines or protocols, examples of efforts made to uphold human rights, human rights standards, mentions of averting human rights violations
	Value for communities	includes economic development or improvements in economic status which affect local communities; poverty reduction; 'sustainable livelihoods'
	Community development	includes mentions of 'community development', as well as discussion of development plans, related community development outcomes, 'sustainable communities', 'capacity building' and 'development' within a community or socio-cultural context
	Gender issues in community	Includes non-employment related gendered issues. For example, women in the community, women's health concerns (including maternal health), family management (including child care), female headed households, consultation with women in community. Mentions of issues, such as HIV/AIDS, which affect women but which are not discussed in specifically gendered terms, are not included under this code.
Community Health	Community Health Education	includes mentions of community health education programs sponsored or run by the mine, related case studies and examples, community health education also includes health education programs run for employees, such as HIV/AIDS programs

	Investment in/ Support for community health programs	includes company donations or sponsorship of community health programs or infrastructure, such as building health care centres or funding a doctor's position, includes support for community health programs such as immunisation programs
Employment/ Employees	Employee fatalities	includes mentions of 'employee fatalities', 'fatalities', 'employee deaths' and steps taken or policies implemented to reduce the number of employee deaths in future. Also includes condolences to employees' families
	Recruitment and training	includes mentions of recruitment processes, including transparency in recruitment, training and professional development programs for employees and also for members of the community, such as in-community skills programs and apprenticeships sponsored by the company
	Volunteering	includes mentions of employee volunteering programs and examples of volunteering undertaken by employees within the community, also includes accounts of the number of employee volunteer hours donated
	Gender diversity	Includes all mentions of gender equity or gender diversity appearing outside of Equal Employment Opportunity statements. For example, mentions of attempts to increase the number of women on boards of management, gender diversity targets, commitment to a gender-diverse workforce or mentions of 'women in mining'.
	Equal Employment Opportunity	Includes all direct mentions of 'Equal Employment Opportunity' clauses and policies. Includes policies on non-discrimination, child care, maternity leave, family leave, fair and equitable treatment of women or prevention of sexual harassment.
	Local employment	includes policies to employ people from communities adjacent to the mine site, percentages and numbers of locals employed at the mine; also includes mentions of how the mine affects local employment in other local industries (e.g. shops which open to serve the influx of mine workers)
	Occupational Health and Safety	includes mentions of 'occupational health and safety', 'OHS', 'Oc-Health', OHS policies and procedures and performance against OHS standards, as well as OHS training
Accountability	Risk management	includes all mentions of risk management, risk assessment and related policies, including actions described as being taken directly for the purposes of risk management, which are not environmental or social impact assessments

Accountability	Internal Governance Standards	includes all mentions of internal governance policies which the company uses as accountability measures, such as Health Safety Environment and Community (HSEC) policies determined by the Board, but not Equal Employment Opportunity policies
	Socio-cultural expectations	includes mentions of companies' attempts to meet the social or cultural expectations of the local community where mining is occurring, may also refer to the company's efforts to meet socio-cultural expectations of shareholders or stakeholders more broadly
	Social impact measurement	includes all references to the specific ways in which companies measure social impacts, but not risk management. The code aims to capture measurement practices, not mentions of 'social impact assessment'.
	Other accountability programs	includes mentions of other accountability frameworks used by companies to guide sustainability reporting and which are not covered under the other codes
	Government regulations	includes all legislation, statutes and other government regulations
	transparency	includes all mentions of 'transparency', 'maintaining transparency', 'operating transparently' or relevant descriptions of practices or policies which imply transparency but which are not related to the EITI
	Environmental impact measurement	includes all references to the specific ways in which companies measure environmental impacts, but not risk management. The code aims to capture measurement practices, not mentions of 'environmental impact assessment'.
	Stakeholder engagement	All codes under stakeholder engagement refer to specific relationships and include mentions of the companies' interactions with that particular stakeholder
	Private-public partnerships	includes a company's collaborative relationships with universities, or similar bodies
	Non-governmental/ Intergovernmental agencies	
	National governments	
	Private-private partnerships	includes partnerships with other companies, across any industry
	Local governments	includes both state and local government relationships
	Contractors	
	Shareholders	
	Local communities	

Financial/ Economic	Charitable giving	includes all mentions of donations, philanthropy and gifts to charity
	Value for shareholders	includes mentions of 'value for shareholders', 'shareholder value', and related discussions of how the company is concerned with shareholders and creation of returns
	Sustainable business	includes mentions which use the phrase 'sustainable business' or 'business sustainability' and references to the ways in which the business practices to ensure profit-making and support operations in the 'long-term', 'into the future' or 'over time'
	Investment in environment	includes all mentions which discuss direct financial investment into the environment, including investment into conservation or biodiversity programs, 'environmental expenditure', and investment in technologies to reduce negative environmental impacts.
	Value for governments	mentions of the ways in which the companies operations directly benefit the countries of operation, including tax revenues, support for industry and employment levels and related 'poverty reduction'
	Investment in communities	includes all financial investment in communities which is not a community program or charitable giving. 'Investment in communities' may include construction of community infrastructure, such as sports stadiums or community halls, but not health centres or sanitation/environmental/transport infrastructure
Textual codes		
Sustainable development/ Sustainability		includes all mentions of 'sustainable development,' 'sustainability'
CSR		includes all mentions of 'corporate social responsibility,' 'CSR', 'social responsibility', 'SR', 'financial, social and environmental responsibility', 'social, environmental and economic performance'
	Ethical practice	includes all mentions of 'ethics', 'ethical', 'ethical practice', 'ethical values', 'ethical business practice', 'ethical conduct', 'business ethics'
	Triple bottom line	includes all mentions of 'triple bottom line', 'quadruple bottom line',
	Licence to operate	includes all mentions of 'licence to operate' or 'social licence'
Environment	Tailings disposal	includes all mentions of 'tailings', 'mine tailings', 'tailings disposal', 'tailings dam', 'tailings storage', 'sediment disposal', 'sediment control', 'acid mine drainage'

	Mine closure	includes all mentions of 'mine closure', 'closure', 'abandonment', 'abandoned mines', 'closure plans', 'mine closure plans', 'rehabilitation and closure'
	Greenhouse gas/ Carbon emissions	includes all mentions of 'greenhouse gas', 'greenhouse gases', 'carbon emissions', 'carbon', 'CO2', 'carbon output', 'gas emissions', and 'emissions'
	Climate change	includes all mentions of 'climate change' or 'global warming'
Globalization		includes all mentions of 'globalization', 'globalising', 'global market', and lists of international sites of operation
Accountability	Global Reporting Initiative	includes all mentions of 'Global Reporting Initiative' or 'GRI'
	UN Global Compact	includes all mentions of 'UN Global Compact', 'United Nations Global Compact', 'Global Compact' or 'UNGC'
	Millennium Development Goals	includes all mentions of 'Millennium Development Goals', 'Millennium Goals', 'MDGs'
	International Council on Mining and Metals	includes all mentions of 'International Council on Mining and Metals', 'ICMM'
	United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights	includes all mentions of 'United Nations Universal Declaration on/of Human Rights', 'UN Declaration on/of Human Rights', 'UN Universal Declaration on/of Human Rights', 'UN Human Rights Declaration',
	Corruption/ Bribery	includes all mentions of 'corruption', 'corrupt practice', 'corrupt business practice(s)', 'bribery', 'bribes' and related policies on bribes and corruption
	ISO 14001	includes all mentions of 'ISO 14001', 'ISO'
	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative	includes all mentions of 'Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative', 'EITI'
Women		Textual code: includes all exact mentions of the following terms: 'women', 'woman', 'female', 'females', 'girl', 'girls'

Appendix 9-2: Intercoder Reliability Calculations

	Thematic Codes				Textual Code
	Gender Diversity	Equal Employment Opportunity	Gender Issues in Community	Totals	Women
Coder A	26	6	6	38	31
Coder B	29	9	7	45	32
Product of Marginals	754	54	42	850	992
Agree	26	6	6	38	31
Disagree	3	3	1	7	1
n =	29	9	7	45	32
Percent Agreement (PA _o)	0.90	0.67	0.86	0.84	0.97
Percent Agreement Expected (PA _e)	—	—	—	0.42	N/A
Cohen's kappa	—	—	—	0.72	N/A

Formulas for calculation²⁰

Percentage Agreement (PA_o) =

$$\frac{\text{Total A's}}{n}$$

Expected Agreement (PA_e) =

$$\left(\frac{1}{n^2}\right) \left(\sum pm_i\right)$$

Where pm_i = each product of marginals

²⁰ Although scholars do not generally agree on how intercoder reliability should be calculated, or what percentage of agreement constitutes good reliability, there is general agreement that intercoder reliability checks should be performed to validate content analyses. The two-coder intercoder reliability performed here measures both simple percentage agreement – that is, the percentage to which both coders were in agreement about their codes – and Cohen's kappa. Cohen's kappa is used to measure the agreement of two coders beyond any 'chance' agreement on thematic codes – that is, to what extent are the codes reliable and replicable when the element of chance agreement is calculated for (See: Neuendorf (2002) for further information).

Product of marginals (pm_i) =

$$n^{\text{Coder A codes}} \times n^{\text{Coder B codes}}$$

Cohen's κ (κ) =

$$\frac{(PA_o) - PA_E}{1 - PA_E}$$

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