

Opening Up Transformation Pathways for Sustainable Wellbeing:
Exploring the Role of Sustainability Experiential Learning as a Capacity Building
Mechanism for Global Ecological Citizenship

by

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ABSTRACT

Criticisms of technocratic and managerial sustainability responses to global environmental change have led scholars to argue for transformative shifts in ideology, policy, and practice favoring alternative, plural transformation pathways to sustainability. This raises key debates around how we build transformative capacity and who will lead the way. To further this critical dialogue, this dissertation explores the potential for sustainability experiential learning (SEL) to serve as a capacity building mechanism for global ecological citizenship in support of transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing. In the process it considers how the next generation of those primed for sustainability leadership identify with and negotiate diversity—of perceptions, values, agency, and lived experiences—in what constitutes sustainable wellbeing and the approaches needed to get there.

Inspired by the STEPS (Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability) Centre's transformation pathways approach, this research proposes a Transformative Capacity Building model grounded in a Transformation Pathways to Sustainable Wellbeing framework that integrates and builds upon tenets of the original pathways approach with transformative learning, Value-Believe-Norm, and global ecological citizenship (eco-citizenship) theories and concepts. The proposed model and framework were applied to an in-depth ethnographic case study of sustainability experiential learning communities formed within the four Summer 2015 Global Sustainability Studies (GSS) programs at Arizona State University. Using mixed methods, including semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and Photovoice, this study examines the values, perceptions, and perceived agency of participants post-program in relation to the knowledge-making and mobilization processes that unfolded

during their international GSS programs. Of particular interest are participants' cognitive, moral, and affective engagement as SEL community members.

Through multi-level thematic analyses, key values, perceptions, agency and engagement themes are identified and influencing relationships highlighted across the different SEL communities and programs. Implications of these factors and their relationships for capacity building for eco-citizenship and future program development are considered. The dissertation concludes by translating study findings into actionable pathways for future research AND practice, including the proposal of program development and implementation recommendations that could enable future sustainability experiential learning programs to better contribute to transformative capacity building for eco-citizenship.

To my God, the source of all goodness and justice and my guiding compass for all eternity. Your endless love and mercy awakens and restores me each and every day.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xiii
ABBREVIATIONS.....	xv
PREFACE.....	xvii
CHAPTER	
1 CONFRONTING THE ROOTS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE FRAMING OF SUSTAINABLE WELLBEING.....	1
Contextual Overview.....	1
Sustainable Development’s Grounding in Global Development and the Emergence of the Global Development Industry.....	5
From Global Development to Sustainable Development.....	12
Unmasking Economic vs. Ecological Rationality.....	19
Implications for an Alternative SD Paradigm.....	31
Contextualizing a Sustainable Wellbeing Framing.....	33
Carving out a Sustainable Wellbeing Framing.....	42
Values and Principles Guiding the Proposed Sustainable Wellbeing Framing.....	42
Unpacking Human and Ecological Wellbeing within a Sustainable Wellbeing Framing.....	43
Human Wellbeing.....	43
Ecological Wellbeing.....	46

2	RECLAIMING THE MORAL IMPERATIVE OF SOCIOECOLOGICAL JUSTICE: GLOBAL ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP IN SUPPORT OF TRANSFORMATION PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABLE WELLBEING.....	49
	Carving out the Foundations of a “Transformation Pathways to Sustainable Wellbeing” Framework.....	51
	Brief Overview of the STEPS Centre’s Pathways Approach to Sustainability.....	52
	Core Tenets of the Proposed T-Pathways to SWB Framework: From an Integrative Understanding of Culture, Cognition, and Ethics to the Practice of Agency.....	54
	Conceptual and Theoretical Underpinnings of the Transformation Pathways to Sustainable Wellbeing Framework.....	62
	The Road to Agency: Expanding Notions of Global Ecological Citizenship.....	62
	Opening up Transformation Pathways: The Role of Knowledge-Making Processes in Fostering Eco-Citizenship.....	67
	Transformative Learning Theory: The Route to Critical Ecological Consciousness.....	68
	A Conceptual Model for Transformative Capacity Building: The Workings of an Evolving Theory of Change.....	70
	Why a Transformation Pathways to Sustainable Wellbeing Framework?.....	73
3	EMPIRICAL STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	81
	Research Questions.....	82

CHAPTER	Page
Hypothesis and Predictive Sub-Questions.....	83
Research Objectives.....	84
Research Plan.....	86
Overview of Research “Sites”	87
Methodological Toolset.....	88
Principal Data Collection Methods	88
Participant Observation.....	88
Program Participant Interviews.....	89
Faculty/Staff Leads and Administrator Interviews.....	91
Host-Country Organization/Community	
Partner Interviews.....	92
Photovoice Project.....	93
Stage 1: Recruitment of participant-	
photographers from the 2015 GSS	
programs’ SEL communities.....	94
Stage 2: Pre-departure orientation and	
ethical photography training session.....	95
Stage 3: Photographic data collection by	
participant-photographers.....	99
Stage 4: Post-program individual	
semi-structured interviews with participant-	
photographers.....	102
Stage 5: Focus group and visioning exercise.....	103

CHAPTER	Page
Phase 2: Supplemental Data Collection Efforts.....	104
Participant Observation.....	105
SNfH Fall 2015 Course Participant Interviews.....	106
Ancillary Resources.....	107
Analytical Methods.....	108
Micro-level Analyses.....	108
Meso-level Analysis.....	111
Meta-level analysis.....	111
Discussion and Reflection.....	112
Adopting a Critical AND Empowering Research Approach.....	112
Study Limitations and Delimitations.....	114
Navigating Multiple Positionalities/Roles During Fieldwork.....	120
Broadening Out Perspectives.....	123
 4	
SITUATING THE CASE STUDY “SITES”: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC SKETCH OF THE GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES/PROGRAMS/COMMUNITIES.....	125
A Birds-Eye View of the Global Sustainability Studies (GSS) Program Initiative.....	126
The GSS Program Initiative’s Ecology of Actors.....	129
GSS Program Initiative Vision and Purpose.....	132
Unpacking the GSS Summer 2015 SEL Programs/Communities.....	138
GSS SEL in Guatemala: Sustainable Neighborhoods for Happiness.....	140
Guatemala micro-ecology of actors.....	140

CHAPTER	Page
Guatemala Pathways.....	141
Guatemala Mechanisms.....	143
GSS SEL in Spain and Morocco: Sustainable Development Across the Mediterranean: Morocco and Spain (May 23-June 16, 2015).....	147
Spain and Morocco Micro-Ecology of Actors.....	147
Spain and Morocco Pathways.....	151
Spain and Morocco Mechanisms.....	152
GSS SEL in Hong Kong: Urban Sustainability in Hong Kong-ASU/Sustainable Development of Hong Kong-CITY U (June 5 – June 20, 2015).....	155
Hong Kong Micro-ecology of Actors.....	155
Hong Kong Pathways.....	158
Hong Kong Mechanisms.....	160
GSS SEL in Brazil: Human Rights and Sustainability in Brazil (May 31 - June 19, 2015).....	164
Brazil Micro-ecology of Actors.....	164
Brazil Pathways.....	170
Brazil Mechanisms.....	173
Conclusion.....	177
5 THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF VALUES, PERCEPTIONS, PERCEIVED AGENCY, AND ENGAGEMENT IN THE GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES (GSS) SEL PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITIES: A PRESENTATION OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS FINDINGS.....	178
Synthesis of Key Themes/Trends Identified in the Thematic	

CHAPTER	Page
Analyses of the Global Sustainability Studies (GSS) Sustainability Experiential Learning Programs/Communities.....	179
Values/Priorities.....	179
Perceptions.....	185
Framings of sustainable wellbeing (SWB).....	185
Problem/Solution framings (i.e. barriers/contributions to sustainability/SWB).....	189
Perceived Agency.....	204
Realizing Agency and Confronting its Barriers through Engagement: The Sustainability Learning Community Experience.....	216
Conclusion: Links to Research Questions and Objectives.....	231
6 BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE.....	233
Summary of Key Findings and their Implications for Capacity Building for Eco-Citizenship: A Response to Main Question (1-3) and Objectives (1-2).....	234
Considerations of Potentiality for Eco-Citizenship.....	234
Indicators of Critical Ecological Consciousness-raising and Norm.....	234
Connections to Eco-Citizenship Qualities, Principles, and Action Potential.....	238
Considerations of Knowledge-Making and Socialization Factors in Shaping Participants' Values, Perceptions, and Perceived Agency.....	240

CHAPTER	Page
Links between the Main Takeaways Reported by Participants and Transformative Sustainability Learning.....	247
Implications for Continued Capacity Building for Global Eco-Citizenship: A Response to Framing Research Question (2) and Objectives (3-4).....	252
Potential Internal and External Barriers and Contributions to Transformative Capacity Building.....	252
Potential Pathways Forward for Future SEL Design and Implementation.....	254
Lessons Learned from Reflexive Research Practice: Suggestions on Ways to Improve and/or Adapt Study Design for Future Research.....	259
Incorporating Comparative Design Across SEL Program Approaches.....	259
Revamping and Launching Survey for ALLSEL Participants.....	261
Working with Faculty on Integrating the Photovoice into SEL Programs.....	265
Potential for Linking with “Key Competencies in Sustainability”	272
Conclusion: Summary of Key Contributions of Dissertation Research.....	273
Final Author’s Note.....	274
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	276
APPENDIX	
I PERMISSION TO REPRINT FIGURE 1.....	300
II PERMISSION TO REPRINT FIGURE 2.....	302
III INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD HUMAN SUBJECTS EXEMPTION.....	304

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1 Transformative Sustainability Learning (TSL) Framework.....	78
2 “Moments’ of Social Transformation” Model: Mechanisms, Actors, and Pathways (MAPs) Framework.....	79
3 Transformative Capacity Building Model within a T-Pathways to SWB Framework.....	80
4 Highlights of Findings from Thematic Analyses.....	232
5 Transformative Capacity Building Model within a T-Pathways to SWB Framework (Applied).....	275

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	Page
1 Indicators of Potentiality (i.e. Capacity) for Eco-Citizenship.....	240

ABBREVIATIONS

CBPR.....	Community-Based Participatory Research
COO.....	Chief Operating Officer
CoPs.....	Communities of Practice (CoPs)
GD.....	Global Development
GDP.....	Gross Domestic Product
GCSO.....	Global Consortium for Sustainability Outcomes
GIOS.....	Global Institute of Sustainability
GSS.....	Global Sustainability Studies
IBRD.....	International Bank of Reconstruction and Development
IHRC.....	Interim Haiti Recovery Commission
IMF.....	International Monetary Fund
JSD.....	Just Sustainability Paradigm
MAPs.....	Mechanisms, Actors, and Pathways (MAPs)
PARDN.....	Plan for National Recovery and Development in Haiti
PM.....	Program Manager
SD.....	Sustainable Development
SEL.....	Sustainability Experiential Learning
S/M.....	Spain and Morocco
SNfH.....	Sustainable Neighborhoods for Happiness
SNHI.....	Sustainable Neighborhoods for Happiness Index
SOS.....	School of Sustainability
SWB.....	Sustainable Wellbeing
TSL.....	Transformative Sustainability Learning
UNCED.....	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

UNCSD.....United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
UNDP.....United Nations Development Program
UNEP.....United Nations Environment Program
USAID.....United States Agency for International Development
VBN.....Value-Belief-Norm
WSS.....Walton Sustainability Solutions
WSSD.....World Summit on Sustainable Development
WSSI.....Walton Sustainability Solutions Initiatives (WSSI)

PREFACE

The negative repercussions of human-induced global environmental change (i.e. global change) have been well-established. Destructive changes in climate, biodiversity, water and food resources, land, and more have been exacerbated by global inequality, exploitative production and consumption patterns, human rights abuses, and rapid urbanization and unsustainable development, among others (Brown & Kasser, 2005; Jackson, 2009; Kjell, 2011; O'Brien, 2012; IPCC 2014; Fiske et al., 2014). The scale and complexity of global change concerns such as climate change make it among the most pressing sustainability challenges of contemporary society. Imperatives for addressing vulnerability to global change have led to technocratic and managerial sustainability responses criticized for reinforcing an anthropocentric, hegemonic development paradigm (Escobar, 1999; Swyngedouw, 2007; Imran et al., 2014; Dryzek, 2013). Such solutions operating within dominant narratives of “planetary management” and “environmental authoritarianism” erode local capacity and neglect diverse needs and interests, especially those of the most vulnerable (Stirling, 2014, p.iii). To address these concerns, scholars argue for transformative shifts in ideology, policy, and practice favoring alternative, plural transformation pathways for achieving a more sustainable and just society for people and planet—herein referred to as sustainable wellbeing (Pelling, 2011; Kates et al., 2012, O'Brien, 2012; Leach et al., 2012; Wise et al., 2014). This raises key debates about what such transformation pathways should entail, from where do we begin, and with whom does the responsibility lie.

If we accept that socioecological transformations are necessary for addressing global change concerns and working toward sustainable wellbeing, how do we build transformative capacity and who will lead the way? What different approaches to capacity building open up (or perhaps obstruct) alternative pathways for social change?

These questions are at the heart of this research inspired by the work of the STEPS (Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability) Centre's transformation pathways approach to sustainability (Leach et al., 2007). Adopting and adapting the STEPS Centre's transformation pathways approach as a guiding framework, this dissertation is based on the premise that working toward sustainable wellbeing requires an ongoing process of identifying, negotiating, and facilitating alternative transformation pathways that are "inclusive" (especially of the most marginalized), "deliberative" (open to multiple understandings and perspectives), and "reflexive" (critically conscious of different framings and competing interests) (Stirling et al., 2007, p. 2). Understanding how underlying values (i.e. principles guiding one's decisions/actions) and perceptions (i.e. problem/solution framings) influence agency and drive human and institutional decision-making and action is a core component of the pathways approach (O'Brien & Wolf, 2010). The degree of openness or resistance to transformation pathways can support or constrain capacity for ameliorating global change and its repercussions, especially when faced with competing interests between privileged groups and vulnerable communities (UNU-IHDP, 2012). My work continues along this vein, albeit interpreting and applying the pathways approach in a somewhat peculiar fashion. This dissertation considers how the next generation of those primed for sustainability leadership (e.g. college/young professional sustainability scholars and practitioners) identify with and negotiate diversity in what constitutes sustainable wellbeing and the approaches needed to get there.

Recent global efforts have highlighted the importance of lifelong learning for the advancement of sustainable wellbeing (Thoresen et al., 2015). Most notable is the United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) (2005-2014). DESD resulted in a series of formal and informal education initiatives around the world that

sought to empower learners of all ages through sustainability understanding, values, core competencies and practice. While the decade has concluded, UNESCO's Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has renewed the call for prioritizing sustainability learning as an essential tool for combatting global change and catalyzing global eco-citizenship (UNESCO, 2014).

In line with the vision of the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development, the Responses to Environmental and Societal Challenges for our Unstable Earth (RESCUE) project asserts that key sites for and facilitators of socioecological transformations are local and global education and capacity building spheres (O'Brien et al., 2013). Project members argue for radical changes in the dominant framings of global change and sustainability, which necessitates transforming approaches to education and capacity building for sustainable wellbeing (O'Brien et al. 2013, p. 10). This points to a shift in knowledge-making processes and the goals, values and structures that govern them (Leach et al., 2010). Here transformative learning—the facilitator of this shift—acts as both a mechanism of and pathway for transformation to sustainable wellbeing. Based on this premise, transformative learning encourages a deeper examination of how conflicting personal and societal priorities—and the assumptions that guide them—may threaten sustainable wellbeing. This helps “learners” identify what is worth preserving and what should be discarded so as to open up space for diverse and innovative pathways for a sustainable future.

Significance and justification of study

I set out on this dissertation to complement and expand upon this line of inquiry by integrating the transformation pathways framework with tenets from transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000; Gruenewald, 2003; Sipos et al., 2008), norm activation and Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) (Schwartz, 1977; Stern & Dietz, 1994; Stern et al., 1999), and

global ecological citizenship (Dobson, 2003; Bendik-Keymer 2006) theories. For the purposes of this study, global ecological citizenship (eco-citizenship), an embodiment of sustainability and social justice values and practice (Dobson 2003; Bendik-Keymer, 2006), is treated as an indicator of individual—and conceivably collective—capacity for decision-making and action that supports plural transformation pathways. In short, eco-citizenship represents a standard for sustainability leadership and practice that facilitates the “opening up” of plural transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing.

Rather than attempting to determine specific transformation “solution” responses to global change concerns, this dissertation is more concerned with the implications for how the next generation of sustainability leaders/scientists conceive of pathways to sustainable wellbeing. A primary goal underpinning this research is to elucidate the normative and mobilizing dimensions of knowledge-making and socialization processes as evidenced in sustainability experiential learning (SEL) communities. To do this, I embarked on an inquiry of SEL members’ values and perceptions of sustainability/sustainable wellbeing concerns in the context of global change, examining how these values and perceptions influence the student participant SEL community members’ perceived agency to work toward sustainable wellbeing as eco-citizens. Such inquiry was aimed at better understanding if and how experiential learning can function as a capacity building mechanism for eco-citizenship that facilitates opening up plural transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing.

Experiential learning is conceptualized here as a category of social learning, encompassing multiple models such as study abroad, practice-based learning, and service learning, among others. The purpose of explicitly categorizing experiential learning as a form of social learning is to emphasize the importance of the social and communal dynamics for capacity building through experiential learning. While

grounded in educational settings, this study is distinguished from traditional program evaluation in its focus on the intercultural socialization and knowledge-making processes unfolding in sustainability experiential learning (SEL) programs offered to U.S.-based youth (targeted age range of 18-35, with some non-traditional student exceptions). Of particular interest is the learners' cognitive and affective engagement as members of SEL communities. In my analyses I considered the ways in which these, along with the broader contexts in which the SEL communities are embedded, influence two components posited as essential to capacity for eco-citizenship: critical ecological consciousness (Bowers, 2002; Gruenewald, 2003) and norm activation (Schwartz, 1977; Stern, 2000; Tarrant, 2010).

This research considers how those primed for sustainability leadership identify with and negotiate diversity in what constitutes sustainable wellbeing and the approaches needed to get there. I began this research with two key framing questions targeting sustainability experiential learning (SEL) communities:

- 1) How can capacity for “opening up” (Leach et al., 2010) plural transformation pathways be understood through the examination of SEL participants' values, perceptions, and perceived agency for eco-citizenship?
- 2) How (if at all) can sustainability experiential learning (SEL) communities better serve as capacity building mechanisms for eco-citizenship in the face of sustainability challenges linked with global change?

These framing questions served as the foundation for the development of this empirical study of SEL programs offered through the Global Sustainability Studies (GSS) Program Initiative at Arizona State University (ASU). In particular, I focused on the Summer 2015 cohort of SEL programs and the SEL communities that formed within each of the four programs. These included the following GSS SEL programs: 1) “*Sustainable*

Development across the Mediterranean” (Spain and Morocco; May 23 to June 16); 2) *“Sustainable Neighborhoods for Happiness”* (Guatemala; May 18 to May 30); 3) *“Cities, Sustainability and Public Policy”* (Hong Kong; June 5 to June 20); and 4) *“Human Rights and Sustainability in Brazil”* (Brazil; May 31-June 19) (ASU WSS, 2015). As this study evolved, so too did the direction of my inquiries. Thus emerged the following questions that became additional guides in conducting both the data collection and analyses for my empirical study:

- 1) How do SEL community members (i.e. student participants) perceive of sustainable wellbeing (SWB) and its associated problems and potential solutions pathways in addressing SWB concerns post-program?
- 2) To what extent do these factors indicate (or not) critical ecological consciousness-raising and norm activation—core components of capacity building for global eco-citizenship in support of T-Pathways to SWB?
- 3) How might these factors (values, perceptions, and perceived agency) be shaped by their engagement experiences in cross-cultural SEL communities?

Personal interests/motivation behind this study

A prime reason why I elected to do an ethnographic case study of SEL communities formed within the Global Sustainability Studies (GSS) programs at ASU is that it represents an adapted form of experiential learning that blends the highly popularized short-term study abroad model with a solutions-focused, problem-based learning model. This sustainability solutions orientation has become a guiding force behind much of the work of ASU’s Julie Ann Wrigley Global Institute of Sustainability (Wrigley Institute) and its associated School of Sustainability (SOS). The Wrigley Institute and SOS have partnered in the development and implementation of the GSS programs and are considered pioneers and global leaders in the field of sustainability.

While the GSS programs are one set of a much larger cadre of initiatives spearheaded by these renowned institutions, they provide a window into the current state of sustainability experiential learning taking place at a global scale. The GSS programs also stand as a prime example of what has become a dedicated interest within the education sphere in shaping “global citizenship” (Su et al., 2013, pp. 231-244). This is evidenced through the tremendous growth in higher education study abroad offerings that create opportunities for the international engagement of young scholars. The GSS programs were formed in response to this increased importance granted international engagement as a means for preparing future global sustainability leaders (Admin/staff, research interviews, July 2015, October 2015).

As will become apparent throughout this manuscript, I employ a critical anthropological lens to deconstruct this particular form of SEL as a capacity building mechanism. I do this not to discount the value of the GSS programs or SEL as a whole. In the interest of full disclosure, I have long been a supporter of multiple forms of experiential learning and have contributed directly to the implementation of the GSS programs specifically. Rather, I set out on this project with the goal of turning the gaze back on ourselves in somewhat of a personal experiment in critical ecological consciousness-raising. Through this practice and promotion of reflexivity, I seek to demonstrate the difficulties and importance of identifying and facilitating capacity for eco-citizenship in support of plural transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing. In the process, I hope to shed light on the need for an ongoing questioning of the values, interests, and perceptions that influence the design, implementation, and impact of formal and informal sustainability experiential learning opportunities.

While it may seem like this research captures but a small snapshot of what has become a massive industry in higher education, sustainability science, and beyond, this

project is meant to offer insight into a set of much larger concerns. Are we appropriately and justly preparing current/future sustainability scientists and practitioners to facilitate transformation that advances social AND ecological justice? To this end, how might SEL be wielded as capacity building mechanisms that better serve to counteract—rather than reinforce—the dominant hegemonic development paradigm? This project stems from my firsthand engagement with experiential learning and international sustainable development concerns through international service-learning opportunities offered by a small liberal arts university in the northeast of the United States. I am eternally grateful for those opportunities and especially for the communities with whom we partnered. They transformed me in ways I still am processing and learning from, having opened my eyes to a world, a reality, unlike anything I had ever imagined.

It was through these experiential learning opportunities that I first was exposed to the notion of "sustainable development" and since then I have never been able to turn back. I credit the personal growth and consciousness-raising I gained from these opportunities as prime motivations for my decision to pursue a Ph.D. in this field. In many ways those formative opportunities have come as both a blessing and a curse. As evidenced by this very research, I continue to struggle with and question the privilege and impact (positive and negative) I, and my fellow practitioners—be they researchers, service teams, activists, etc.—bring to similar communities around the world. This research seeks to confront some of these struggles head-on and to get at a deeper question that has haunted me since my first journey abroad: Are we doing more harm than good? It may not seem like much, but my ultimate goal is to help shape the development and implementation of future sustainability experiential learning that will support collaborative efforts to realize sustainable wellbeing through the pursuit of socioecological justice for all, especially the most marginalized in our global society. This

research is predicated on advancing a more ambitious vision for better integrating the voices and agency of youth—in solidarity with communities around the world—into international sustainability initiatives.

Preview of Manuscript Chapters

The chapters that comprise this dissertation manuscript demonstrate my own evolving and unconventional journey in seeking alternative pathways for thinking about and acting upon the complex challenges of sustainability/sustainable wellbeing and global environmental change—challenges governed by uncertainty and beholden to the powerful institutions and actors who stand to benefit most from maintaining the status quo of an unsustainable global development paradigm. Chapter 1 delves into a historically rooted critical discussion of the dominant development and succeeding sustainable development paradigms. This is meant to offer insight into the contextual background and justifications for adopting a more holistic “transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing” framework. Building upon this contextual background, Chapter 2 tackles the “how” and “why” I have interpreted and adapted the STEPS Centre’s pathways approach to sustainability as my dissertation’s guiding framework. This includes introducing the theoretical underpinnings that I integrated within this adapted framework as a means for helping to inform this research. Chapter 2 thus sets the stage for the direction of my empirical study, which I focus on throughout the remaining chapters of this manuscript.

Chapters 3 through 6 focus on the empirical ethnographic case study of the Summer 2015 Global Sustainability Studies (GSS) SEL programs/communities. I provide a detailed account of the research design and methodology employed in this case study in Chapter 3, acknowledging some of the unexpected directions it took and the main limitations I faced along the way. Chapter 4 embodies the first major integration of

ethnographic findings extracted from all types of data collected in this case study based on macro- and meso-level analyses. The results of these analyses are presented in the form of ethnographic sketches of the GSS Program Initiative and its Summer 2015 program offerings. Chapter 5 takes the analytical gaze to the micro-level wherein I discuss the findings of the applied thematic analyses I conducted on the interview data. The goal of Chapter 5 is to begin to demonstrate the connections between values, perceptions and agency and the ways in which these factors shape and are shaped by the learning communities' knowledge-making and socialization processes (particularly engagement approaches and opportunities during the GSS SEL programs). Finally, Chapter 6 concludes by bringing the narrative full-circle in a discussion of the implications this research has for alternative pathways to addressing the “wicked” sustainability challenges that are exacerbated by the dominant sustainable development paradigm. To do so, I propose concrete recommendations on ways to move forward with a more strategic transformative capacity building model aimed at facilitating global ecological citizenship in support of plural transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing.

CHAPTER 1

CONFRONTING THE ROOTS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE FRAMING OF SUSTAINABLE WELLBEING

Contextual Overview

Our ecosystem is in the midst of a global ecological crisis. Widespread environmental degradation is evidenced in growing global trends such as the loss of biodiversity, deforestation, severe droughts, land transformation, natural resource scarcity, increased extreme weather events, natural disasters, and the like (Vitousek et al., 1997; Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005; Schipper & Pelling, 2006; Jäger et al., 2011; IPCC, 2012). These occurrences—compounded by pervasive poverty, structural inequality, human rights abuses, and other socioecological injustices—are accelerating global environmental change (herein global change) and disproportionately impacting some of the most marginalized communities in both developed and developing nations (IPCC, 2007; Sachs, 2001; Amin & Goldstein, 2008; Adger & Brooks, 2003; Adger et al., 2003). The scale and complexity of global change concerns such as climate change make it among the most pressing sustainability challenges of contemporary society.

Discussions of society-nature interactions, especially human impacts of and on global change, have become focal points for scholars and practitioners in fields such as environmental anthropology (Descola & Pálsson, 1996; Kopnina, 2012; Checker, 2007; Lockyer & Veteto, 2013), development studies (Croll & Parkin, 2002; Adger et al., 2003), sustainability science (Kates et al., 2001; Turner et al., 2003; Thabrew et al., 2009; Clark & Dickson, 2003); global change studies (including adaptation, resilience and transformation research) (Nelson et al., 2007; Smit & Wandel, 2006; Eakin & Wehbe, 2009; Eriksen et al., 2011), disaster studies (Schipper & Pelling, 2006; Adger & Brooks, 2003; Warner et al., 2010), human geography (Swyngedouw, 2007 and 2010; Brown, 2014), ecology (Folke et al., 2002), economics (Lehtonen, 2004; Cavanagh & Mander,

2004) and more. The concept of sustainable development (SD) serves as a point of convergence across many of these fields. However, due to the complicated and context-dependent nature of SD, it is considered a highly elusive and contested concept (Mebratu, 1998; Pezzoli, 1997; Robinson, 2004; Gibson, 2002; Dryzek, 2013; Imran et al., 2014). This, however, has not stopped many scholars and practitioners from analyzing and assessing its different forms and applications in our global society. More recent literature has turned its gaze on questioning the very notion of sustainable development, including its underlying rationalities and root metaphors (Robinson, 2004; Sneddon et al., 2006; Cléménçon, 2012; Dryzek, 2013; Imran et al., 2014; Stirling, 2009). This chapter seeks to further that critical discussion and lay the foundation for an alternative framing of sustainable wellbeing.

The worsening state of our present global ecological crisis and the recognition of its increasingly more destructive effects on sustainable social and ecological wellbeing (what I inclusively refer to as sustainable wellbeing) sets the stage for a critical examination of the conceptualizations of SD. This critical examination is meant to shed light on how the dominant ideologies underlying the concept of SD shape local and global perceptions, decision-making and actions aimed at promoting and implementing SD. As will be argued throughout this chapter and dissertation, SD in its current form has been built upon an unsustainable anthropocentric economic paradigm that, in contradiction to the claimed goals of SD, has led in many cases to the erosion of local capacity and widespread socioecological injustices. Imperatives for addressing vulnerability to global change have led to technocratic and managerial sustainability responses criticized for reinforcing an anthropocentric, hegemonic development paradigm (Escobar, 1999; Swyngedouw, 2007; Imran et al., 2014; Dryzek, 2013). Such solutions operating within dominant narratives of “planetary management” and

“environmental authoritarianism” erode local capacity and neglect diverse needs and interests, especially of the most vulnerable (Stirling, 2014, iii). To address these concerns, scholars argue for a transformative shift in ideology, policy, and practice favoring alternative, plural transformation pathways for achieving a more sustainable and just society for people and planet—herein referred to as sustainable wellbeing (Pelling, 2011, Kates et al., 2012, O’Brien, 2012; Leach et al., 2012; Wise et al., 2014). This raises key debates about what such transformation pathways should entail, from where do we begin, and with whom does the responsibility lie.

By first exploring the criticisms of SD and alternative approaches within the context of global change, I intend to make the case for shifting our focus from SD to that of sustainable wellbeing. I argue that a sustainable wellbeing framing forces us to interrogate the underlying rationalities of our global development paradigm and to reconsider what our aims for sustainability should be if applying a more holistic and pluralist ecocentric perspective as encapsulated in the STEPS Centre’s “pathways approach to sustainability” (Leach et al., 2010). In turn, sustainable wellbeing better unites and balances the human and ecological realms by invoking a moral imperative that emphasizes a dual capacity building and socioecological justice lens, which I will argue in subsequent chapters is integral to global ecological citizenship (Stoner et al., 2014).

The discussion below is divided into three main sections: (1) Sustainable Development’s Grounding in Global Development and the Emergence of the Global Development Industry; (2) Contextualizing a Sustainable Wellbeing Framing; and (3) Carving out a Sustainable Wellbeing Framing.

The first section addresses two main arguments. First, I discuss the ways in which dominant conceptualizations of, and consequently approaches to, sustainable development (SD) have exercised a top-down, technocratic model that in many cases has fostered dependency, eroded local capacity, and resulted in greater vulnerability to ecological degradation, global change, and socioecological injustice. To do this, I start by highlighting the present SD paradigm's roots in the global development industry. Second, I demonstrate how SD's top-down, technocratic model is built upon an anthropocentric economic rationality stemming from the global capitalist system, rather than an ecological rationality which positions the concerns of humans and our natural environment on a more equal playing field. Here I point to the ways in which an economic rationality further compounds potential contradictions and competing interests between human and ecological wellbeing.

The second section sets forth the case for moving from a "sustainable development" to "sustainable wellbeing" framing. I ground this section in a discussion of the debate between an anthropocentric view of SD vs. a more holistic, ecocentric view of sustainable wellbeing that redefines the human and environment relationship. Before laying out the proposed alternative framing, I briefly examine the historical roots of human wellbeing conceptualizations. I do this to raise important concerns about how some conceptualizations of human wellbeing have succeeded in pushing forward an economic rationality, while pointing to recent attempts to counteract this economic-centered approach. This discussion provides justification for a sustainable wellbeing framing grounded in an ecological rationality and socioecological justice imperative for global ecological citizenship (Bendik-Keymer, 2006).

Finally, the third section lays the groundwork for advancing a more holistic sustainable wellbeing framing. In this final section I outline the fundamental elements of

this proposed sustainable wellbeing framing, including the integrated human and ecological wellbeing conditions to which sustainability decision-making and action would ideally aspire. In sum, this chapter provides the contextual background and justification for my adaptation of the STEPS Centre’s “pathways approach to sustainability” as my overarching framework. I present a detailed overview of this adopted framework in the following chapter.

Sustainable Development’s Grounding in Global Development and the Emergence of the Global Development Industry

In order to articulate and critically examine the complex concept of SD, I must first consider its foundational underpinnings of global development (GD) and the emergence of the “global development industry” (DeVries, 2007; Nolan, 2002; Mosse, 2013). GD is referred to as the “worldwide effort to eradicate poverty and its associated ills” (Nolan, 2002, p. 32). While poverty eradication and development on the surface are virtuous and fundamental goals, a closer look at the history of GD and the GD industry paints a much more problematic picture. To begin, GD is grounded in a long history of ethnocentrism enacted through colonization and Westernization that has succeeded in many cases in penalizing or outright destroying traditional values, practices, and forms of social organization among diverse cultures around the world (Englund, 2006; Escobar, 2012; Gupta, 2010; Nolan, 2002; Mosse, 2013; Moyo, 2009).

The hierarchical underpinnings of the GD industry and its associated top-down approaches to SD are best exemplified in the birth of the “first”, “second” and “third world” classifications during the mid-twentieth century (Escobar, 2012). “First World” nations were comprised of the “Western industrial democracies” (Nolan, 2002, p. 35). “Second World” nations consisted of “the centrally planned economies of the Soviet bloc” (Nolan, 2002, p. 35). Finally, the “Third World” nations were characterized as “poor

countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America,” most of which “had been former colonies, and were therefore equipped—or saddled—with a range of Western-style institutions” (Nolan, 2002, p. 35). Today, the First and Second World nations are often grouped together as the “Global North” (with some exceptions), whereas Third World countries are more commonly referred to as “developing nations” making up a majority of the “Global South.” As Sachs (2001, p. 6) puts it, “today, such divisions fail to represent relevant reality; they are just diplomatic artefacts.” Nonetheless, these “artefacts” have reified a deeply entrenched system of global inequality that cannot be overlooked.

Instead of illuminating the complex realities and diverse experiences of people and communities entangled by poverty’s wrath so as to better address its underlying causes and impacts, the Third World classification succeeded in demoralizing and disempowering entire nations. Much like colonization, Third World countries were essentially lumped together in a way that would permit the proliferation of a prescribed, “one-size-fits-all” mentality that portrayed First World nations and their pursuits for prosperity and growth as the ideal. “Progress...would be measured in economic terms, and industrialized societies would be the model to which weaker economies should aspire. Development, in this view, was essentially a unilineal evolutionary process that could be accelerated through the adoption of Western technology, models, and methods” (Nolan, 2002, p. 45). In other words, the GD industry’s fight against poverty fostered a technocratic model based on a “savior mentality”, or what others referred to as the “White Man’s Burden” (Easterly, 2006). It was thus the duty of the First World—those Western nations armed with supposed superior knowledge, technology and resources—to save the Third World from itself.

The rise of GD as an industry dates back to the mid-twentieth century, particularly the post-WWII era. Nolan (2002) identifies this as the period in which the

global development industry took a more definitive form, bringing with it an expanding global exchange of people, skills, finances and other resources claimed to be applied in service of GD as “progress”, a proclaimed global social good. Globalization, credited with reinforcing rather than counteracting global inequality as proponents would claim, has no doubt played a key role in the expansion of the GD project into a “multibillion-dollar industry” comprised of four core groups: “multilateral agencies, bilateral agencies, nongovernment organizations, and private consulting firms” (Nolan, 2002, p. 36). This can be seen in how these core groups, the bulk of which are either internationally based or rely heavily on international ties for resources, have infiltrated countries in the Global South.

During the post-WWII period, we saw the emergence of the Bretton Woods Framework, which “embodied and promoted an economic approach to development in which rapid reconstruction and growth were seen as essential to the establishment of national economic health” (Nolan, 2002, p. 35). This in turn led to the creation of global economic powerhouses such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) (i.e. World Bank), which continue to wield incredible control and influence over development efforts (including those under the heading of sustainable development) worldwide (Stiglitz, 2002; Nolan, 2002; Moyo 2009; Bayliss et al., 2011).

While globalization has facilitated the exchange of essential development resources, including funding, personnel, information, technology, and project collaboration within and across national borders, the distribution of these resources came to be dominated by foreign aid programs and policies controlled heavily by international development donor agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Development Programme

(UNDP), and the World Bank (Cavanagh & Mander, 2004; Nolan, 2002; Moyo, 2009). Typically pulling the purse-strings and setting the agendas from the top down, these central actors could be considered what Easterly (2006, pp. 5-6) refers to as the leading “Planners”—in contrast to “Searchers”—within the GD industry:

Planners raise expectations but take no responsibility for meeting them; Searchers accept responsibility for their actions. Planners determine what to supply; Searchers find out what is in demand. Planners apply global blueprints; Searchers adapt to local conditions. Planners at the top lack knowledge at the bottom; Searchers find out what the reality is at the bottom....

....A Planner thinks he already knows the answers; he thinks of poverty as a technical engineering problem that his answers will solve. A Searcher admits he doesn't know the answers in advance; he believes that poverty is a complicated tangle of political, social, historical, institutional, and technological factors. A Searcher hopes to find answers to individual problems only by trial and error experimentation. A Planner believe outsiders know enough to impose solutions. A Searcher believes only insiders have enough knowledge to find solutions, and that most solutions must be homegrown. (Easterly, 2006, p. 6)

In short, Global North Planners operate as the decision-makers, defining the problems, goals and solutions within the GD industry and justifying their actions (regardless of how ill-matched or ineffective they may be) with the belief that they have the necessary knowledge, resources, and ideologies to improve the plights of the Global South. Such entities today continue to maintain a great deal of decision-making and economic power

over the direction of GD efforts, though more recent Global South-South efforts are beginning to push back against this reality.¹

A primary way for donors (i.e. Planners) to assert control over development pathways and thus promote their own agendas has been a reliance on an aid tied to conditionalities model (Goldman, 2005; Easterly, 2006; Moyo, 2009). The three main ways aid has been tied to conditionalities are as follows: 1) aid “tied to procurement”, meaning aid must be applied toward “specific goods or services” or the employment of donor citizens in host countries; 2) aid tied to a preselected “sector and/or project”; 3) aid tied to the adoption of predetermined “economic and political policies” (Moyo, 2009, 38-39). The latter has been particularly conducive to pushing forward market-based policies embedded within a neoliberal development approach that was ushered in at full force with structural adjustment (Portes, 1997; Harvey, 2005; Moyo, 2009). By serving the interests of donors and limiting the capacity of aid recipients to determine how aid is applied, especially those most impacted by development or lack thereof, conditionalities have greatly influenced the top-down, technocratic and ethnocentric approaches to SD that persist today.

As a number of scholars have noted (Bauer, 1954; Easterly, 2002; Easterly, 2003; Easterly et al., 2003; Easterly, 2006; Collier, 2003, 2007; Crocker, 2002; Moyo, 2009; Sachs, 2015), despite the billions (USD) and countless resources injected into development efforts abroad, foreign aid has failed on its own terms to “stimulate rapid, large-scale, and sustained economic growth”—the championed solution to the problems at the heart of the poverty-underdevelopment nexus (Nolan, 2002, p. 45). Though GD efforts throughout time have led to some significant improvements in livelihoods and economic growth for some, the successes of GD efforts are variable at best and have

¹ See Quadir, 2013, and de Renzio & Seifert, 2014 for a critical discussion of implications for this more recent South-South cooperation trend.

brought about unintended devastating consequences at worst (Easterly, 2002). Instead of eradicating poverty, the pursuit of this paired growth-development goal in the name of progress by the foreign aid and GD industry as a whole have reinforced corruption and inequality, and fostered a system of dependency that has eroded national and local community capacity to provide for the basic needs and wellbeing of its people (Cavanagh & Mander, 2004; England, 2005; Harvey, 2005; Easterly, 2006; Collier, 2007; Moyo, 2009). On whole, the GD industry has failed at embracing a collaborative and collective, multidirectional effort in their fight against poverty. Scholars have cited a lack of sociopolitical will to acknowledge and address the structural inequalities fueling poverty around the world as a major source of the GD industry's failure (Moyo, 2009).

Haiti, the poorest country in the Western hemisphere and the one that has received the most aid from the U.S., is a telling (albeit extreme) example. International aid and the NGOization of the country have left local communities at the mercy of international actors (Zanotti, 2010). Haiti's *2010 Action Plan for National Recovery and Development in Haiti* (PARDN) has demonstrated the country's continued commitment to (or perhaps entrapment by) neoliberal economic development policies and projects that have severely eroded the local economy. The ramifications of local capacity erosion has been felt most significantly by Haiti's local agriculture industry which, as argued, is essential to the reconstruction and sustainable development of the country (Zanotti, 2010; Herard, 2011).

While PARDN may appear to push forward respectable goals in theory, its strategies have been criticized for neglecting environmental concerns and withholding funds and resources from other areas in dire need of support such as agriculture. All the while, economic development schemes, such as those aimed at erecting hotels within the tourism industry, have primarily benefitted multi-national corporations and other

external entities at the expense of Haiti's most marginalized (Herard, 2011). The very fact that control of international aid is placed in the hands of international bodies such as the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (IHRC) creates potential barriers to desperately needed national and local capacity-building.

The example of Haiti supports the literature found in the critical anthropology of development. Influenced by political economy work, scholars have emphasized the ways in which GD, under the guise of an “antipolitics front of schemes for production or poverty reduction”, has concealed “strategies of power” in areas such as immigration and border control, global trade and market systems, and resource extraction (Mosse, 2013, 229; Ferguson, 1994; Scott, 1998; Sachs, 2001; Duffield, 2002; Greenough & Tsing, 2003; Harvey, 2005; Easterly, 2006). To be fair, the legitimization of international power in developing regions does not happen in isolation. Power inequalities (among other factors) inherent within donor recipient nations in the Global South contribute to the necessary conditions for external agencies to infiltrate these regions. This oftentimes leads to local elites inviting in donor agencies that are most conducive to reaffirming their own power and political interests. In turn, these same local elites benefit from the influx of GD resources and interventions at the expense of those most in need. As Easterly (2002, p. 1) puts it, “foreign aid works for everyone except for those whom it was intended to help.” Weak or corrupt governments and institutions (i.e. poor governance) within developing nations is an oft-cited reason for why aid-based development strategies have failed to pull impoverished peoples and entire nations out of poverty (Johnsøn, Taxell, & Iversen, 2015; Cremer, 2015). But while corruption is a pervasive problem on a global scale, it is but one piece of a far more complex set of interwoven issues impeding just and sustainable development. For more information on the ongoing anti-corruption movement, see the work of Transparency International, the

leading NGO in the fight against global corruption. Nevertheless, power struggles and inequalities prominent in the global development industry—propagated by actors from the Global North and South alike—provide the backdrop for the advent of the sustainable development paradigm in response to growing concern for our modern day ecological crisis. I now turn my focus to sustainable development in the sections to follow.

From Global Development to Sustainable Development

The roots of SD as a concept, guiding principle, and global modernization project are most commonly linked to two key international gatherings: the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (the Stockholm Conference) in 1972, and the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (the Brundtland Commission), sponsored by the United Nations in 1987 (Mebratu, 1998; UNEP, 2002; Sneddon et al., 2006). Both were informed by and could be seen as responses to growing environmental concerns in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s (UNEP, 2002; Robinson, 2004), as well as what Dryzek (2013, p. 148) refers to as “radical discourse for the Third World.” The latter drew upon local cultures and practices to challenge an ‘economic growth at all costs model’ of development with a less exploitative and more restorative interaction between humans and environment. The Stockholm Conference produced *a Declaration on the Human Environment* (the *Stockholm Declaration*, United Nations, 1972), the *Action Plan for the Human Environment*, and an “Environment Fund” directed toward supplementing government funds for development.

The Stockholm Conference and its outputs were meant to set forth the principles and shared framework for global environmental action intended to guide global development policy (UNEP, 1972; UNEP, 2002). However, the process of developing this framework was anything but inclusive. As Wapner (2003) points out, the Stockholm Conference fell short of sufficient participation from countries in the Global South.

Treated as “an environment conference”, Stockholm focused more on the “pollution problems of the North with little consequence for Southern countries” (Wapner, 2003, p. 4). This exemplifies power inequalities between the Global North and South present early in the evolution of the emergent SD paradigm, particularly with regards to future leading advocates of SD. As will be discussed, struggles stemming from this “North-South divide” would continue into future world gatherings, agreements, negotiations and other international efforts linked to SD, especially the Brundtland Commission and the well-known Rio Summits (Sachs, 2001).

While the Stockholm Conference weighed heavily on the side of environmentalism, the Brundtland Commission was meant to address more holistically the complex environmental and social concerns of the times. Probably its most recognized contributions to the progression of SD was its resulting Brundtland Report, also known as *Our Common Future* (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), and its highly cited definition of sustainable development: “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, p. 41). Most commonly associated with this definition are the “three pillars of SD”: “economic development, social development, and environmental protection” (United Nations, 2011, “About Rio+20”). Recent articulations of SD, such as that found in the UN-Secretary General’s synthesis report on the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), add “governance” as a fourth pillar (Ban Ki-Moon, 2014).

At the time, the Brundtland Commission was hailed for making great strides in better incorporating the poverty and development concerns of the Global South with environmental concerns of the Global North—a significant improvement from Stockholm. The Brundtland Report specifically stresses the need to address “goals of

economic and social development...in terms of sustainability in all countries” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 41). Nonetheless, this early conceptualization of SD was built upon a global divide of competing interests between the Global North and South that has continued to influence North-South relations (Sachs 2001). Advocates in the Global North saw SD as “an affirmation of global environmental protection efforts” while those in the Global South “looked to the term as a formal commitment to address development goals” (Wapner, 2003, p. 4). This conflict is evidenced in the inherent contradictions of the goals of SD articulated in World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) which reinforce the “call for economic growth in developing countries” while at the same time advocating for “enhanced levels of ecological conservation” (Sneddon et al., 2006, p. 254; Lélé, 1991; Robinson, 2004).

Since the early days of Stockholm and Brundtland, international leaders from both the Global North and South have converged in attempts to discuss and advance (or some might argue, impede) the cause of SD as a global, collective imperative. Among the most noteworthy were the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro (i.e. “Rio Earth Summit”); the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg, South Africa (i.e. “Rio+10”); and the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) again held in Rio de Janeiro (i.e. “Rio+20”) (Dryzek, 2013). Each of these produced what were intended to be highly influential international documents and calls for action. Examples included the following: declarations and resolutions (UNCED’s *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*; WSSD’s *Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*; UNCSD’s *The Future We Want*); agendas (UNCED’s *Agenda 21*); statements on principles (e.g. UNCED’s *Forest Principles*); treaties (UNCED’s

Treaty on Climate Change and *Treaty on Biological Diversity*); goals or plans (WSSD's *Plan of Implementation for Agenda 21*; UNCSD's plan for establishing Sustainable Development Goals and the post 2015 development agenda); and more (United Nations Division for Sustainable Development, 2014; Wapner 2003; Cléménçon 2012; Scott 2012; Linnér & Selin, 2013).

Of particular importance to setting the contemporary stage of SD was UNCED's *Agenda 21* (United Nations, 1992b). Hailed as a major step forward, *Agenda 21* strove to implement an action plan for SD that was endorsed voluntarily by more than 178 national government delegations (UN-DESA, 2014, "Agenda 21"). *Agenda 21*, which could have been construed as a bold follow-up to the Brundtland Commission, went so far as to pinpoint production and consumption patterns of wealthier nations as major culprits contributing to the global ecological crisis. Yet the hope it brought for championing the cause of global equity through SD was perhaps doomed from the start by simultaneous calls for increased global economic growth and the dwindling motivations of Global North countries to address the inequalities they bore responsibility for causing (Dryzek, 2013). Not surprisingly, developed nations have made few strides in curbing their over-consumption patterns so as to counteract their destructive exploitation of our global ecosystem and the further deprivation of peoples whose already scarce resources are being depleted (Meadowcroft, 2000; Dryzek, 2013).

Another reason for the high regard granted *Agenda 21* was how it accentuated the need for grassroots, bottom-up engagement approaches, offering prospects for a shift toward local capacity building as a more empowering and less hierarchical alternative approach to SD. The associated *Local Agenda 21 (LA21)* promoted local people and community-based participation in SD decision-making, action, and education, and popularized the slogan "Think global, act local" (Scott, 2012). Unfortunately, while this

mantra definitely has gained hold in today's grassroots level civil society movements linked to SD and global environmental change, these efforts remain overshadowed by hegemonic global agendas that serve the interests of the corporate and government elite at the expense of those most in need. After all, local efforts can only go so far when faced with competing interests from a confluence of power and influence operating at the upper-echelons of leaders on the international stage.

Despite the repertoire of promises and agreements flowing from the various Earth Summits, these gatherings faced major criticisms for falling short of achieving more tangible results in line with their high aspirations (Chatterjee & Finger, 1994; Smith, 1994; Wapner, 2003; Vogler & Jordan, 2003; Andresen, 2012; von Frantzius, 2004; Haas, 2012; Cléménçon, 2012; Linnér & Selin, 2013). Many attribute lack of concrete outcomes to our global society's inadequate measures for translating otherwise inspiring and innovative policies and declarations into implementable and accountable actions. Furthermore, critics have argued that rather than being more inclusive and democratic, the various Earth Summits and their Stockholm and Brundtland predecessors led to the exclusion or denouncement of alternative perspectives and core voices, particularly those most directly impacted by the SD agendas pushed forward (Meadowcroft, 1999; Sachs, 2001; Wapner, 2003; Scoones, 2007; Cléménçon, 2012; Espinosa, 2014). Controversies surrounding Rio+20 are a prime example. For instance, attempts of NGOs and other advocates to propose the adoption of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth (UDRME) (2010) spurred on many simultaneous outlier events among grassroots level actors as a means for counteracting the hegemonic "green economy" agenda that monopolized Rio+20 (Espinosa, 2014).

The contested nature of Rio+20 brought to the forefront key ideological battles surrounding SD. Most fundamental is perhaps the definition of SD itself. Though it

continues to prevail decades later, the Brundtland definition and its associated three pillars (economic, social, environmental) have come under significant criticism for being detached from the urgent reality of our global ecological crisis, failing to acknowledge the real “limits to carrying capacity of the Earth” (Cléménçon, 2012, p. 312) or give much credence to the proliferating ecological repercussions (Sumudu 2002; Murphy & Price, 2005; Imran et al., 2014). Others have argued that the vagueness of the Brundtland definition was used as a political tactic to gain widespread approval so as to advance economic development under the guise of sustainability (Wackernagel & Rees, 1996; Cordero et al., 2005; Lambacher, 2007; Imran et al., 2014). Furthermore, even when SD is broken down to more specific indicators of measurement, the dominant measurement tools—“gross domestic product, cost-benefit analysis and human development index”—weigh heavily on the side of economic and human/social priorities (Imran et al., 2014, p. 136). However basic these criticisms may appear, they draw attention to the anthropocentric, economic-driven, and technocratic trajectory of SD strategies.

An anthropocentric, economic-driven, technocratic approach to SD is clearly prominent from the early days that SD became a part of the global development agenda. This is seen in the Brundtland Report itself, which states that “sustainable development is a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 46). This extended definition of SD also exemplifies the Brundtland Commission’s caution in calling for limitations on consumption patterns. Rather than question the consumption model altogether, proponents of SD maintained that humans had the capacity to buy, build, and think our way out of this ecological mess without having to shake up the old

order. SD boiled down to simply devising a more “intelligent operation of natural systems and human systems in combination” and environmental sustainability concerns were relegated to the realm of innovations in renewable resource management that would be more efficient in meeting present and future human needs (Dryzek, 2013, p. 148). Thus, the end goal of perpetual growth to serve human needs remained the same. These early framings of SD buttress the time-honored rhetoric of human domination over the planet, and the ultimate goal of SD being the continued (or for developing countries, still to be realized) satisfaction of human needs and interests at the expense of the environment (White, 1967; Robinson, 2004; Cléménçon, 2012; Scott, 2012; Espinosa, 2014).

Beckerman (1994) and Dryzek (2013) argue that the framing of SD within the context of present and future “needs” is itself a highly subjective and contentious exercise rife with conflict. As Dryzek (2013, p. 148) points out, “Opinions differ as to what human needs count, what is to be sustained, for how long, for whom, and in what terms.” At best, this combination of competing interests and different perspectives and valuing of needs threaten the realization of SD. At worst, the implementation of certain SD initiatives has the potential to result in deplorable social and/or ecological injustices (Beckerman, 1994). The latter is most likely when SD initiatives reinforce the interests of existing sociopolitical and economic systems serving an unsustainable and unjust global paradigm that separates humans from the natural world (Bernstein, 2001; Linnér & Selin, 2013; Espinosa, 2014). Similar to the GD industry’s failed attempts at eradicating poverty, socioecological injustices stemming from SD initiatives have been attributed to the resistance of leading global powers to implementing “meaningful institutional and political change” (Linnér & Selin, 2013, p. 972). It is argued that such change is necessary if we are to redress the underlying causes of our worsening social and ecological

problems such as structural inequality, commodification of nature, and the over-production and consumption patterns characteristic of our global economic paradigm (Linnér and Selin, 2013).

I will revisit these criticisms in greater detail in my discussion below under the heading “Unmasking Economic vs. Ecological Rationality.” For now, the key points of importance can be summed up as follows. The context in which “sustainable development” in its modern form was conceived was ridden with power inequalities and competing interests among and between local-to-global actors. These competing interests were deeply embroiled within a self-defeating battle between human and ecological wellbeing. These, in turn, continue to shape the way SD has been interpreted and implemented on the ground—especially in developing countries—through top-down, growth-driven social, economic and environmental policy and action (Robinson, 2004; Sneddon et al., 2006; Dryzek, 2013). All of this stems from an anthropocentric, economic-driven, technocratic SD regime. Under such a regime the reigning message of SD is quite clear: the environment exists to serve humanity, and thus humans must not destroy it or they will destroy themselves in the process. However, the popular belief is that humans have the knowledge and tools (particularly technology and financial resources) to outsmart the environment. So long as the West can get the rest of the world up to speed on modern standards of living all will be fine.

Unmasking Economic vs. Ecological Rationality

The thread that seems to run through the progression of the global development and SD agendas is the notion of competing interests that have repeatedly undermined or thwarted sustainability efforts on local and global scales. Three main categories of competing interests that appear to emerge within the SD debate include economic interests (equated with capitalism, competitive markets, and the dominant model of

development); social interests (equated with human needs and human rights, which prioritize individualization and individual human wellbeing); and environmental interests (equated with “ecocentricism”, which prioritizes overall ecological health and wellbeing) (Hancock, 2003). These are revealed within Hancock’s (2003) articulation of two overarching rationalities that influence the realization of sustainability/SD as well as human rights: “economic rationality” and “ecological rationality.”

Under economic rationality, capitalist societies have rendered economic prosperity and competition more important than ecological protection, essentially devaluing the concept of environmental protection and rights (i.e. environmental interests), except where such contribute positively to the gross domestic product (GDP) or bolster growth. But it does not necessarily put human wellbeing (i.e. social interests) at the forefront either. Rather, economic (read corporate/market or industrialist) interests in their current form end up reinforcing values and social norms considered detrimental to sustainability, such as commodification, consumerism, competition and perpetual development at the expense of the natural world (Robinson, 2004; Kidner, 2014). Kidner (2014) refers to these interests as serving modernity’s “technological-economic system” that has colonized both the natural world and human consciousness, enslaving humans as perpetrators of this order at the expense of both human and ecological wellbeing.

Ecological rationality, on the other hand, adopts an “ecocentric” framework (Rowe, 1994), which sets as sustainability imperatives the preservation of biodiversity and natural habitats, as the recognition of the inherent value and rights of all human and non-human beings that comprise the ecosphere. Following Hancock’s (2003) rights-based concerns, adopting an ecological rationality would enable us to reconceptualize human wellbeing (including human rights) in a way that makes environmental wellbeing

(including environmental rights) not only compatible with, but necessary for, the full realization of human wellbeing. In essence, ecological rationality would help us move away from the assumption that “human nature can only be defined in terms of egotistical consumerism” toward one which places the “self and other members of human society as a part of a wider ecosystem” (Hancock, 2003, p. 5).

Hancock’s discussion of economic vs. ecological rationality can be linked with Blowers’ (2003) and Scott’s (2012) notion of “weak sustainability” vs. “strong sustainability.” The weak sustainability view is based on an “ecological modernisation conception of sustainable development” (Scott, 2012, p. 44). Under this conception, SD is co-opted by the global market, adopting an economic rationality that puts business innovation and green technology as paramount solutions to environmental degradation. Ecological modernization has prevailed as a dominant policy framework due to its promotion of economic growth as a solution to, rather than cause of, our global ecological crisis (Ulkersen, 2010). The dominant policy and action approaches to SD that result emphasize “technological innovation to solve environmental issues” and “regulation to prevent environmental degradation damaging market processes” (Scott, 2012, p. 44). Ecological modernization could also be linked to “green-washing” of corporations that claim to be sustainability-friendly, jumping on the bandwagon of the green movement as a marketing tactic for advancing their images of corporate social responsibility (Lyon & Maxwell, 2008; Vos, 2009).

These technocratic approaches are considered weak sustainability because while they may involve some “restructuring” of the current order, they ultimately strengthen the very systems and institutional structures fueling socioecological injustice and the global ecological crisis (Dryzek, 2013). The rise of industrialized agriculture and the monocrop enterprise during the “Green Revolution” is a case in point (Gottlieb & Joshi,

2010, p. 105). This agricultural model, which has come to dominate the global food system and play a leading role in the global economy, has been touted as more efficient and productive agriculture necessary to feed the rapidly growing global population. Yet the monopoly dominating the large-scale agricultural system around the world has pushed out small-scale, local farmers and resulted in a host of both social and ecological injustices. Examples of such injustices include, but are not limited to the following: families and entire communities have lost their livelihoods and in many cases become displaced from their own lands; the monoculture approach has exploited and eroded lands, threatening biodiversity; large-scale farms have contributed to pollution of surrounding environments (e.g. water resources) through agricultural run-off; and while those in the agricultural industry who hold a monopoly over production and new developments (e.g. Monsanto) have profited greatly off the “advancements” in agricultural technologies and favorable exportation policies, it is often off the backs of labor workers and already marginalized communities who may not even be able to afford to purchase or have access to the very food that their own sacrifice and suffering has made possible (for a more thorough analysis of modern developments in the agricultural-food industry and their links to socioecological justice, see Gottlieb & Joshi 2010).

Strong sustainability, on the other hand, calls for a direct “challenge to the established order” (Buckingham-Hatfield & Evans, 1996, p. 6; Scott, 2012, p. 45). Approaching SD from a strong sustainability view means embracing an ecological rationality and actively seeking alternatives to our dominant development paradigm based on unfettered growth (Dryzek, 2013). Through this process, we are able to reclaim and redefine notions of the “common good and human wellbeing” (Boulanger, 2007, p. 27), holding these as inseparable from ecological wellbeing.

Taking up again the example of the agriculture-food industry, a strong sustainability approach to transforming this complex food system would require a fundamental reframing of the system within a “food justice” perspective. Though what food justice looks like on the ground varies greatly by context, a food justice perspective aims “to achieve equity and fairness in relation to food system impacts and a different, more just, and sustainable way for food to be grown, produced, made accessible, and eaten” (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010, p. 223). Thus, this framing holds as paramount not only the health and wellbeing of humans, but a fundamental “respect for the systems that support how and where the food is grown—an ethic of place regarding the land, the air, the water, the plants, the animals, and the environment” (Gottlieb & Joshi 2010, p. 223).

Foster (2002), Doran (2012) and Kidner (2014) delve deep into the economic rationality of capitalism—the driving force behind SD’s technologic-economic paradigm. These authors emphasize the obstacles capitalism, in its current form, poses to our global society’s ability to effectively combat the negative impacts of ecological degradation and global environmental change. As these authors and other proponents of “sustainable consumption” (see Jackson, 2005), “new economy” (see Mommaerts et al., 2014), and “sustainable degrowth” (see Kallis, 2011) movements argue, our global capitalist system is predicated on the notion of “growth at any cost,” an expansionist model that prioritizes prosperity of the market over human wellbeing and environmental protection. Its focus on short-term, immediate returns, has created a demand for production and profit that has led to what Foster (2002, p. 44) calls a “global treadmill of production”—an imprisoning cycle of destruction, production, consumption, destruction...and so on, leaving little to no choice but to produce and consume more.

Foster (2002, pp. 44-45) breaks this treadmill of production into six key elements featured in the global capitalist system: 1) growing wealth accumulation by an

increasingly smaller privileged group in society (i.e. the 99% vs the 1%); 2) pressures to shift from “self-employment” to “wage jobs” dependent on increased productivity; 3) competition-driven technological innovation aimed at maintaining said increased production and thus economic power (again concentrated in the hands of the few at the expense of the many); 4) impetus for innovation and growth that feeds on producers’ and consumers’ “insatiable hunger for more”; 5) prioritization of progress and development in terms of economic growth, particularly by governments on the national front; 6) the institutionalization and reinforcement of this growth mentality through dominant sociocultural systems (e.g. education, media, entertainment, etc.) Perhaps most alarming is the reality that “we live as unknowing agents of this system”, blinded, corrupted and exploited by false capitalist promises of “‘freedom’, ‘individual choice’, and ‘democracy’” that have instead rendered us powerless (Kidner 2014, pp. 471-472). These features of capitalism have come not only to define our global economic, political and sociocultural landscapes at large, but have also set the standards by which success and happiness on an individual level are perceived.²

Capitalism’s expansionist model is well illustrated in the example of the global food crisis. Gonzalez (2011), Gasteyer et al. (2012), and Hudson (2009) raise important connections among food insecurity, food sovereignty and environmental degradation stemming from inequality among labor and market functions within the global agricultural trade system. Gonzalez (2011, p. 493) emphasizes market influences, referring in particular to highly unequal “aid, trade and production policies” that favor transnational corporations over environmental and social justice concerns. In this case, industrial agriculture, a birth child of corporations that drive global labor and market functions, is viewed as a major player in fostering food insecurity, compromising

² For an informative and accessible change initiative that tackles the treadmill of production from the perspective of overconsumption, see “The Story of Stuff”: <http://storyofstuff.org/>.

agrobiodiversity, and contributing most severely to climate change. Each of these injustices has grave consequences for SD and the realization of human and ecological wellbeing.

Furthermore, Hudson (2009, p. 10) cautions against falling victim to the “Enrichment Paradox” where short term gains in productivity and efficiency by virtue of advancement in agricultural technologies could lead to a period of stabilization and then ultimately a devastating crash. At the core of this paradox is a predominant view of SD approaches focused on technological innovations as our saving grace, enabling us to out-produce or out-think ecological destruction while enjoying persistent growth and maintaining the competition-driven, capitalist logic. Ecological modernization and weak sustainability are major sources of this paradox as they encourage us to ignore the fact that production and efficiency do not automatically equate to greater wellbeing (human or ecological) or sustainability as a whole, especially when based on systems of “structural inequality”—“a condition that arises out of attributing an unequal status to a category of people in relation to one or more other categories of people” (Dani & de Haan, 2008, p. 3). In such systems, policies, institutions, and dominant cultural norms perpetuate the “unequal relations in roles, functions, decision rights, and opportunities” of certain groups compared to others within a given society (Dani & de Haan, 2008, p. 3).

According to these critics of capitalism, the consumer individual is not the only one subjected to the model’s mechanical chains. Even big business leaders and government officials who acknowledge the severity of our ecological crisis and desire to incorporate positive changes must inevitably acquiesce to the rules of the market economy in order to survive. We see this in failed efforts or missed opportunities on the part of national and international governing bodies to guide our global society toward

ecological rationality and strong sustainability. For example, international efforts to curtail climate change such as the Kyoto protocol have been watered down or obliterated by those in power in the process of prioritizing the impact on the economy over the impact on the environment (and, as a result, compromising long-term human wellbeing). This is best summed up in McKibben's (2007, p. 24) description of the U.S.'s resistance to the Kyoto protocol: "...the United States has refused to sign on because we worry it will interfere with...economic growth." Paired with growing contention from climate change denialists, many of whom hold some of the highest positions of authority in countries like the U.S., it is clear that global leaders are not immune to becoming co-creators and fellow victims of our production- and consumption-driven culture (McKibben, 2007; Jackson, 2009; Scott, 2012).

The example of Kyoto sends the message that the market is what matters, plain and simple. Proponents of the technological-economic capitalist model may lay claim to notions of advancing human wellbeing to push forward their agendas. But, as critics of ecological modernization would argue, underlying these seemingly goodwill efforts couched under the title of "sustainable development" is the goal of sustaining capitalism—the real source of governance in our society (Ulkerson, 2010; McKibben, 2007). What results is commodification. Capitalism drives us to put a price on everything including human life, social institutions, conflict, religion, and of course the environment. Commodification of environmental resources allows us to divorce ourselves from nature even further than modernization has already pushed us, thus perpetuating the root metaphor (i.e. suppositional framing or perspective) of man's dominance over the earth (Crist & Kopnina, 2014). This becomes ever clearer in the battle between public and private goods, an element of capitalism that, as Haglund

(2010) points out, has resulted in greater inequality and human rights abuses, and remains a direct threat to the integrity and wellbeing of our ecosystem.

The exploitation of humans and the environment for profit points to a more pervasive concern of structural violence. “Structural violence” stems from social systems and institutions systematically designed and/or enacted in ways that cause undue harm—by compromising the rights, needs, and wellbeing of humans and their surrounding environments (Galtung, 1969; Farmer, 2003). This social justice concept is rooted in structural inequality and can be linked to Sen’s (1999, p. 3) notion of “unfreedoms”—“poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states.” The historically oppressive, hidden, and institutionalized nature of structural violence makes it difficult to identify and fight against. This struggle is worsened by “the erasure of historical memory and other forms of desocialization” that beget ignorance, or worse, turn people into indirect perpetrators of harm by virtue of where they fit within a certain “social order” (Farmer, 2003, p. 307).

The privatization of water in impoverished regions is an excellent example of structural violence at play. Water scarcity, a global concern, has led governments in places like Bolivia to commodify a natural resource, ushering in a private market for water distribution that has left the most vulnerable at the mercy of profit-driven national and multinational corporations (Woods, 2006; Public Citizen, 2001). For example, at the turn of the 21st century the Bolivian government transferred control of the municipal water system in Cochabamba over to the London-based multinational water consortium, Aguas del Tunari Ltd. This action was part of a series of privatization efforts driven largely by neoliberal “structural adjustment” policies adopted by (or some might argue thrust upon) the Bolivian government as a “condition for borrowing money from the

World Bank and IMF” in attempts to raise the country out of poverty (Public Citizen, 2001, p. 2). (For an in-depth discussion on implications for the impacts of structural adjustment on sustainable development, see the seminal volume edited by Reed, 1996.) The untenable rise in the cost of water that accompanied this transfer to a privatized water system over the span of months made this basic resource unaffordable and inaccessible to many local people. What resulted was a proliferation of public protests and citizen actions known today as the “Water War in Bolivia” (Olivera & Lewis, 2004; Public Citizen, 2001).

Though greatly simplified here for brevity purposes, the Bolivia water war example is one of many complex situations whereby scarce and/or stressed resources combined with internal and external pressures to develop can give rise to structural violence. In Cochabamba’s case, the structural violence stemming from the privatization of water produced “unfreedoms” in the form of preventing vulnerable people access to a natural resource essential to survival in order to serve a capitalist profit-making scheme. Such unfreedoms limit the capabilities and capacities of people, communities, institutions and governments to protect human rights and implement a strong sustainability model of SD (Haglund, 2010).³

Building upon this discussion, Jackson (2009), Haglund (2010) and Wilkinson & Pickett (2010) each support the argument that structural inequality in the globalized economy—which translates into inequality within our social, political and ecological landscapes—stems from and perpetuates the treadmill of production, or what Jackson calls the “dilemma of growth.” In an age of “creative destruction” (Jackson, 2009, p. 9) where newer equals better and people are beholden to material consumption in order to survive and thrive, institutions—and the people who govern and are governed by them—

³ For a more thorough analysis of the impacts of water privatization in Bolivia, see Olivera & Lewis 2004.

must continuously compete and exploit the resources available to their fullest extent to avoid becoming obsolete or relegated to the “have nots.” Competition in the name of growth begets inequality, pitting people against one another and in turn compromising human wellbeing. Simultaneously, growth driven by a perpetual cycle of extractive production and consumption ends up pitting people against the environment, comprising ecological wellbeing. Jackson (2009, p. 102) sums up the growth dilemma as follows: “to resist growth is to risk economic and social collapse. To pursue it is to endanger the ecosystems on which we depend for long-term survival.” As Jackson shows in his deconstruction of the economic recession of 2008, the worst perpetrators of economic rationality and its resulting growth dilemma are those in Westernized developed countries. The overabundant production and consumption patterns of developed countries thrive on the exploitation of cheap labor, resources, etc. from around the world. These patterns also tend to contribute more drastically to waste and spur on ecological degradation (Rees & Westra, 2003) (for example, by depleting already scarce resources and contributing to higher levels of greenhouse gas emissions). Yet while global economy leaders like the United States gain tremendously from the successes of growth, the greatest the impacts of the growth dilemma are felt most severely in developing countries who are striving to meet even the most basic needs of their people while fighting to become relevant and competitive within a cut-throat global economy (Rees & Westra, 2003). In search of alternatives, Jackson (2009) makes the case for a transition to a sustainable economy as a means for remedying structural inequality and ecological degradation.

Moving toward a sustainable economy, according to Jackson (2009, p. 34), means replacing a materialist, growth-centered conception of prosperity with the notion of “bounded capabilities”—the freedom and capacity to live decent lives we have reason

to value, but “within clearly defined limits.” To determine these limits within a sustainable economy, we must take into account the “finite nature” of available ecological resources, the “entitlements” of all human and non-human species within our ecosystem (i.e. the demands of an increasing global population), and the “freedoms of future generations and other species” to thrive on this planet (Jackson, 2009, p. 35). Here, Jackson repurposes this idea of freedom drawn from Sen’s Capabilities Approach in order to acknowledge that taking freedom to the extreme runs the risk of reinforcing the pursuit limitless growth and other unsustainable practices (I return to the Capabilities Approach in later sections). A failure to account for the boundedness of capabilities would otherwise recreate the very systems of socioecological injustice and inequality Jackson’s proposed sustainable economy is meant to mend.

Echoing Jackson’s arguments for a reconceptualization of prosperity, Wilkinson & Pickett (2010) make the case that what matters most in considering human wellbeing is not one’s level of income, but rather the level of social inequality as is evidenced within a country or community. While the authors focus primarily on inequality within economically wealthy nations, this is not to say that inequality between countries has no significance. Rather, the authors’ intent is to show that gross poverty and destitution aside (such as that found in developing countries or in rural and urban impoverished regions in developed nations), inequality greatly undermines any “progress” made within wealthier nations, especially when it comes to human welfare and happiness (i.e. subjective wellbeing). The reality of structural inequality facing developing nations paints an even grimmer picture. By unveiling the links between our growth economy, inequality and disrespect of ecological limits, these authors point to further evidence of the ways in which SD’s dominant technological-economic paradigm has thwarted sustainability and compounded threats to both human and ecological wellbeing. With

that in mind, it would appear that a central aim for any SD-related policy and action should be the elimination of structural inequality and the structural violence it can inflict on individuals, communities, and entire nations.

Implications for an Alternative SD Paradigm

Reflecting on the multitude of criticisms that pinpoint the unjust and unsustainable aspects of the dominant SD paradigm, what appears to be a resounding theme throughout is this ethical imperative to question, rethink and re-conceptualize the underlying assumptions, values, aims, and priorities governing SD (Carvalho, 2001; Luke, 2005; Robinson, 2004; Gasparatos et al., 2009; Jackson, 2009; Leach et al., 2010; Imran et al., 2014). In other words, if we are serious about combatting global environmental change and facilitating a more sustainable and just society and ecosystem, what is needed, first and foremost, is a transformative ideological shift in our conceptualizations of and approaches to SD (Leach et al. 2010). However, this message tends to get lost or worse, silenced, in the mechanical and bottom-line motives of a (economic) development-based sustainability agenda.

Given the power that economic institutions, corporations, and governments at the top of the macro-economy have wielded over SD since its rise to the global arena, it is not surprising that many scholars have chosen to focus their attention on transforming our economic systems (Cavanagh & Mander, 2004; McKibben, 2007; Jackson, 2009). Considering that a complete reworking of capitalism is highly unlikely due to how entrenched it is in dominant culture and society, and how entrenched dominant culture and society is in capitalism, scholars like Jackson (2009) have proposed alternative forms of SD that seek to shift our global society toward more sustainable and just consumption practices (Cavanagh & Mander, 2004; McKibben, 2007). Rhetoric of a “sustainable macro-economy”, “sustainable degrowth”, “sustainable consumption” and

the like emanate from the work of these and other like-minded scholars, activists, and experts. What such proponents see as the way forward is an explicit recognition of the social and ecological consequences of inequality that have come to define our capitalist system, and consequently, approaches to SD. To do this, however, we need to unite the concepts of environmental justice and social and economic justice in a more holistic approach to SD that dethrones economic development as the ultimate priority. That is not to say that economic development does not have its place, especially when considering the current state of many developing countries. However, to continue to ignore the socioecological implications will only perpetuate the status quo and result in further marginalization of communities who have become most vulnerable to the repercussions of our disregard for ecological degradation.

I would argue that one of the most important contributions of the aforementioned critics of SD is the way in which their work sets the stage for an alternative vision for sustainability based on wellbeing rather than development. This fits in line with arguments regarding the ways in which the “development” part of SD has become synonymous with economic growth and industrial development (Luke, 2005; Carvalho, 2001; Robinson, 2004; Gasparatos et al., 2009). Imran. et al. (2014) make the case that a reinterpretation of SD must involve replacing an anthropocentric with an ecocentric orientation of sustainability (I discuss the anthropocentric vs. ecocentric debate more explicitly in subsequent sections.). Within this more balanced and holistic vision, our happiness, health and overall sustained human wellbeing are no longer viewed as dependent upon production, materialization and consumerism, but rather as inseparable from and reinforced by protecting the wellbeing of our wider ecosystem.

Calling for such a transformative shift in SD is a lofty goal, no doubt. But as a growing number of scholars, activists, policy-makers and other experts alike are

conceding, unless we commit to transforming the underlying values and ideologies driving our dominant SD paradigm, we are going to continue down this self-destructive path, jeopardizing human and ecological wellbeing in the process (De Paula & Cavalcanti, 2000; Ehrlich, 2002; Leach et al., 2010; Pelling, 2011; Imran et al., 2014). The following section builds upon these arguments by exploring how a focus on sustainable wellbeing could provide the pathway to the kinds of transformative change required for counteracting the underlying causes of our global ecological crisis.

Contextualizing a Sustainable Wellbeing Framing

This concluding section provides a brief overview of the historical foundations of human wellbeing and more recent conceptualizations that could be seen as attempts to counter a purely economic rendering of wellbeing. In particular, I emphasize the tensions between human and ecological wellbeing, couching this in the debate between an anthropocentric vs. ecocentric worldview introduced in the previous section. In sum, this section is meant to ground the particular conceptualization of sustainable wellbeing (for people and planet) that I propose as part of a broader guiding framework for my dissertation research, which I will take up in Chapter 2.

While a full overview of the etymology of the concept of human wellbeing is not within the scope of this chapter, it is important to note that historically human wellbeing has been grounded in “religious, spiritual, and philosophical traditions” that better lend themselves to a justice or normative framework (Stutz, 2006, p. 4). Particularly relevant is the strong influence of Aristotle’s notion of the “‘good life’ as a life of ‘virtue’” on the spread of Christianity (particularly Catholicism) and consequently, “Western civilization” (Stutz, 2006, p. 4). However, industrialization and modernization ushered in a shift toward a more economically-based determinant of human wellbeing (i.e. an economic

rationality) where “growth in income” was hailed as the “proxy for increasing wellbeing” (Stutz, 2006, p. 4). As articulated previously, this economic rationality has been a prime motivation driving the dominant sustainable development paradigm.

Stutz (2006, p. 4) points to two major efforts to expand and counter this narrow economic framing of wellbeing: “Needs Theory, developed by Maslow, Max-Neef, Gough, and others” (see Rayner & Malone 1998); and “Capabilities & Functionings” (i.e. Capabilities Approach), “developed by Sen, Nussbaum, and others” (see Nussbaum 2003 for an overview of hers and Sen’s conceptualizations of the Capabilities Approach). Additionally, the “Human Security Framework” from the field of adaptation to global environmental change (global change) calls for a more social-justice orientation of human wellbeing, with particular emphasis on capacity building as a means for addressing human vulnerabilities to global change. I briefly touch on each below as examples of how the concept of human wellbeing has taken shape outside of the realm of global domestic product. These examples also point to more recent attempts to reconnect with human wellbeing’s earlier justice and normative foundations upon which I build a sustainable wellbeing framing.

Needs theory is most commonly associated with Maslow’s (1943, 1954) “hierarchy of needs” which he saw as basic motivations at the core of human existence. Maslow’s (1943, 1954) original iterations of this motivational hierarchy included five levels most often exhibited in the literature in pyramid ordering beginning with the most basic and moving toward higher-order needs. The original five levels included “physiological”, “safety”, “love”, “esteem”, and “self-actualization” (Maslow 1943, pp. 370-396). Meeting these needs thus provides a guidepost to achieving human

development and wellbeing.⁴ Links to human needs and the environment are perhaps most obvious at the physiological level comprising of essential human survival elements such as “air, water, food, shelter” (Walsh, 2011, p. 792). In terms of sustainability and SD, Maslow’s theory posits that satisfying basic level human needs is also a prerequisite for people to be able and willing to contribute to a more sustainable society (Walsh, 2011).

Maslow’s original hierarchical ordering of human needs has been criticized for such things as downplaying the social nature of humans in its focus on individual motivations (i.e. too individualistic); for failing to adequately account for diversity of how needs might differ in framing, valuing, categorizing, and fulfillment due to cultural influences, such as in collectivist societies (i.e. too ethnocentric); for treating needs as operating within a unidirectional, linear flow rather than an iterative, relational flow throughout the life course (i.e. too bounded and limiting); for oversimplifying the process of “self-actualization”; and so forth (Heylighen, 1992; Kiel, 1999; Trigg, 2004). Nonetheless, Maslow’s theory contributes early on to a broader understanding of what humans require for living fulfilling and dignified lives⁵. This raises important questions such as the following: How are needs prioritized on both individual and societal levels? What resources and social structures are necessary to achieving higher order individual needs fulfillment, such as what Maslow (1943) refers to as “self-actualization”? How are these resources and social structures made available to people for needs fulfillment (if at all)? Who or what is impacted (positively or negatively) in what ways in the process of humans seeking needs fulfillment?

⁴ See Walsh, 2011 for a compelling discussion of the compatibility between Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and sustainability.

⁵ While Maslow’s (1943, 1954) original model remains the most well-known and widely adopted, Maslow (1970a, 1970b) later went on to refine and expand his model to include three additional levels—“cognitive needs”, “aesthetic needs”, and “transcendence needs” (see McLeod 2017 for an overview of Maslow’s hierarchical motivational theory and how it evolved over time).

Such questions bring to light potential conflicts between human and ecological wellbeing. For example, in developing countries where basic physiological needs have yet to be met, people have often been forced to take desperate measures to survive that have no doubt compromised ecological integrity. The current drought and housing crisis in São Paulo, Brazil is no doubt evidence of these conflicts. Brazilians who have nowhere else to live given the rapid urbanization of São Paulo have erected homes in sensitive watershed areas. In so doing they have further compromised water security for all within the greater São Paulo state by adding to the contamination of scarce resources (presentation by Sabesp Waste Management and Water Company in São Paulo, May 2014). However, despite the appeal of placing the blame of ecological degradation on the poverty of developing countries (a blame the victim mentality) (Argyrou, 2005), Ballet et al. (2013, p. 32) argue, “wealth rather than poverty is the main cause of both environmental problems and the persistence of poverty by fuelling excessive consumption of natural resources at the expense of local access.”

Adopting a social justice lens, the Capabilities Approach stems from Sen’s (1970, 1985, 1999) work on development and wellbeing with recent advancements made by Nussbaum (2001, 2003, 2006). Sen’s version of the Capabilities Approach places strong emphasis on “human freedoms”, which involves not only meeting human needs such as those articulated in Maslow’s hierarchy, but also ensuring people the “liberty to define and pursue our own goals, objectives and commitments, no matter how they link with our own particular needs” (Sen, 2013, p. 6). No doubt access to adequate resources, including economic, are necessary. However, the Capabilities Approach makes an explicit attempt to move us beyond an income-based (or GDP at a global level) conceptualization of wellbeing. As an alternative conceptualization, the Capabilities Approach focuses on capabilities as potential functionings that individuals identify as

enabling them to live the kind of lives they have reason to value (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2003). In this way, the Capabilities Approach exemplifies how more recent framings of wellbeing have been tied to diverse beliefs and understandings of what it means to be human, and what constitutes human dignity, happiness and quality of life (Scott, 2012). Supporting Sen's emphasis on human freedoms, Pelenc and Dubois (2011, p. 6) sum up the links between capabilities, functionings and wellbeing in the following:

“Functionings are related to wellbeing achievement and capability is related to the freedom of choice to achieve wellbeing.” Thus, the freedoms to choose what constitutes a “good life” and to act on those choices are essential to human wellbeing.

Both Needs Theory and the Capabilities Approach share tenets with a Human Security Framework (O'Brien, 2006; O'Brien et al., 2009; Redclift et al., 2011). A Human Security Framework, embedded in a broader social justice perspective, provides the critical theory lens necessary for grappling with interrelated concepts of power, agency, justice and wellbeing in the context of global environmental change (O'Brien, 2006; O'Brien et al., 2009). O'Brien (2006, p. 1) defines human security as “the condition when and where individuals and communities have the options necessary to end, mitigate, or adapt to risks to their human, environmental, and social rights; have the capacity and freedom to exercise these options; and actively participate in attaining these options.” A Human Security Framework prioritizes building the capacities of people within communities to “respond to change, whether by reducing vulnerability or by challenging the drivers of environmental change,” including structural inequality and human rights abuses (O'Brien, 2006, p. 1). A key component of a Human Security Framework is the recognition that individual and communal perceptions of risk and vulnerability to environmental change—factors heavily shaped by dominating social and cultural

norms—can either build or impede capacities for adaptation or transformation (Redclift et al., 2011; Adger et al., 2009).

While Needs Theory, the Capabilities Approach, and the Human Security Framework each offer valuable alternatives to the deeply entrenched economic rationality of wellbeing, their focus on the needs and interests of humans reinforces a more anthropocentric view of SD whereby human development comes at the potential risk of ecological degradation (e.g. natural resource depletion to serve human consumption needs) (Walsh, 2011). Furthermore, critics have argued that some of the most widely accepted approaches to conceptualizing and assessing human wellbeing are overwhelmingly individualistic (Kjell, 2011). Such criticisms point to the problem of an increasing spread of the Western ideal of individualism and individual prosperity, which has contributed to a loss of solidarity between individuals and societies in addition to competition for resources that breed inequality. As the critics purport, individualistic approaches to and measures of wellbeing foster a sense of isolation and self-interest, whereby individuals fail to account (or are prevented from accounting) for how their actions impact their wider local and global communities, let alone the ecosystem (Wilson & Wilson, 2007; Kjell 2011).

Despite these criticisms, a more intentional focus on the concept of wellbeing in general allows for the incorporation of important factors besides economic indicators that contribute to living a “good life.” Drawing from the Capabilities Approach and Human Security Framework, these might include factors such as interpersonal relationships, social cohesion, freedom, justice, equity and capacities—all of which are essential to socioecological justice and sustainability. Factors of community or collective wellbeing also do appear to have broader appeal within the Capabilities Approach and the Human Security Framework (Kjell, 2011). Additionally, other recent

conceptualizations of human wellbeing such as those falling into the categories of “hedonic” (associated with subjective wellbeing) and “eudaimonic” (associated with purpose and the realization of full human potential) hold promise for bringing attention to the importance of environmental health and human-environment connectedness to aspects of human wellbeing such as physical health, psychological health and happiness (i.e. subjective wellbeing), a sense of purpose or self-fulfillment, and self-efficacy (Kjell, 2011; O’Brien, 2009; Dietz et al., 2009; Cloutier et al., 2014a; Cloutier et al., 2014b).

One example of emerging approaches that attempt to directly link sustainability with wellbeing measures is the Sustainable Neighborhoods for Happiness Index (SNHI). SNHI foregrounds the role that sustainable communities play in greater subjective wellbeing (Cloutier et al., 2014a; Cloutier et al., 2014b). Justification for alternative approaches to wellbeing such as SNHI are supported by research that shows how wellbeing gains in income reach a point of diminishing returns. After a certain point, continued growth does little to improve human wellbeing, and may in fact counteract it by generating greater inequality and even poor life satisfaction, all the while adding further to ecological degradation (Di Tella & MacCulloch, 2006; Kasser & Kanner, 2004). This illustrates how positioning non-economic centered aspects of human wellbeing as aims for sustainability/SD can simultaneously result in benefits for both humans and the wider ecosystem of which we are a part (Dietz et al. 2009; Kjell, 2011; Cloutier et al., 2014b).

Though the different conceptualizations of human wellbeing discussed above still run the risk of reinforcing an instrumental rendering of the human-environment relationship, they are steps in the right direction. These examples show that a focus on wellbeing has the potential to help us move beyond an economic rationality toward an ecological rationality that advances socioecological justice and wellbeing for humans and

our wider ecosystem. The key to this is to more intentionally integrate human and ecological interests into a broader sustainable wellbeing framework that moves us past an exploitative relationship with nature in which we see it as existing solely to serve human needs and interests. But first, I explore the challenges to such integration by highlighting the conflicts between human and ecological wellbeing embedded within the anthropocentric vs. ecocentric sustainability debate.

A recurring theme in the sustainability and sustainable development literature is this battle between an anthropocentric model of sustainability, which puts serving the needs of human welfare at the center, and an ecocentric model, which values the health and wellbeing of the entire ecosphere, of which humans are just one part (Rowe, 1994; Beckmann et al., 1997; Gough et al., 2000; Hoffman & Sandelands, 2005; Argyrou, 2005; Sneddon et al., 2006; Horsthemke, 2009; Ingwe et al., 2010; Kopnina, 2013; Imran et al., 2014). An anthropocentric model is most concerned with human self-preservation and sustaining our current ways of living at whatever cost to the environment, including the dominant socio-cultural, political and economic systems we have created, for better or worse. Under this model, we disavow links between our growing global ecological crisis and our personal and societal “environmental ethics and values”, or rather, lack thereof (Imran et al., 2014, p. 135; Sarvestani & Shahvali, 2008; Vucetich & Nelson, 2010; Kopnina, 2013). By adopting a socioecological systems approach, an ecocentric model strives for a greater balance between human and ecological wellbeing, recognizing that these are inseparable, but can at times be in conflict with one another. Crucial here is ensuring that conflicts between human-environment interests are transparent and are considered in all sustainability decision-making and action, especially where tradeoffs are deemed necessary.

More holistic ecocentric goals for sustainability center around total ecosystem welfare (including that of humans), emphasizing such realities as ecosystem limits, our ecological footprint, and the recognition of how our present dominant development paradigm based on unsustainable growth is antagonistic to both human and ecological wellbeing. The sustainable economy model Jackson (2009) proposes (see discussion in previous sections) could be considered an example of a more ecocentric approach to sustainability. This is due to the model's concern with the previously discussed "bounded capabilities" that are governed by earth's finite resources and regenerative capacity, and their implications for the interconnected flourishing (i.e. wellbeing) of present and future human and non-human life forms.

Political discourse has carried the anthropocentric vs. ecocentric theme forward by highlighting the deep-seated conflict between the realization of human wellbeing and ecological wellbeing (White, 1967; Sachs, 2001; Hancock, 2003; Brown & Kasser, 2005; Sneddon et al., 2006). Associated with this conflict are human perceptions of sustainability or sustainable development as requiring society to submit to restrictions or constraints on our "personal desires, needs, and ultimately, happiness" (Brown & Kasser, 2005, p. 349). Such negative associations equating sustainability with "self-sacrifice"—or worse, harm—runs the risk of undermining or making behaviors that promote socioecological justice appear less desirable, and reinforces anthropocentric, individualistic values and worldviews (White, 1967; Kjell, 2011). Understanding the ways in which values, worldviews, and perceptions shape peoples' willingness to adopt more sustainable behaviors in order to adapt to a rapidly changing climate has become a leading concern for researchers and experts in the interrelated sustainability and global change fields. In an effort to further this understanding, I make the case for shifting our framing from "sustainable development" to "sustainable wellbeing." Justified by the

discussions and debates I have covered throughout this chapter, I present the basis of the proposed alternative framing in the concluding sections that follow.

Carving out a Sustainable Wellbeing Framing

The proposed conceptualization of sustainable wellbeing represents an embodiment of integrated plurality, drawing on components viewed as integral to socioecological justice that stem from a diverse range of theoretical and practical traditions. As such, I sketch out the beginnings of what is meant to be a more holistic rendering of sustainable wellbeing predicated on particular principles and values that are considered essential to the realization of socioecological justice.

Values and Principles Guiding the Proposed Sustainable Wellbeing Framing

Fundamental to this sustainable wellbeing framing is the reclamation of “integrationism” or an “integrated relation to nature” (Bendik-Keymer, 2006, p. 197). In the most basic sense, this begins with the extension of the “wellbeing” concept to include both human and ecological welfare. Embracing an ecocentric perspective, or what Bendik-Keymer (2006, p. 54) refers to as an “ecological orientation,” sustainable wellbeing acknowledges that humanity and the natural world are deeply-interconnected component parts of the wider ecosphere. Such a perspective calls for a collective understanding of wellbeing whereby humans must strive to live in harmony and balance with the natural world. This entails living by principles of “complementarity, solidarity, and equality” for all entities that make up the ecosphere (World Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, 2010, “Peoples’ Agreement”). At the same time, it promotes the “practice of ‘biospherical egalitarianism’”, which recognizes both humans and the natural world (i.e. larger ecosystem) as subjects in and of themselves, and that each embody intrinsic value irrespective of the instrumental value to one another (Ingwe et al., 2010, p. 005, as cited in Imran et al., 2014, p. 139). While proponents of a more

radical environmentalism have been criticized for taking ecocentricism to the extreme, viewed as being against humanity, that is not the interpretation of ecocentricism introduced here (Argyrou, 2005). Rather, this framing of sustainable wellbeing integrates notions such as human AND environmental dignity, needs and rights in a shared goal of respecting life in all its diversity through reinforcing, as opposed to conflicting, mechanisms (Bendik-Keymer, 2006).

The term “sustainable” is important here because it carries forward the notions of inter-generational and intra-generational equity within the social, environmental, economic, and governance spheres in pursuing wellbeing for all human and non-human species (Ban Ki-moon, 2014). It also accentuates interspecies equity and the reality of earth’s fragility, underscoring that we live in a world with finite natural resources and ecological carrying capacity (Jackson, 2009). As such, it promotes “ecological sensibility” in all human endeavors (Kates et al., 2006). Finally, this sustainable wellbeing framing strives to disrupt the zero-sum game approach to sustainability tradeoffs whereby those in power reap the rewards of sustainability decision-making and action while those more vulnerable are forced to bear the burden of sacrifice. As an alternative approach, it adopts Kjell’s (2011, p. 264) reframing of tradeoffs as “catalysts” for “an all-inclusive increase in wellbeing in the long term”, as opposed to “constraints” that “infringe on individual freedom.”

Unpacking Human and Ecological Wellbeing within a Sustainable Wellbeing Framing

Given the multitude of approaches to and definitions of wellbeing, it is important to articulate what is meant by human and ecological wellbeing. This section aims not to argue for a separation of the two, but rather to tease out the nuances of each complementary part while simultaneously demonstrating their intersectionality.

Human wellbeing. For the purposes of this proposed framing, I draw on the

work of Stutz (2006) and Summers & Smith (2014), which describe human wellbeing as consisting of several key interrelated elements. I synthesize these as follows: 1) “welfare”—includes access to environmental, educational, medical, economic, and other natural and social capital resources necessary to meet basic human needs for physical and psychological health (social capital includes both informal and interpersonal relationships that foster social support and human solidarity, as well as formal institutions that establish norms within the wider sociopolitical environment); 2) “contentment” (i.e. fulfillment)—includes subjective wellbeing aspects such as balanced and continued life satisfaction or happiness and a sense of purpose and self-efficacy linked to one’s “heredity, circumstances and actions” (Stutz, 2006, p. 6); and 3) “freedom”—includes individual and societal capabilities and human rights, shaped heavily by the capacity “to choose one’s destiny and the ability to live a life one chooses” without infringing upon the freedom and rights of others (Stutz, 2006, p. 4). Each of these has important implications for establishing norms (e.g. human rights) and accountability mechanisms for maintaining socioecological justice, and building capacity for sustainable wellbeing.

I want to highlight the last element, freedom, which has strong links with Sen’s work, particularly *Development as Freedom* (Sen, 1999), his Capabilities Approach discussed earlier, and his articulation of “a freedom-based” as opposed to needs-based “view of sustainable development” (SD) (Sen, 2013, p. 10). Sen’s work is notorious for challenging the “wealth maximization” development orientation, introducing freedom as an alternative framing for not only promoting individual wellbeing, but working toward social justice and human rights realization for all (Sneddon et al., 2006, p. 262; Anand & Sen, 2000). Building on his notion of freedom, Sen (2013, p.10) proposed a “freedom-based” view of SD which prioritizes human agency, creating the capacity for people to

choose to live more sustainably and in harmony with one another and the natural world. Severely constricting freedoms, Sen argues, creates inequality and fosters competition for resources that is likely to lead to more, rather than less, exploitation of the natural world as well as of one another. Sen uses sustainable consumption as an example of one possible sustainability pathway that people must be free to choose as a pathway in life they have reason to value. This freedom to choose includes, for example, being free from abject poverty or political enslavement (i.e. dictatorship), as well as from dependency on ecologically destructive systems determining one's livelihood (e.g. fossil fuel dependent economies). Only through "reasoning and freedom"—both of which are linked to "power to participate in decision-making"—Sen (2013, p. 16) argues, can people fully embrace the kind of transformative values and behaviors necessary for sustainable wellbeing.

Sen's conception of freedom has been criticized for inadequately dealing with ecological concerns such as global environmental change (Sneddon et al., 2006; Jackson, 2009). As such, I also draw upon Jackson's (2009) interpretation of freedom as "bounded capabilities." As discussed in previous sections, Jackson envisions bounded capabilities as guideposts for determining pathways to joint human and ecological flourishing (i.e. freedom). Key to ensuring this freedom is an emphasis on human-to-human (i.e. social) and human-to-environment interdependency, along with taking into full account the present and potential future "reality of life for every other species on the planet" (Jackson, 2009, p. 35). This comes through creating a culture of plurality and social cohesion by opening up a dialogical and democratic space that fosters participation, social interaction, critical consciousness and human agency (Bendik-Keymer, 2006; Dobson & Bell, 2006; Jackson, 2009; Leach et al., 2010; Sen, 2013). Creating such a culture requires nurturing what Bendik-Keymer (2006, p. 122) refers to as an "ecological social maturity"—an ongoing socialization process of human

development aimed at “being able to live well not only with each other, but also with other forms of life.” Working toward ecological maturity not only epitomizes freedom in this sustainable wellbeing framing, it represents the cornerstone of global ecological citizenship (Bendik-Keymer, 2006). I will return to this discussion when describing global ecological citizenship in Chapter 2.

Ecological wellbeing. In this sustainable wellbeing framing, ecological wellbeing is guided by the concepts of ecological sustainability and ecological ethics. The latter particularly entails a respect for the needs and rights of the natural world, including present and future generations of all species within our larger ecosystem. This has links to the work and movements stemming from deep ecology (Naess, 1989), the Gaia hypothesis (Lovelock, 1979 and 2000; see also the Gaia Foundation for contemporary applications: <http://www.gaiafoundation.org/about-us>), and the proposal for a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth adopted in 2010 at the World Peoples Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in Bolivia, among others (Dryzek, 2013; to read the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth, see <http://pwccc.wordpress.com/programa/>). In attempts to relate ecological wellbeing more directly with human wellbeing, I outline the following core elements which are extrapolated from the Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth (2010): 1) welfare—includes respect for and protection of natural resources (e.g. water, air, land, physical space, etc.) that contribute to sustained ecological health and biodiversity; 2) contentment—includes fulfillment of “bio-capacity” and purpose, and maintaining “its identity and integrity as a distinct, self-regulating and interrelated being”; 3) freedom—includes being free to self-regulate and regenerate, and to exist “free from contamination, pollution” and from “torture or cruel treatment by human beings” (Article 2: Inherent Rights of Mother Earth).

Despite its connotations of human emotions, the term “contentment” is intentionally used again in ecological wellbeing to emphasize the agency that comes with a subjective rendering of the natural world. Aside from conceding that other non-human animals think and feel, it is pertinent to consider alternative perspectives of the environment stemming from philosophies such as deep ecology, Gaia, and those that underlie the Rights of Mother Earth. Proponents of these philosophies would argue that the whole ecosphere is comprised of a diverse range of sentient beings, not just humans and other animals. This is further supported by conceptions of nature as Mother Earth found in traditional and indigenous cultures around the world (Dryzek, 2013).

The particular components of human and ecological wellbeing outlined above are meant to underscore the importance of granting subjectivity—and thus inherent value—to both humans and the natural world (i.e. ecosystem). The purpose is not to render the environment human, but rather to advance a more analogous relationship between human and ecological wellbeing that accounts for their complexity and demonstrates their individual and interconnected concerns. This includes recognizing the rights, needs and interests of each that deserve to be respected, protected, and fulfilled. Such explicit acknowledgement will prove most useful in identifying points of synergy and points of conflict when engaging in sustainability decision-making and action. Doing so is essential to practicing global ecological citizenship that opens up transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing. In sum, the proposed sustainable wellbeing framing holds human and ecological wellbeing to be interdependent and mutually reinforcing, representing a unified ecological orientation and underlying rationality. Sustainable wellbeing thus embodies the realization of socioecological justice that enables the simultaneous flourishing of people and planet.

In this chapter I delved into the historically rooted critical discussion of the dominant development and succeeding sustainable development paradigms. Building from this discussion, I began to sketch out the makings of an alternative sustainable wellbeing framing. As a whole, this chapter is meant to offer insight into the contextual background and justifications for adopting a more holistic “transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing” framework. In the following chapter I expound upon the core tenets of this framework drawn from theory and practice, including the values and principles upon which it stands.

CHAPTER 2

RECLAIMING THE MORAL IMPERATIVE OF SOCIOECOLOGICAL JUSTICE: GLOBAL ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP IN SUPPORT OF TRANSFORMATION PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABLE WELLBEING

If we are truly living on what Vitousek et al. (1997, p. 499) deem a “human-dominated planet,” then we as humans must take collective responsibility for reestablishing a sense of balance in our socio-cultural, economic and ecological environments, or “domains” as Martens (2006) calls them. The keyword here is balance. There is evidence that certain tradeoffs are necessary, especially given the ways in which human consumption patterns—framed as the ultimate means for achieving personal wellbeing—have seriously jeopardized the wellbeing of our larger ecosystem (MEA, 2005; Brown & Kasser, 2005; United Nations Environment Programme, 2002; McKibben, 2007). In response to these and other complex challenges such as those I raised in Chapter 1, there has been an increasing recognition of the need to move beyond simply “defining impacts of human activities on the environment to identifying pathways for societal change” (Jäger et al., 2011). Achieving more just and sustainable socioecological systems (i.e. sustainable wellbeing) requires more concerted efforts directed at facilitating socioecological transformations, or what the STEPS Centre refers to as “pathways to sustainability” (i.e. “pathways approach”) (Leach et al., 2010).

Of course, facilitating transformation pathways is easier said than done, as demonstrated in the continued struggles for economic and political power between the Global South and North that have long overshadowed sustainable development efforts (Sachs, 2001). As the leading architects behind the STEPS Centre’s “pathways approach” argue in their seminal work, *Dynamic Sustainabilities* (Leach et al., 2010), what must be considered with regards to any decision-making and action aimed at sustainability transformations is the extent to which they can support both social and ecological justice

simultaneously without eroding the present and future wellbeing of people or planet. To carry this forward, I propose adopting a “transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing” framework built upon the STEPS Centre’s “pathways approach” (Leach et al., 2010).

This chapter expands upon the articulation of a sustainable wellbeing framing presented in the previous chapter by actualizing it within an adaptation of the STEPS Centre’s pathways approach. The discussion is divided into two main sections. The first section provides an overview of the pathways approach and how I have come to adapt and apply it as the “transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing” (T-Pathways to SWB) framework in this dissertation research. The bulk of this section is devoted to delineating the core tenets of the proposed T-Pathways to SWB framework. Of primary importance is the framework’s integrative understanding of cognition, culture, and ethics as potential barriers and/or contributions to agency.

The second section introduces the main conceptual and theoretical components that serve as essential underpinnings of the T-Pathways to SWB framework as applied in this research. This section tackles two main themes:

- 1.) *The Road to Agency: Expanding Notions of Global Ecological Citizenship*
- 2.) *Opening up Transformation Pathways: The Role of Knowledge-Making Processes in Fostering Eco-Citizenship*

Rather than simply describing the concepts and theories, the second section focuses more on explaining why they were selected and articulating the ways in which they have been incorporated within the T-Pathways to SWB framework. A working conceptual model for transformative capacity building is presented to offer a visual map for how the different concepts and theories are integrated within the proposed framework.

The goal of this chapter is to get at the “how” and “why” I have interpreted and adapted the STEPS Centre’s pathways approach to sustainability as my dissertation’s

guiding framework. By doing so, it seeks to address two key questions: What would a focus on sustainable wellbeing entail?” and “What are the potential contributions of adopting a transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing framework?” I attend to these questions throughout the chapter, but most directly in the concluding discussion section. Ultimately, this chapter sets the stage for the direction of this dissertation’s empirical study design and implementation, which I focus on throughout the remainder of this manuscript.

Carving out the Foundations of a “Transformation Pathways to Sustainable Wellbeing” Framework

As previously stated, for the purposes of this dissertation I adopt a justice-oriented guiding framework based on the STEPS Centre’s pathways to sustainability approach (i.e. “pathways approach”) (Leach et al., 2010). The “transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing” (T-pathways to SWB) framework employed in this research fully embraces the pathways approach while simultaneously attempting to build upon it. The T-Pathways to SWB framework could be seen as an adaptation of the pathways approach in three primary ways. The first is its advocating for an explicit “sustainable wellbeing” framing (i.e. pathways to sustainable wellbeing) as articulated in this manuscript. The second is its integration of global ecological citizenship with the pathways approach, which is delineated in the remaining sections of this chapter. The third is its application of the pathways approach as a heuristic tool for analyzing capacity building mechanisms for global ecological citizenship. This third component is addressed in greater detail in subsequent chapters. What follows is an introduction of the STEPS Centre’s pathways approach as I interpret it. I then link this in the subsequent section with essential conceptual and theoretical elements (including global ecological citizenship) that inform the proposed T-Pathways to SWB framework utilized in this

dissertation research.

Brief Overview of the STEPS Centre’s Pathways Approach to Sustainability

A central attribute of the STEPS Centre’s pathways approach is recognizing that alternative pathways to sustainability—or sustainable wellbeing as I propose—involve normative framings (i.e. values-laden perceptions) that are constructed under high levels of uncertainty, complexity, and political contestation (i.e. competing interests) surrounding global change. As such, it calls for reflexivity in what must be an ongoing pursuit of plural pathways that are context-specific and able to accommodate diversity (Stirling, 2008, 2009; Leach et al., 2010). Just as global change impacts are “place-specific” and “path-dependent”, so too should be potential solutions (Fiske et al., 2014; Wise et al., 2014). Rather than treat diversity of values and perspectives as inherently problematic, however, the pathways approach seeks to uncover possible contributions of the multiple sustainability framings and narratives that such values and perspectives form. This may come through identifying unexplored points of convergence that could lead to innovative approaches involving collaboration among a multitude of actors. Or it may evidence through the emergence of a wide palette of potential *contextualized* sustainability “solutions” pathways. No one process, idea, or approach is deemed as the ultimate answer. Rather than impose a single prescriptive method or model, the pathways approach espouses an expansion of agency—particularly of the most marginalized and disenfranchised—in decision-making and action for sustainability transformations (Leach, 2011).

The importance of pluralism in the pathways approach is tied to its emphasis on the interdependency of socioecological justice and ecological integrity. This interdependency means overtly acknowledging and embracing the “normative” and “political” aspects involved in the construction of pathways to sustainability (Leach et al.,

2010, Chapter 1). It also means being willing and able to work with “dynamic complexity” (i.e. “opening up” plural pathways) rather than against it (i.e. “closing down” plural pathways) (Leach et al., 2010, p. 37). Opening up plural pathways is thus a collaborative and relational process that encourages reflexivity among different actors so as to stay vigilant of and adaptive to our ever-changing socioecological contexts and capacities. This requires creating space for inclusive dialogue, reflection, and action aimed at unearthing competing interests that could pose barriers to plural transformation pathways.

Recognizing that conflicting values and perceptions are often at the source of competing interests, the pathways approach calls for a critical questioning of dominant development narratives that constrict transformation and erode capacity of local communities to address sustainability and socioecological justice concerns by excluding the values, perceptions, needs and strengths of those most impacted on the ground (Stirling, 2008, 2011). This call brings to light a crucial underlying assumption of the pathways approach. In order to achieve transformations in policy and practice, global society requires a transformative shift in ideology—which includes the perceptions, values, and worldviews that govern our behaviors/actions. Such a shift in ideology entails acknowledging and assuming personal and collective responsibility for redressing the human causes of our global ecological crisis rooted in socioecological injustice (Kates et al., 2006; Pelling, 2011; Kates et al., 2012; O’Brien et al., 2013; Leach et al., 2012; Imran et al., 2014; Ban Ki-moon, 2014; Wise et al., 2014). This call for ideological transformation forms the basis of the proposed T-Pathways to SWB framework and this dissertation as a whole.

Core Tenets of the Proposed T-Pathways to SWB Framework: From an Integrative Understanding of Culture, Cognition, and Ethics to the Practice

of Agency

Calls for transformation pathways in sustainability research have led to greater attention on the cognitive and sociocultural barriers to global change responses, but much work needs to be done. Adger et al. (2009) highlight key human-societal parameters that need greater attention in order to understand the barriers and potential contributions to capacity building of different actors at multiple levels to identify and pursue plural transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing. These include “ethics (how and what we value), knowledge (how and what we know),” attitudes toward “risk (how and what we perceive),” and “culture (how and why we live)” (Adger et al., 2009, p. 338). Similarly, O’Brien & Wolf (2010) argue that a focus on values and perceptions is necessary in understanding the decision-making and action processes that facilitate or hinder transformation pathways in response to global change. The T-Pathways to SWB framework, and this research as a whole, are direct attempts to further understanding around these oft-neglected human dimensions of global change.

Building upon the foundations of the STEPS Centre’s pathways approach, the proposed T-Pathways to SWB framework holds that a first step in achieving such a transformative shift—in ideology, and ultimately socioecological systems at large—is developing a critical ecological “conscientization” (Freire, 1972, 2005) of global change concerns. Conscientization, or consciousness-raising, is a dialogical process of knowing, seeing, and actively engaging with our internal and external realities (Freire, 1972, 2005). This involves developing deeper levels of personal “mindfulness,” a form of consciousness whereby “internal and external realities are perceived openly and without distortion” (Brown & Kasser, 2005, p. 351). Fostering critical ecological consciousness (eco-consciousness) means actively questioning our underlying values and worldviews that drive our exploitative, unjust and unsustainable global development paradigm and

the institutional structures that reinforce this paradigm. It also entails consciously reflecting on the links between our behaviors/actions (e.g. consumption patterns), personal and social wellbeing (e.g. individual and communal health or happiness), and ecological wellbeing (e.g. ecological footprint). Doing so can help us understand the ways in which certain tradeoffs can actually improve both human and ecological wellbeing simultaneously rather than perceive them as losses, sacrifices, or threats to human wellbeing.

In this way, eco-consciousness-raising is an ongoing process meant to cultivate a reorientation of the human-environment relationship, or what Bendik-Keymer (2006, p. 54) refers to as an “ecological orientation.” To provide a very elementary example, eco-consciousness confronts and simultaneously deconstructs fundamental sustainability questions like that posed by Summers & Smith (2014, p. 721): “How can we and our children live good lives without eroding the health and productivity of the physical planet—and therefore the possibility for future generations to lead good lives?” Viewed through the lens of this proposed framework, which espouses the goals of eco-consciousness, this question could be interrogated for the ways in which it might reinforce a purely instrumental view of the natural world. It also needs to be expanded to incorporate non-human species in the concept of “future generations.” This is but one example of how eco-consciousness-raising can help explicate the ways in which deeply entrenched and unconscious perceptions, values and worldviews can lead to potentially unjust and unsustainable behaviors and practices.

The other key premise informing the T-Pathways to SWB framework is that socioecological justice is both a necessary condition for and outcome of sustainable wellbeing. As such, the promotion of socioecological justice is a guiding principle of sustainable wellbeing. To assist in articulating the import and meaning behind a

socioecological justice lens within this proposed framework, I enlist the assistance of two key concepts that promote eco-consciousness as a gateway to transformative action: “ecojustice” (Bowers, 2002) and “just sustainability” (Agyeman, 2007, 2008). Ecojustice stems from Bowers’ (2002, 2006) framework for ecojustice pedagogy, which he proposes as a mechanism for bringing to the forefront root metaphors embedded in culture and institutional systems that drive our ecological crisis. For Bowers (2006), ecojustice means the dual realization of social and environmental justice, which he argues is closely tied to the rejuvenation of “ecological literacy”—people’s shared “ethical responsibility to revitalize the commons and preserve cultural diversity and biodiversity for future generations” (Mueller, 2008, p. 156).

Rather than argue for an undisputed conservation of all systems (social, political, economic, and environmental), Bowers (2002, 2006) and Gruenewald (2003) call for an eco-consciousness of the causes of socioecological injustice and unsustainability within these systems. For example, ecojustice means confronting human overexploitation of natural resources worsened by a global consumer dependency, gross inequality within and between nations, environmental racism, pervasive poverty, and the growing vulnerabilities of marginalized communities. Working toward sustainable wellbeing thus challenges us to overcome systems and practices that perpetuate “unbalance, competition, conflict, individualism, domination, destruction, expropriation and undue and unbalanced material acquisition” (Carlos Rodrigues Brandão 2008, p. 136). In the process, a greater emphasis is placed on capacity building that combines personal responsibility with egalitarianism, collective action, and uniting people in solidarity with one another and their natural environments (Bowers, 2006, Mueller, 2008, Gadotti, 2010). This is exemplified in calls for rejuvenating “ecological commons” thinking and organizing, and the protection, reclamation, and restoration of “intergenerational

knowledge, ... marginalized talents and skills, and the interrelationships between the family, the community, and natural environments” (Mueller, 2008, p. 157).

Agyeman’s (2007, 2008) “just sustainability paradigm (JSP)” fits well with Bowers’ (2006) concept of ecojustice. Just sustainability builds on Agyeman et al.’s (2003, p. 5) earlier definition of sustainability, which focuses on improving present and future “quality of life for all, in a just and equitable manner.” Their definition brings justice and equity to the forefront while maintaining the importance of environmental limits (Agyeman, 2007). Similar to ecojustice, just sustainability holds that the wellbeing of humanity is inherently dependent upon the wellbeing of our natural environment, and thus social and ecological justice go hand-in-hand.

For Agyeman (2008, p. 751), the JSP strives to highlight the ways in which “environmental quality and human equality are inseparable” and as such, the framing of and approaches to sustainability and SD must go beyond a purely environmental or purely anthropocentric lens. In other words, just sustainability makes the case for an ecological rationality and ecocentric perspective. Much like Bowers (2006), Agyeman points to social injustices such as poverty, racism, classism, and human rights abuses— injustices born from systems of structural inequality and structural violence—as underpinning ecological degradation and global change concerns (see also earlier studies by Torras & Boyce, 1998; Boyce et al., 1999; and Morello-Frosch, 1997). For Agyeman (2008, p. 752), just sustainability equals “transformative sustainability.” An invaluable contribution of just sustainability is thus its commitment to moving sustainability toward a “process with the power to transform” (i.e. strong sustainability) rather than simply “reform” current policies and practices (i.e. weak sustainability) (Agyeman, 2008, p. 752).

Another vital contribution of the JSP described by Agyeman (2007, 2008) is its role in bringing together potentially conflicting perspectives from the “New Environmental Paradigm” (Catton & Dunlap, 1978) and “Environmental Justice” (Taylor, 2000) camps in attempts to bridge the equity gap between them. The former, also referred to as the “green/ecological sustainability” agenda, is most associated with dominating environmental sustainability movements headed up by privileged groups in the Global North (e.g. white, highly educated upper classes within industrialized nations). The latter, also referred to as the “brown/environmental health” agenda, often though not solely associated with those in the Global South who are most concerned with addressing development challenges related to poverty and lack of access to basic resources, stable infrastructure and services such as education and health (McGranahan & Satterthwaite, 2000; Agyeman, 2008). This equity gap can be connected to the previously discussed competing interests of the Global North and South evidenced in the early days of SD. The “Environmental Justice” camp also represents decolonization efforts spanning the global community, including the United States (Agyeman, 2008). The JSP attempts to bridge the equity gap by focusing on four key areas and the intersections between them: “quality of life; present and future generations; justice and equity; and living within ecosystem limits” (Agyeman, 2008, p. 755).

Taking the lead from ecojustice and just sustainability, the T-Pathways to SWB framework links this pursuit of socioecological justice to “norm activation” that comes from the eco-consciousness-raising process of interrogating our perceptions of and connections to our social and natural environments (Schwartz, 1977; Weber & Stern, 2011). Norm-activation (Schwartz, 1977)—the foundation of Value-Belief-Norm (VBN)

theory posited by Stern & Dietz (1994) and Stern et al. (1999)⁶—is directly tied to personal, social, and environmental values and worldviews such as altruism, egalitarianism or collectivism that are heavily conditioned by sociocultural, political and ecological factors. Both values and worldviews influence one’s motivation to take action in support of socioecological justice as well as have significant implications for personal and collective wellbeing (Brown & Kasser, 2005; Kjell, 2011).

As Weber & Stern (2011) describe, “people experience a sense of obligation to act (a personal moral norm)” as they become more attuned to how their own actions or inactions directly and indirectly impact the wellbeing of selves and others (including other living beings) and the socioecological systems on which humans depend (Weber & Stern, 2011, p. 320). Within this norm activation process, individual and communal acknowledgement of personal and collective responsibility creates the necessary space whereby concerns for ecological wellbeing can potentially (though not necessarily) manifest as priorities that are intimately linked with human wellbeing. By becoming critically conscious of the underlying causes of our global ecological crisis, people are better equipped to challenge injustices through deliberate transformative decision-making and action (Freire, 2005; Kjell, 2011). Within the context of global change concerns, norm activation can be summarized as follows: Through eco-consciousness-raising people become aware of their own perceptions of the negative impacts of global change on self or others (including non-human species) and how they are implicated in those negative impacts. This in turn may drive people to act by cultivating in them feelings of personal obligation to help rectify what they believe to be problems resulting in socioecological injustices (Tarrant, 2010). In short, the combination of eco-consciousness and norm activation can foster what is referred to in this research as

⁶ For more in-depth overview of VBN theory and how it has evolved, see also Stern et al. (1999); Stern (2000); Schultz (2000); and Weber & Stern (2011).

global ecological citizenship whereby one's personal liberation is ultimately believed to be interconnected with the liberation of other living and non-living species that make up the wider ecosystem (see Christoff, 1996; Dobson, 2003; Dobson & Bell, 2006 (eds.); Bendik-Keymer, 2006; Dobson, 2007; Jagers, 2009; Tarrant 2010; Stoner et al., 2014 for work related to global ecological citizenship). However, there is also the potential for eco-consciousness-raising to evoke other responses such as defense mechanisms or feelings of hopelessness in being able to make a difference. Thus, it is important to consider what might better activate this sense of interconnectedness and commitment to socioecological justice that are at the heart of global ecological citizenship. I will take up this discussion of global ecological citizenship in the subsequent section.

The remainder of this section synthesizes the core tenets and their intersections, which form the foundation of the T-Pathways to SWB framework. Central to the T-Pathways to SWB framework is its commitment to socioecological justice. Its deep-seated justice orientation is greatly influenced by concepts such as “ecojustice” (Bowers, 2002) and “just sustainability” (Agyeman, 2007, 2008), as well as internationally recognized principles such as those encompassed within The Earth Charter Initiative (2000). Built upon these normative foundations, the T-Pathways to SWB framework envisions sustainable wellbeing for people and planet as an ongoing process of “building a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society” advanced through global solidarity and collective action, whereby each of us assumes responsibility for present and future human and ecological wellbeing (The Earth Charter Initiative, 2012).

To realize such a vision, our global society is in need of a transformative shift in the currently dominant development paradigm—from an “economic rationality,” which equates human progress and wellbeing with production, consumption and growth, to an “ecological rationality” (Hancock, 2003), whereby socioecological justice, including the

eradication of structural inequality and unfreedoms (for people and planet), is both a product of and a necessary condition for “just sustainability” (Agyeman, 2008). Essential to this transformation is a reorientation of our human-environment relationship, replacing a purely instrumental, dominating valuation of the natural world with an “ecojustice” ethic (Bowers, 2002) that recognizes humans as but one part of a much larger ecosystem.

A key step in dismantling the current dominant valuation is facilitating “ecological restoration” through critical eco-consciousness-raising (Thompson & Bendik-Keymer, 2012, p. 15). In this process of restoration, humans become aware of the need for change by recognizing the “virtues we ought to acquire if we wish to move from a damaging and alienated relationship with our environment” to a relationship based on the mutual flourishing of “both us and the world of life around us” (Thompson & Bendik-Keymer, 2012, p. 15). As such, seeking transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing entails developing a critical eco-consciousness of the “interconnectedness of cultural and ecological life” that facilitates a constructive application of “an ethic of social and ecological justice” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 6). More specifically, to facilitate a transformative shift in ideology and practice, the T-Pathways to SWB framework explicitly calls for eco-consciousness-raising and norm activation as facilitated through transformative learning. Both processes require fostering agency to question and actively seek to transform our underlying values, perspectives, and practices. The following section further unpacks the role of the change agent.

Conceptual and Theoretical Underpinnings of the Transformation Pathways to Sustainable Wellbeing Framework

The Road to Agency: Expanding Notions of Global Ecological Citizenship

Global ecological citizenship (eco-citizenship) stems from the broader notion of globally-minded and active citizens (Stearns 2009; Tarrant 2010; Stoner et al. 2014). In the context of global change, eco-citizenship is associated with the following core attributes: “social responsibility” and ecological responsibility (care and concern for human and ecological wellbeing), “global awareness” (critical ecological consciousness of and responsiveness to global change and sustainability/SWB concerns), and “civic engagement” (involvement in decision-making and action to address socioecological justice concerns linked with global change) (Stoner et al., 2014, p. 152). Within this T-Pathways to SWB framework, eco-citizenship is grounded in normative assumptions that prioritize socioecological justice and hold that enacting eco-citizenship requires “more than basic moral response. It requires...rich identifications” with the liberation and wellbeing of people and planet (Bendik-Keymer, 2006, p. 12). Emphasizing the links between values, perceptions, and agency. Eco-citizenship represents an embodiment of eco-consciousness and norm activation—two core capacities for facilitating plural transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing.

While human agency (individual and communal) has been acknowledged as a critical component in counteracting global change, agency is often overlooked in systems-level research. As an actor-oriented concept, eco-citizenship elevates the importance of individual and collective agency and responsibility in effecting positive change that supports sustainable wellbeing. Agency can be defined as the capacity of individual, collective, or institutional actors—each bringing their own cultural values and perceptions—to act freely and shape history (Brown & Westaway, 2011). Dobson’s (2003,

2007) conceptualization of eco-citizenship holds personal agency as essential to collective agency and ultimately societal change.

Bendik-Keymer's (2006) conceptualization of eco-citizenship emphasizes the interrelationship between individual values, perceptions, and actions, and communal and institutional norms. The activation of eco-citizenship is where the moral and political meet through the restoration of what Bendik-Keymer (2006) refers to as an "ecological orientation" that evokes a sense of responsibility to correct socioecological injustices. An ecological orientation is based on an "integrated relation to nature" whereby humans seek a cooperative and balanced rather than exploitative way of living within the ecological community of all life forms (Bendik-Keymer, 2006, pp. 194-195). This shares direct links with an ecocentric worldview (Rowe, 1994) that frames humans and the environment as interconnected parts of a larger ecosphere. According to Bendik-Keymer (2006, p. 55), to embrace an ecological orientation requires shifting the "self-understanding" of humans toward a "moral identification with the universe of life" whereby decision-making and action are driven by an ecological rationality that sees respect for the inherent dignity, integrity and rights of all human and non-human life as essential to human and environmental flourishing (or sustainable wellbeing as conceptualized herein). In this way, an ecological orientation is not only the cornerstone of eco-citizenship but essential to transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing.

Portrayed as "post-cosmopolitan citizenship," eco-citizenship goes beyond traditional nation-state parameters to encompass international and intergenerational dimensions. As such, the responsibility to uphold justice, its core value, defies spatial and temporal bounds (Dobson, 2003). For Dobson (2003), the imperative of eco-citizenship is invoked by a call for justice in use and distribution of ecological resources. Bendik-Keymer (2006) goes beyond a narrow resource view. Taking a humanist

perspective, he envisions eco-citizenship as an ongoing process of moral, cognitive and psychomotor development that mobilizes individual and collective socio-political action in support of human and environmental wellbeing. Stressing an ecological framing of human capabilities, eco-citizenship is about improving not only ourselves, but also the institutions and socioecological systems of which we are a part. Bendik-Keymer (2006, p. 139) refers to this practice of eco-citizenship as the pursuit of “ecological idealism”—the “overarching developmental habit...of conceptualizing our ecological situation and acting on what we think is best in the service of respect for life.” Developing ecological idealism can empower eco-citizens to embark on a lifelong “practice of informing ourselves, being self-critical about our moral complacency and limits, and making our lives express the best judgment at which we arrive” (Bendik-Keymer, 2006, pp. 140-141). Ultimately, an eco-citizen is called to seek justice and respect for all life forms on Earth (Bendik-Keymer, 2006, p. 4). Though we must keep in mind that ecological idealism—as with all the developmental habits of eco-citizens (see below)—is not a fixed state and must be understood as subject to the broader socioecological conditions that can nurture and/or prevent ecological idealism’s development by supporting and/or constricting the agency of aspiring eco-citizens.

Capacity building for eco-citizenship within this conceptualization thus requires nurturing both the master habit of ecological idealism and its associated “four habits of ecological maturity”: 1) “moral perception; 2) ecological literacy; 3) moral creativity; 4) political-economic liberty” (Bendik-Keymer, 2006, p. 134). Each of these four habits are interrelated and complementary, functioning in a discursive relationship with ecological idealism. These four habits can be linked directly to eco-consciousness and norm activation. The capacities inherent within each are articulated below.

Moral perception emphasizes making the “morally invisible” visible (Bendik-Keymer, 2006, p. 134). It is about recognizing all life as worthy of respect and bringing to the forefront the voices and causes of all human and non-human species who are unjustly marginalized, exploited, abused, forgotten, or demonized. Moral perception thus requires broadening out one’s mindset to not only be more ecologically inclusive, but also attuned to the hidden realities of suffering and injustice within our wider ecosphere (Bendik-Keymer, 2006). Building upon moral perception, ecological literacy emphasizes a “practice of learning” whereby we continuously strive to better acknowledge, appreciate, and understand the “ecological nature” of our surrounding ecosystems, in all their diversity and interdependencies (Bendik-Keymer, 2006, p. 134). Both moral perception and ecological literacy have links to Leopold’s (1949, 1989) “land ethic,” which advocates for establishing a stronger, morally grounded, human relationship and concern for the natural environment based on upholding the integrity of all biotic communities (human and non-human alike) comprising our ecosystems. Developing and nurturing the developmental habits of moral perception and ecological literacy can be viewed as pivotal charges of eco-consciousness-raising.

Moral creativity emphasizes “innovating” how we live in order to uphold respect for justice and integrity of all life (Bendik-Keymer, 2006, p. 134). This developmental habit is an ongoing effort to rectify the internal cognitive dissonance and external socioecological contradictions that prevent us from living in line with our evolving moral perceptions and ecological literacy. Coming to terms with the dissonance and contradictions in our personal lives, as well as the societies in which we are embedded, will likely mean confronting and seeking to change deeply entrenched individual, cultural, and systemic norms that are antagonistic to sustainable wellbeing. Moral creativity challenges us to consciously promote and personally live in ways that are more

“humanizing” (i.e. contribute to ecological and human flourishing) (Bendik-Keymer, 2006, p. 136). What this looks like will differ depending on one’s life circumstances. Thus practicing moral creativity is a lifelong challenge that requires being open-minded, adaptive, reflexive, innovative, and at times courageous in our thinking and action to the extent that the conditions in which we live allow (Bendik-Keymer, 2006). It also means being willing and able to collaborate and empathize with others across differences—be they in values, perspectives, capabilities, and/or resources—towards the shared goal of transformation to sustainable wellbeing.

Finally, political-economic liberty emphasizes overcoming the “political-economic blocks” that prevent people across our global society from being free to employ moral creativity in the service of realizing sustainable wellbeing (i.e. working toward an “ecological idealism”) (Bendik-Keymer, 2006, p. 137). This developmental habit acknowledges that freedom to flourish requires challenging the unjust and unsustainable systemic structures, ideologies, and practices that have threatened the livelihoods of people and planet. Political-economic liberty asks all of us to take up the call of global eco-citizenship to embrace the role of activist in order to target the inequality and power imbalances that enable such “unfreedoms” (Sen, 1999) to thrive on an individual and societal level (Bendik-Keymer, 2006). To facilitate transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing requires being able to envision and engage with resistance to, and ambiguity surrounding, alternative futures. Such pathways can only emerge within conditions of political economic liberty (i.e. freedom to flourish). Creating those necessary conditions demands both an individual and collective practice of moral creativity aimed at realizing socioecological justice. Together, moral creativity and political-economic liberty can be seen as representations of norm activation, enabling us to move from perceived to applied agency. This will be elucidated further in the section

of this chapter where I propose a *transformative capacity building model* as an evolving theory of change.

Opening up Transformation Pathways: The Role of Knowledge-Making Processes in Fostering Eco-Citizenship

Mechanisms for opening up plural transformation pathways vary greatly from negotiating policy change, to public mobilization, to critical consciousness-raising through social learning (Leach et al., 2010). This study focuses on the latter in the form of sustainability experiential learning. Social learning in the context of global change has roots in community-based participatory environmental management, appraisal, and problem-solving (Didham & Ofei-Manu, 2015). Social learning for transformation to sustainability has been characterized by three essential needs: 1) “to challenge the mental models” underlying “unsustainable development”; 2) to support “new learning approaches,” (e.g. experiential learning) that open up alternative pathways; and 3) to encourage “pluralism and diversity” in collaboratively working toward sustainable wellbeing (Tilbury, 2007, p. 118). In this school of thought, social learning approaches like sustainability experiential learning (SEL) can be considered both mechanisms and pathways for transformative capacity building. SEL engages individuals as members of participatory SEL communities. Drawing from the “communities of practice” (CoPs) concept (Wenger, 2010; Blackmore, 2010), SEL communities can be formal or informal, structured or fluid, and are typically based upon commitment to a shared goal and/or experience. In addition to knowledge and skills acquisition most often associated with capacity building, SEL involves critical reflection—the mainstay of critical ecological consciousness-raising—which can facilitate deliberation, awareness, and understanding of, and if necessary, changes in community members’ values and perceptions. The extent to which critical reflection takes place is influenced by sociocultural factors such as the norms and power systems established within SEL communities, the identities and

experiences individual community members bring to the SEL communities, and the socioecological contexts in which the SEL communities engage (Glasser, 2009; Pahl-Wostl et al., 2007; Reed et al., 2010; Didham & Ofei-Manu, 2015).

While CoPs have been extensively studied in organizational or professional settings, there has been less work on higher education and youth-based (i.e. college and young professional age range) social learning, especially in the form of sustainability experiential learning (SEL) communities. Research on experiential learning—whether focused on sustainability or other themes and fields—has centered on program evaluation to assess achievement of learning outcomes. Such evaluations rely heavily on survey research concerned with cognitive (i.e. theoretical or expert knowledge) or psychomotor (i.e. skills) domains of SEL. More work is needed to investigate the particular dynamics of SEL or other types of social learning communities and how these influence members’ affective domain (i.e. values, beliefs, attitudes), which has important implications for opening up plural transformation pathways through eco-citizenship—be it manifested through behavioral and/or broader structural changes (Leiserowitz, 2006; Sipos et al., 2008; Frisk & Larson, 2011). For this I turn to transformative learning theory.

Transformative Learning Theory: The Route to Critical Ecological Consciousness

Transformative learning is most often associated with Mezirow’s (2000) work in adult education and has gained prominence in environmental and sustainability education in recent years (see for example Sterling, 2001; Wals & Corcoran, 2006; Sipos et al., 2008; Swee-Hin & Cawagas, 2010; Zollinger, 2010). Though varied, transformative learning approaches are greatly influenced by Freire’s (1972, 2005) concept of “conscientization” (see earlier discussion in previous sections). Of particular emphasis in transformative learning is “perspective transformation” (Mezirow, 1985)

aimed at empowering individuals to critically question, reflect on and expand or shift their worldviews toward a deeper level of knowing and identifying with our diverse and changing world (Sipos et al., 2008, p. 71; Moore, 2005; Cranton, 1994).

Transformative learning in sustainability education has expanded this goal to fostering critical ecological consciousness (eco-consciousness)—one of the core pillars of the T-Pathways to SWB framework. Ecojustice (Bowers, 2002) and critical pedagogy of place (Gruenewald, 2003) are two prime examples of this approach to transformative learning that is especially applicable to sustainability and environmental education, and related disciplines. Leading advocates of these pedagogies describe eco-consciousness-raising as a process of “decolonization and reinhabitation” whereby learners question taken-for-granted personal and societal values and assumptions (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 9). What results is a critical understanding of 1) the inherent value and interdependency of cultural and ecological diversity; 2) the intersections of human and ecological exploitation; 3) the need to replace an economic rationality (based on a growth equals progress paradigm) with an ecological rationality (based on socioecological justice); and 4) the restoration of one’s place-connection to the environment (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004). The goal of this knowledge-making process is to determine what is worth conserving, restoring, or transforming in pursuit of sustainable wellbeing (Gruenewald, 2003). This re/construction process in turn can lead to norm activation—another core pillar of the T-Pathways to SWB framework.

Responding to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UN DESD) (2005-2014)⁷, Sipos et al. (2008, p. 69) proposed a unique framework of “transformative sustainability learning” (TSL) that uses the organizing principle of “head, hands and heart.” *Head* (cognitive learning) refers to knowledge

⁷ For an overview of the UN DESD, visit <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/what-is-esd/un-decade-of-esd>.

acquisition and critical thinking across disciplinary boundaries. *Hands* (psychomotor learning) refers to the development of practical skills and capacities. *Heart* (affective learning) refers to the embodiment of values and interests in support of positive social change. Affective learning is particularly integral to norm activation as it can facilitate greater empathy toward others (including nature). This TSL framework highlights the role of emotions, desirability, and values in catalyzing SEL participants as change agents (or eco-citizens as referred to herein) for transformation pathways. As a part of the proposed T-Pathways to SWB framework, the TSL approach serves as a tool for analyzing the types of knowledge-making processes evidenced in the sustainability experiential learning communities and their contributions to capacity building for eco-citizenship. (See Figures 1-3 at the end of the chapter).

A Conceptual Model for Transformative Capacity Building: The Workings of an Evolving Theory of Change

When taken together, each of the theoretical influences discussed above can offer tremendous insight into critical dimensions of transformative capacity building for eco-citizenship, thereby providing the foundations for the T-Pathways to SWB framework's evolving theory of change. To better demonstrate the theory of change that underpins this proposed T-Pathways to SWB framework, I draw upon the Mechanisms, Actors, and Pathways (MAPs) framework and its transformation models. The MAPs framework originally proposed in Haglund and Aggarwal (2011, p. 495) and later expanded upon in Haglund and Stryker (2015, p. 5) is an analytical tool developed to identify, model, and compare across multiple cases three intersecting components that are argued to be essential in influencing the realization (or not) of social transformation: "mechanisms, actors, and pathways". Within this framework's model, "mechanisms" account for the strategic processes and resources employed to facilitate, or in some cases obstruct, social transformation; "actors" encompass the collection of "individuals, groups, and

organizations” involved (to varying degrees and at various points in time) in implementing the mechanisms that contribute to or stand in the way of social transformation; and “pathways” constitute the specific contexts and conditions in which these mechanisms and actors operate (Haglund & Stryker, 2015, p. 5; Haglund & Aggarwal, 2011). Haglund & Stryker (2015, pp. 3-4) further articulate three “moments of social transformation” that help to trace the iterative processes in which mechanisms, actors, and pathways interact and set in motion the translation of norms into action, and action into “broader social change reflecting the new normative principles.” The three moments include the following: 1) “belief-formation context and mechanisms: linking abstract norms to perceptions and held values”; 2) action-formation context and mechanisms: facilitating or forcing action”; 3) “transformational context and mechanisms: actions cumulating in deep structural or cultural change” (Haglund & Stryker, 2015, p. 4; see Figure 2 for the authors’ illustration of their “Moments’ of Social Transformation” model).

While the MAPs framework was initially proposed for research in the area of human rights realization, its utility can be extended to multiple types of transformation contexts and processes. In this research, the original MAPs model is utilized to map and examine the potentiality of the mechanisms, actors, and pathways involved in sustainability experiential learning (SEL) in facilitating transformative sustainability learning experiences that contribute to or create barriers for capacity building for global eco-citizenship (see Chapter 3 for an explanation of how this is integrated as an analytical method for the empirical case study). Furthermore, I propose a model for transformation in the form of transformative capacity building that takes its inspiration from the original MAPs model (Haglund & Aggarwal, 2011) and its associated “Moments” of social transformation” model (Haglund & Stryker, 2015, p. 4).

The proposed *transformative capacity building model* can be seen as an adaptation of the “‘Moments’ of Social Transformation” model to the context of sustainability experiential learning (SEL). (See Figure 3 for an illustration of the proposed *transformative capacity building model* at the end of this chapter.) There are 4 instead of 3 “moments” incorporated into the adapted model. The first moment is the “social learning context and mechanisms”, which involves the knowledge-making and socialization processes embedded within SEL programs and their emergent SEL communities. This includes the formation of the SEL communities and their “cognitive (head), psychomotor (hands), and affective (heart)” (Sipos et al., 2008, p. 69) engagement through communal, cultural and environmental interaction and immersion. The second, third, and fourth moments are based on the original MAPs “Moments” model as described above (Haglund & Stryker, 2015, p. 4). In this adapted version, the second moment is the “belief-formation context and mechanisms” whereby the transformative sustainability learning engagement approaches translate into critical ecological consciousness-raising and norm activation through the shaping of SEL community members’ values and perceptions. In this moment, one develops a critical awareness (i.e. eco-consciousness) of the consequences of SWB problems and solutions, and an awareness of personal and/or collective responsibility in addressing SWB problems and working towards solutions pathways. The third moment, “action-formation context and mechanisms,” is the space in which individual and collective agency are nurtured—or perhaps constricted. This involves the translation of eco-consciousness and norm activation into potential/intended and realized agency. It may also include barriers to agency that may stand in the way of actualizing one’s responsibilities as an eco-citizen. Finally, the fourth moment is the “transformational context and mechanisms” wherein global eco-citizenship is channeled through decision-

making and action that “opens up” different plural T-Pathways to SWB. In line with the original model, these four moments are iterative and dialogical in nature, and are facilitated through interweaving mechanisms, actors and pathways (Haglund & Stryker, 2015).

The proposed *transformative capacity building model* primarily serves as a visual representation of how the T-Pathways to SWB framework and its integrated theories and concepts come together within a broader theory of change. Similar to the MAPs models, the *transformative capacity building model* can simultaneously function as an analytical tool for better mapping and understanding the different transformative sustainability learning processes that unfold (or are perhaps lacking) in SEL. This in turn can help inform the development of SEL programs that are better able to facilitate transformative capacity building for eco-citizenship in support of plural transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing.

Why a Transformation Pathways to Sustainable Wellbeing Framework?

Now that I have provided a more comprehensive overview of the proposed transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing (T-pathways to SWB) framework, one might ask, “So what?” In this section I make the case for explicitly targeting sustainable wellbeing (as conceptualized in Chapter 1) by addressing the following question: “What might a T-Pathways to SWB framework offer that the current sustainable development (SD) model does not?” The following arguments are based on the multitude of concerns and criticisms regarding the dominant SD paradigm discussed in Chapter 1.

Perhaps most importantly, sustainable wellbeing provides a broader, more inclusive alternative framing to the current focus on sustainable development, which is driven by economic development and growth embedded within an anthropocentric, economic rationality. Rather than bolstering “weak sustainability” (Blowers, 2003; Scott,

2012) through this dominant technological-economic development paradigm that maintains our unjust and unsustainable capitalist-based systems, the T-Pathways to SWB framework advocates for “strong sustainability” (see Blowers, 2003; Scott, 2012) through a reorientation of the human-environment relationship. In place of this dominant paradigm, this framework adopts an ecocentric perspective (i.e. ecological orientation), which holds human and ecological wellbeing as interdependent, while honoring the subjectivity and inherent values, interests, and rights of both humans and the natural world.⁸ It aims for these to be reinforcing, though recognizes that tradeoffs will be necessary at times to maintain balance and harmony and to work toward all-inclusive wellbeing. Instead of resulting in unjust constrictions on personal freedoms, these tradeoffs function as catalysts for seeking plural transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing.

By shifting the focus to sustainable wellbeing—which may entail but is not defined by development—this more holistic framework attempts to counteract the historic practice of “othering” at the heart of colonization and modernization and which has been carried forward through SD. SD has traditionally been approached as a “Third World” or “Global South” problem. As such, privileged groups, particularly within developed Western societies (i.e. Global North), tend to assume a “savior” mentality whereby their duty is to fix the problems in the developing world. This has permitted us to escape implicating ourselves as direct contributors to (some would even argue, the worst offenders of) the global ecological crisis and unsustainable development. In this way, we are able to detach ourselves from the underlying causes of these global concerns, which creates barriers to the kind of transformative change needed to achieve

⁸ For an in-depth overview of ecocentrism and ecological orientation, see previous chapters’ discussions of these concepts and related work (e.g. Hancock, 2003; Rowe, 1994; Bendik-Keymer, 2006; Kopnina, 2013; Imran et al., 2014).

sustainable wellbeing for all. The T-Pathways to SWB framework challenges this practice of othering by advocating for eco-consciousness grounded in the framework's strong socioecological justice and ethics orientation. Through this process we as global eco-citizens are forced to simultaneously turn the gaze on ourselves (i.e. internal reality), and the very systems of structural inequality and othering that we perpetuate (i.e. external reality).

Instead of reinforcing the hegemonic, top-down approach that has come to characterize sustainable development, the sustainable wellbeing framework aims to generate global solidarity and shared responsibility while respecting diversity. It does this by underscoring the importance of synergistic partnerships for collective action, and the prioritization of freedom and capacity building as both outcomes of and mechanisms for working towards improved wellbeing for people and planet. This contrasts the prescriptive, technocratic approaches to SD that have roots in the global development industry and its aid-based system. In this way, the framework echoes the call of The Earth Charter (2000), recognizing that to realize sustainable wellbeing for all:

...[W]e must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future wellbeing of the human family and the larger living world. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature (The Earth Charter Initiative, 2000, *The Earth Charter* para 1 under "Universal Responsibility").

Finally, each of these potential contributions of adopting a T-Pathways to SWB framework has important implications for facilitating capacity building through sustainability-related education and training that could better equip sustainability change agents to influence policy, legal and institutional reform, and redirect other public, private and corporate governance mechanisms toward enhanced accountability at the local and global scales. Such transformations would require forging cross-sector and multi-scalar synergistic partnerships that create the kind of participatory action Sen (2013, p. 10) calls for in his “freedom-based” approach to sustainable development⁹, and which grassroots level collectives such as the Earth Charter Initiative are already implementing.

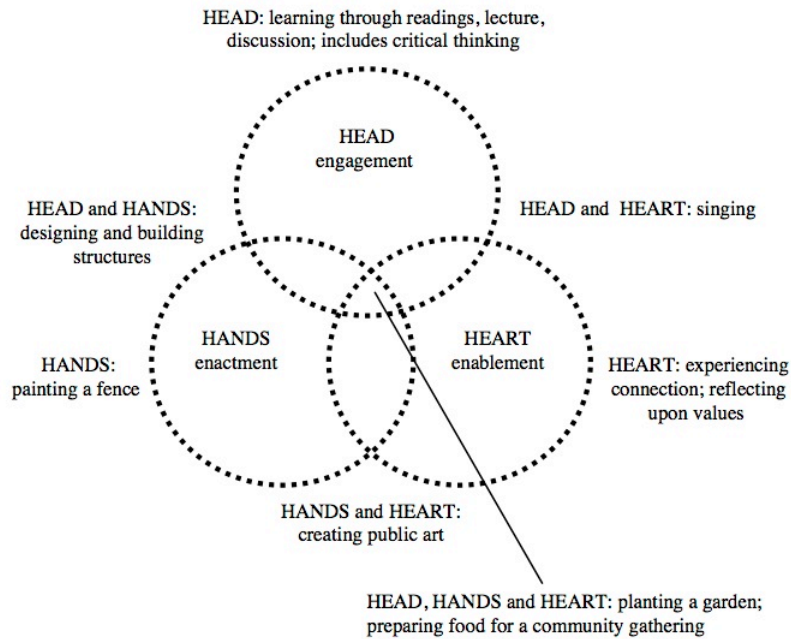
As Imran et al. (2014, p. 142) point out in their own proposal for an ecocentric reorientation of sustainable development, which has considerably informed my advocating for an alternative sustainable wellbeing framing, given the complexity and likelihood of “trade-offs between social, economic and environmental objectives,” decision-making and action in all social, economic, and environmental sectors will need to involve a more transparent, equitable, integrated and participatory process for assessing and determining how to handle these tradeoffs. A central aim for these deliberations is ensuring the least detriment done to both human and ecological wellbeing, now and for future generations. Accountability is especially crucial when considering components of human and ecological wellbeing such as fundamental human and environmental rights. Both are presently subjects of intense and highly controversial debates in the global arena. However, while Imran et al. (2014) tend to emphasize change at the institutional level, this T-Pathways to sustainable wellbeing framework places as much—if not more—importance on individual and communal responsibility in

⁹ See previous discussion of this in Chapter 1.

working toward sustainable wellbeing. For this reason, the T-Pathways to SWB framework maintains firm commitment to building capacity for people to serve as transformative change agents for socioecological justice (i.e. eco-citizens). The challenge remains identifying and implementing appropriate capacity building mechanisms that foster eco-citizenship in support of plural transformation pathways. This research exploring sustainability experiential learning as a potential capacity building mechanism represents one scholar-activist's attempt at responding to this very complex but pressing challenge. In light of this challenge, the remaining chapters shift the focus to an empirical case study of a university-based sustainability experiential learning (SEL) program known as the Global Sustainability Studies Program Initiative, and the SEL communities that form within a subset of individual summer program offerings. Chapter 3 details the purpose and methods of this case study. The empirical case study of a cohort of SEL programs/communities stemming from the Global Sustainability Studies Program Initiative can be seen as an application of the proposed T-Pathways to SWB framework and its underlying evolving theory of change delineated in this chapter.

Figure 1. Transformative Sustainability Learning (TSL) Framework

(Sipos et al., 2008, p. 75. Reprinted with permission. See Appendix I)



Note: There are seven combinations that can emerge; an example of how each may be actualized is provided

Figure 1 shows a framework for “Achieving TSL. A Venn diagram depicting constituents (combinations of head, hands and heart) and synergies (in spheres) of the TSL pedagogy wherein the principle of head, hands and heart engages and enables participants to enact Sustainability” (Sipos et al., 2008, p. 75).

Figure 2. “Moments’ of Social Transformation” Model: Mechanisms, Actors, and Pathways (MAPs) Framework (Haglund & Stryker, 2015, p. 4. Reprinted with permission. See Appendix I).

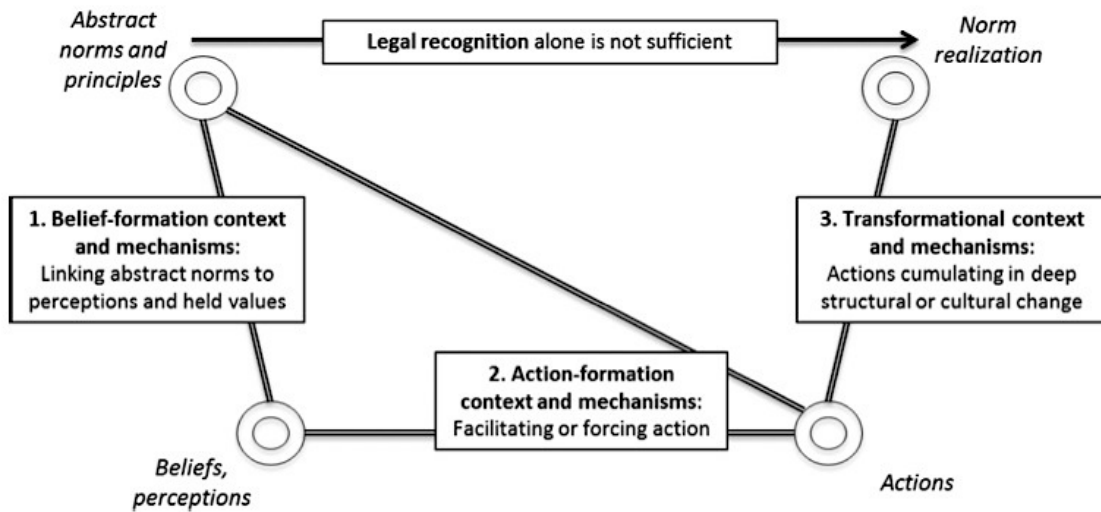
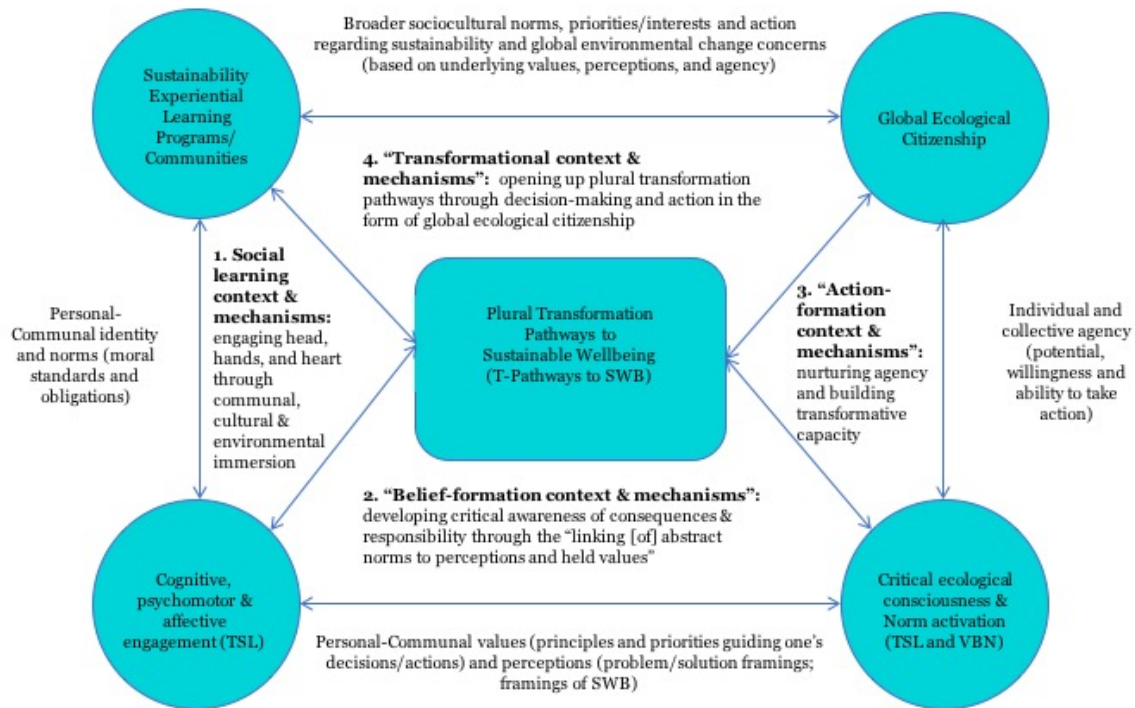


Figure 2 shows a framework for “Moments’ of social transformation. Note: this is an iterative rather than a stage-based model, with continual feedback among the various mechanisms and processes” (Haglund & Stryker, 2015, p. 4).

Figure 3. Transformative Capacity Building Model within a T-Pathways to SWB Framework



This model demonstrates the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the T-Pathways to SWB framework and its application as a proposed theory of change. This framework integrates the pathways approach (Leach et al., 2010) with tenets of transformative sustainability learning (TSL) (Sipos et al., 2008), norm activation and Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) (Schwartz, 1977; Stern & Dietz, 1994; Stern et al., 1999; Stern, 2000), global ecological citizenship (Dobson, 2003; Bendik-Keymer, 2006; Tarrant, 2010), and the Mechanisms, Actors, and Pathways (MAPs) framework (Haglund & Stryker, 2015; Haglund & Aggarwal, 2011). The structure of this proposed model is based on an adapted version of the MAPs “Moments” of social transformation” model (Haglund & Stryker, 2015; quotations from original; see Figure 2 above). Similar to the MAPs model, this *transformative capacity building model* illustrates the intersecting and iterative socialization, knowledge-making and mobilization processes that may unfold in sustainability experiential learning programs/communities. It simultaneously serves as an analytical tool for identifying and understanding the potential for SEL to function as a transformative capacity building mechanism for plural transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing (SWB).

CHAPTER 3

EMPIRICAL STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Endeavoring to identify and advance alternative capacity building approaches that support plural transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing (T-Pathways to SWB), this dissertation probes into the potential for sustainability experiential learning (SEL) to serve as a capacity building mechanism for global ecological citizenship (eco-citizenship). To begin to concretize and respond to this multi-faceted challenge, I conducted an ethnographic case study of SEL communities formed within the Global Sustainability Studies (GSS) programs at Arizona State University (ASU).

My choice to focus on SEL communities as opposed to employing a strictly programmatic lens was inspired by thinking from social learning (Tilbury, 2007; Wals, ed., 2007; Wals et al. 2008; Wals et al. 2009; Didham & Ofei-Manu, 2015) and community of scholars (Wenger, 2010; Blackmore, 2010) spheres. It is argued that a significant contribution of experiential learning is its emphasis on the social nature of learning. In other words, the knowledge-making processes are intertwined with—and ideally enhanced by—socialization processes at play during the “experiences.” Based on this premise, this empirical study uniquely treats SEL programs (e.g. GSS) as communal sites with distinct cultural and psychosocial learning components. Doing so has enabled me to critically examine the relationship between three intersecting aspects of capacity building that are often neglected in sustainability and global change research: values, perceptions, and agency and their relation to engagement through SEL. Exploring these together was meant to highlight the importance of these three difficult to capture capacity building elements in fostering critical-ecological consciousness and norm activation. This, in turn, can help advance understanding of the psychosocial and

cultural conditions necessary for “opening up” (Leach et al., 2010) plural transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing through eco-citizenship.

Research Questions

As articulated in the preface, this research is grounded in two framing questions:

- 1) How can capacity for “opening up” (Leach et al. 2010) plural transformation pathways be understood through the examination of SEL participants’ values, perceptions, and perceived agency for eco-citizenship?
- 2) How (if at all) can sustainability experiential learning communities better serve as capacity building mechanisms for eco-citizenship in the face of sustainability challenges linked with global change?

Once embarking on this empirical study, I developed the following main questions to better focus data collection and analyses:

- 1) How do SEL community members (i.e. student participants) perceive of sustainable wellbeing (SWB) and its associated problems and potential solutions pathways in addressing SWB concerns post-program?
 - a) *Analytical Implications:* Examine the SWB conceptualization and problem/solution framings of these perceptions. Consider where these framings fall along the anthropocentric to ecocentric spectrum.
- 2) To what extent do these factors indicate (or not) critical ecological consciousness-raising and norm activation—core components of capacity building for global eco-citizenship in support of T-Pathways to SWB?
 - a) *Analytical Implications:* Examine the values/value orientations and perceived agency evidenced in these perceptions. Consider whether these findings indicate critical eco-consciousness-raising and norm activation and the extent to which these point to a potentiality for eco-citizenship (e.g. align with eco-citizen

principles, qualities and/or action potential as articulated within the T-Pathways to SWB framework).

3) How might these factors (values, perceptions, and perceived agency) be shaped by their engagement experiences in cross-cultural SEL communities?

a) *Analytical Implications*: Examine the role of knowledge-making and socialization processes at play in their SEL communities in facilitating capacity building through eco-consciousness-raising and norm activation.

Hypothesis and Predictive Sub-Questions

My main hypothesis entering into this study was that sustainability experiential learning (SEL) communities can serve as important catalysts for eco-citizenship in support of plural transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing (T-Pathways to SWB). This was based on two assumptions: a) the combination of knowledge-making and socialization processes unfolding in SEL programs/communities in the form of communal, cultural and/or environmental engagement of the head (cognitive), hands (psychomotor), and/or heart (affective) influence values, perceptions, and perceived agency of participants; and b) affective engagement is especially important to eco-consciousness-raising and norm activation, which are key determinants of capacity for eco-citizenship. Based on these assumptions, I raised the following predictive sub-questions to be considered as part of my meta-level analysis in this study.

1) Are any of the following predicted outcomes evidenced in the GSS SEL communities post-program?

a) *the empowerment of SEL community members through eco-consciousness-raising and norm activation that arms them with the values, perceptions, and perceived agency to serve as eco-citizens (i.e. change agents) for plural transformation pathways?*

- b) *the disaffection of SEL community members who are incapacitated by becoming conscious of the cataclysmic and complex reality of global change and being implicated in its causes and solutions?*
 - c) *the affirmation among SEL community members of a dominant development paradigm that motivates them to seek technocratic and/or ethnocentric solutions to global change? Despite good intentions, SEL community members' values, perceptions and agency in this case are more likely to "close down," rather than "open up," plural transformation pathways.*
- 2) If evidenced, what factors related to socialization and knowledge-making processes may have contributed to these particular outcomes?
 - 3) Alternatively, are there other factors that demonstrate greater influential importance on such outcomes that perhaps challenge the base assumptions discussed above?

Research Objectives

The core objectives guiding this study are summarized as follows:

- 1) to critically examine the links between socialization and knowledge-making processes emerging in sustainability experiential learning (SEL) communities and the shaping of participants' values (i.e. moral/ethical standards and priorities) and perceptions (i.e. problem/solution framings of SWB);
- 2) to better understand how these values and perceptions in turn can impact SEL participants' perceived individual and collective agency (i.e. potential, willingness, and ability to take action) for eco-citizenship;
- 3) to identify internal and external barriers to long-term capacity building for eco-citizenship;

- 4) to consider the implications of this research for the development of future SEL programs that could better function as transformative capacity building for plural T-Pathways to SWB.

Underlying these objectives is the recognition that while sustainability experiential learning (SEL) has the potential to foster transformative sustainability learning, it also runs the risk of reinforcing a development paradigm based on a “modernist worldview” (Takahashi, 2004, p.172) that has been criticized by leading scholars for perpetuating ideologies and systems that threaten sustainable wellbeing (Wals & Jickling, 2002; Agyeman et al., 2003; Leach et al., 2010; Pelling 2011; Kates et al., 2012; O’Brien, 2012; Kothari, 2014; Imran et al., 2014). This points toward the ethical and political implications of knowledge-making processes transpiring in SEL (Leach et al., 2010; Frisk & Larson, 2011). Considering the context of sustainability learning, educators and institutions providing SEL programs and initiatives have both an opportunity and an obligation to consider how their own practices, structures, and ideologies are implicated in the proliferation of socioecological injustices embedded within the dominant development paradigm (Wals & Jickling, 2002). With this critical perspective in mind, a prime goal of this study was to offer insight into the psychosocial and cultural dimensions of SEL communities formed within SEL programs. Such insight is crucial to understanding SEL’s role in promoting “emancipatory” learning that builds the capacity of eco-citizens to engage in and help facilitate “active dialogue to establish co-owned objectives, shared meanings, and a joint, self-determined plan of action” (Wals et al., 2008, p. 56-57). Emancipatory SEL could thus be considered an aspirational mechanism for “opening up” rather than “closing down” plural transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing (Stirling, 2008).

Research Plan

This empirical study evolved into two complementary phases that took place over the course of 2015-2016. Phase 1, the focus of this dissertation, concentrated on the GSS case study cohort and involved members (i.e. program participants, faculty/staff leads) of the internal ASU SEL communities from the Summer 2015 GSS program cohorts. Phase 1 involved a more robust data collection process using a mixed-methods approach and multi-level analyses designed to enable internal comparison of the different SEL communities and programs and the themes that can be drawn between them as a representation of the entire 2015 GSS program/community cohort.

Phase 2 emerged as a supplemental exploratory phase to help inform future research and further consider alternative pathways for facilitating capacity building through continued engagement post-program. This second phase also helped in further grounding the GSS case study in the broader sphere of higher education-based SEL approaches. In this way, it served as a complement to Phase 1, with select data collection targeting a distinct but related SEL program/community stemming from the “Sustainable Neighborhoods for Happiness™ (SNfH) Project” and its Fall 2015 semester cohort. This SNfH group represented a more streamlined SEL model based on a traditional semester course structure offered to ASU students in the local (domestic) region of Tempe, AZ. My decision to incorporate the SNfH cohort in Phase 2 was based largely on knowledge gained during my data collection in Phase 1. I discovered that several participants in the SNfH initiative were also alumni of the GSS programs. I determined that this additional phase would enable me to further unpack this unexpected relationship between the programs while simultaneously enhancing my original case study analysis. Furthermore, I anticipated that insight gained from Phase 2 would help inform potential recommendations for linking GSS programs with other

streamlined experiential learning opportunities such as the SNfH initiative that could carry forward capacity building efforts.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on an overview of the GSS case study “sites” and the data collection and analytical methods employed in Phase 1. Phase 2 connections will be discussed in the final chapter of this manuscript wherein I consider the implications for future research and propose a strategic initiative for transformative capacity building for eco-citizenship. In anticipation of this discussion, this chapter also makes reference to the additional data collection that was involved in Phase 2.

Overview of Research “Sites”

This section provides a brief overview of the research “sites” involved in the Global Sustainability Studies (GSS) case study. I offer a more detailed ethnographic look at the different GSS programs and the broader GSS Program Initiative in Chapter 4.

The internal SEL community comparisons in Phase 1 stemmed from the GSS program initiative housed within the Julie Ann Wrigley Global Institute of Sustainability (Wrigley Institute) at ASU. As part of the Rob and Melani Walton Sustainability Solutions (WSS) initiatives, the GSS program offerings on whole have been designed around a solutions-oriented skills development approach (ASU WSS, 2015). According to senior WSS administrative staff who founded this initiative, GSS was a relatively new program modeled after GlobalResolve, an Ira A. Fulton School of Engineering program (Admin/staff, research interview, July 2015). At the time of this study, the GSS was in its fourth year of operation offering several single course-based programs each summer following a short-term (e.g. 10 days to about 5-6 weeks), international travel model. The GSS program cohorts traveling in the Summer 2015 semester (Phase 1 foci) included the following: 1) “*Sustainable Development across the Mediterranean*” (Spain and Morocco; May 23 to June 16); 2) “*Sustainable Neighborhoods for Happiness*” (Guatemala; May 18

to May 30); 3) “*Cities, Sustainability and Public Policy*” (Hong Kong; June 5 to June 20); and 4) “*Human Rights and Sustainability in Brazil*” (Brazil; May 31-June 19) (ASU WSSI, 2015).

The GSS initiative has relied mainly on funding from a short-term grant set to conclude in 2018, bringing into question its future continuation. Founders of the GSS initiative acknowledged the funding challenge they faced but aimed for it to become self-sustainable so the GSS initiative could continue to expand its impact on participants and global community partners (Admin/staff, research interview, July 2015). These factors, along with the GSS initiative being a separate WSS initiative of the Wrigley Institute rather than housed directly within the School of Sustainability or the Study Abroad Office at ASU, made it a particularly interesting and timely case.

Methodological Toolset

This section explains the multiple methods that made up the methodological toolset utilized in this research. This includes the principal and ancillary data collection and analytical methods employed in service of responding to my research questions and objectives.

Principal data collection methods. I employed a mixed-methods approach for data collection that included the following principal methods: participant observation; semi-structured interviews; and a community-based participatory research (CBPR) visual ethnography method known as Photovoice. Participants for each method were recruited using purposive sampling. The main reason for this sampling approach was due to the contained pool of participants linked to one of the four Summer 2015 GSS programs.

Participant observation. The most intensive participant observation was conducted during the “Human Rights and Sustainability in Brazil” study abroad program

that ran from May 31-June 19, 2015. During this three-week program I traveled as an official member of this sustainability experiential learning (SEL) community to São Paulo, Curitiba, Santarem, and on an Amazon boat tour, engaging fully in the presentations, community projects, and group cultural activities.

I conducted additional participant observation throughout the 2015-2016 academic year, focusing on program preparation and debriefing activities led by the GSS office and individual program leaders, as well as the program participants themselves (e.g. pre-departure workshops and trainings or post-program debriefs, presentations, informal SEL community gatherings, etc.). This combination of participant observations was aimed at supplying me with thick description data necessary for a deeper analysis of the socialization and knowledge-making processes of capacity building evidenced in the GSS-formed SEL communities. They also allowed me to assess GSS program ambitions against program realities that I presumed were heavily shaped by the characteristics, perceptions, experiences, and interactions (before, during, and after program travels) of SEL community members; the individual GSS program foci; and the host community contexts, among others.

Program participant interviews. The bulk of semi-structured interviews targeted student program participants, the dominant population that comprised the different internal SEL communities within each GSS program. Most of these interview participants fell within or close to the youth (18-35 years) age group, representing a wide range of undergraduate and graduate programs at ASU. While I had intended to specifically target youth for this study, I discovered a surprisingly fair amount of older (35+) students had participated in the GSS programs as non-traditional undergraduate and late-career graduate students. As such, I decided to extend my targeted age group for

study participants to better represent the diversity of the GSS SEL community members. The requirement was that participants be at least 18 years of age.

The semi-structured interviews among program participants in this case study were split between those who elected to also participate in the Photovoice project and those who did not. In order to maintain some standardization across these methods for comparative purposes, I used the same interview template as the basis for both sets of interviews with the addition of a photo-sorting and elicitation discussion activity at the start of the Photovoice interviews. (I elaborate on how I integrated the semi-structured interviews into the Photovoice project when describing the different Photovoice stages below.) I conducted a total of 13 post-program semi-structured interviews with Photovoice participants. These were the first interviews I administered at the start of the Fall 2015 semester. I conducted an additional 10 post-program semi-structured interviews with non-Photovoice GSS program participants throughout the remainder of the Fall 2015 semester. The 23 total GSS program participant interviews included six interview participants from the Brazil, Spain and Morocco, and Guatemala SEL communities, and five from the Hong Kong SEL community.

These extensive program participant interviews represented a significant portion of the GSS SEL community members and served as the mainstay of data collection and analyses efforts. As such, the interview protocol included critically reflective questions aimed at eliciting from program participants insights into the following areas: the ways these SEL program experiences may have shaped SEL community members' values, perceptions, and perceived agency as evidenced post-program; opportunities for affective, cognitive, and/or psychomotor engagement (i.e. knowledge-making and socialization processes) of SEL community members during and post-program; additional factors such as SEL community dynamics (i.e. socialization factors) and

program/pedagogical structures (i.e. knowledge-making factors) that may have impacted the SEL community members' experiences—and thereby capacity building potential—during and post-program; and other potential contributions and barriers to capacity building for eco-citizenship in support of sustainable wellbeing.

Faculty/staff leads and administrator interviews. To supplement the program participant interviews, I also conducted semi-structured interviews using purposive sampling that targeted the faculty/staff program leaders from each of the four Summer 2015 GSS programs, along with key administrative staff responsible for implementing the GSS Program Initiative as a whole. These interviews ran approximately 60-90 minutes and took place predominantly during the 2015-2016 academic year. The breakdown of faculty/staff leads and administrator interviews were as follows: five GSS administrative and supporting staff interviews (four directly within the Walton Sustainability Solutions office, and one representing the Study Abroad Office); and six ASU faculty/program lead interviews (one from Brazil, two from Spain and Morocco, one from Guatemala, and two from Hong Kong). One of the faculty/program lead interview participants held dual roles serving also as an administrator within the Wrigley Institute, which oversees the GSS Program Initiative.

The justifications for this set of supplemental interviews included the following: to provide a more well-rounded ethnographic portrayal of the GSS learning communities; to better understand the goals and visions (realized or not) of the GSS programs as seen through the lens of program leaders/GSS staff; to support analysis of how the capacity building of learning community members may be influenced by the approaches, experiences, values and perceptions of faculty/program leads and GSS staff; and ultimately to help identify potential contributions and barriers to capacity building for eco-citizenship through sustainability experiential learning (SEL). The interview

protocols for both the faculty/staff program leads and GSS administrator interviews were aimed at eliciting their different perceptions of and approaches to implementing the GSS programs; the roles they assumed throughout the SEL program development and implementation process; and their critical reflections on the overall experiences of the SEL communities. Though based on the same foundational questions, the interview protocols for these supplemental semi-structured interviews were adapted accordingly to better account for the specific positions and program affiliations of the interview participants.

Host-country organization/community partner interviews. Finally, I conducted additional semi-structured interviews with representatives from the four GSS programs' host-country organization/community partners where feasible. These post-program interviews were based on an adapted interview protocol similar to the one I developed for the faculty/staff and administrator interviews. A key difference was that due to travel constraints I had to conduct the host-country interviews remotely using special technology for international communication (e.g. Skype or other telecommunication tools). I administered interviews with representatives from all but one of the four GSS programs' host-country partners. Circumstances out of my control did not permit me to recruit an interviewee representing a host-country organization/community partner in Guatemala. My completed host-country partner interviews included the following: one interview with a representative from the institutional (university) partner in the Hong Kong program; one interview representing the organizational partner/community liaison in the Spain/Morocco program; one individual and one group interview, both representing the organizational partner/community liaison in the Brazil program; and one interview representing an institutional (university) partner in the Brazil program.

Similar to the faculty/staff and administrator sample group, the main justification for this final set of interviews was to enable a more holistic ethnographic portrayal of the GSS programs. I also wanted to ensure that, while not the focus of this study per se, there was at least some aspect (albeit incomplete) of an alternative viewpoint representing the host-country community incorporated into this research. I anticipated that these interviews would serve as a starting point for identifying possible points of conflict regarding the importance, purpose, and implementation approaches of SEL as a capacity building mechanism when comparing the host-country partner perspectives (three of which are within countries considered to be among the “Global South”) to the faculty/staff leads and GSS administrators (stemming from an institution in the Global North). (I will discuss more extensively my concerns for elevating the host-country partner and community perspective later in this and future chapters.)

Photovoice project. To complement my interview data, I utilized the CBPR method known as Photovoice. This interactive visual ethnography method is notable for capturing individual and/or group concerns about and perspectives of participants’ socioecological environments (Wang, 1999). Its central component is a photography assignment challenging participants to respond to an issue-based prompt. This is then typically followed by critical reflection and dialogue often resulting in action initiatives. Photovoice is designed to be an empowering data collection and analysis tool. By documenting their external realities and engaging in critically reflective dialogue on the images they choose to produce, the participant-photographers create individual and collective narratives that can serve as pathways for social change (Wang et al., 2004).

While Photovoice is often used to engage traditionally marginalized and/or more vulnerable communities, I chose to employ this method as a tool for challenging privileged groups to cast a critical eye on their own experiences and observations as

members of the GSS SEL communities while abroad. In this way, the Photovoice project also served as a capacity building mechanism that enabled the participant-photographers to better process what they saw, felt, and took away from their time spent in these cross-national SEL community contexts. This processing proved invaluable to uncovering the participant-photographers' cognitive and affective engagement with and responses to what they were experiencing throughout their journeys as members of the cross-national SEL communities. In this way, Photovoice opened the door to better understanding how participant-photographers embraced and observed the socioecological worlds in which they (temporarily) lived. The very act of completing the Photovoice project was an opportunity for participant-photographers to further develop and apply their photography/photo narrative skills, thus representing psychomotor engagement.

Implementation of the Photovoice project involved a five-stage model. I describe these different stages below.

Stage 1: Recruitment of participant-photographers from the 2015 GSS programs' SEL communities. As Photovoice works best with small groups (typically no more than 20, although this is on the high end), my goal was to recruit a small sample (n= 3-4) of student program participants from each of the four summer 2015 GSS SEL communities. Given the already modest size of total student participants in each GSS program (average of 16 participants per program), the purpose here was to obtain diverse representation while keeping the Photovoice team at a manageable size. Due to a request by one of the faculty-leads of the Hong Kong program, I had to refrain from actively recruiting participant-photographers from that cohort. As such, my Photovoice project group included participant-photographers from the Brazil, Guatemala, and Spain/Morocco 2015 GSS programs only. Of the total 13 participant-photographers

involved over the course of the Photovoice project, five were from the Brazil SEL community, five were from the Guatemala SEL community, and three were from the Spain/Morocco SEL community. As already demonstrated, I ensured there were opportunities to include additional GSS SEL community members in other components of my data collection.

Photovoice recruitment involved outreach directly to the three represented SEL communities near the end of the Spring 2015 semester and prior to departure for their Summer 2015 GSS programs. I enlisted the support of the GSS staff and faculty leads for connecting with the SEL community members via electronic (e.g. email and official GSS Facebook group messages) and in-person communications (e.g. presentations at GSS pre-departure meetings) as stated in my approved IRB protocol. After a potential participant-photographer expressed interest, I sent him/her a follow-up email and/or contacted them via phone to discuss the project purpose and expectations in greater detail. Once I confirmed the initial members of my core participant-photographer team, I invited them to the pre-departure orientation and ethical photography training session (see Stage 2).

Stage 2: Pre-departure orientation and ethical photography training session (about 90-120 minutes). The pre-departure orientation and ethical photography training session was an integral part of the Photovoice project. During the orientation component of this unified session, I introduced the participant-photographers to Photovoice methodology and how the Photovoice project fit within the broader goals of my dissertation research. Beyond explaining the Photovoice assignment, including procedures and expectations I had in mind for the team, I solicited feedback from the participant-photographers in tailoring guidelines to best support their ideas, needs and skillsets (within reason and ethical standards). For example, this was a chance for the

participant-photographers to determine how many photos to take, which equipment would be acceptable, how best to keep photo logs, etc. Additionally, I used this session as a capacity building opportunity by training the participant-photographers in basic photography skills and what it means to practice safe and ethical photography. I concluded the session by reviewing with the team the “Photovoice Participant-Photographer Information Packet” that I developed specifically for this project. Packet contents included the following:

1. *Information Letter for Photovoice Project Participant-Photographers:* Beyond informing participants of the scope of this study and their anticipated involvement in it, this official letter also served as a means for documenting “Agreement to Participate in the Photovoice Project” (i.e. informed consent); “Authorship Release Agreement for Photographic Data”; and “Agreement for Inclusion of Name alongside Photographs in Resulting Publications.” While the first informed consent signature was required, the latter two signatures were requested but not required based on recommendations from Photovoice methodology resources. Participant-photographers were given a blank copy of the letter in their packets and were granted a chance to review their signed letters at the start of their individual post-program interviews.
2. *Overview of the Photovoice Project for Participant-Photographers:* This overview was a copy of the recruitment email I sent out to all student participants in the Brazil, Guatemala, and Spain/Morocco GSS Summer 2015 programs in search of potential Photovoice participant-photographers. It provided more specific details on the main components (mirrored after the Photovoice Project stages) in which the participant-photographers would be asked to fully engage should they agree to join the Photovoice team.

3. *Overview of Photovoice Methodology*: This document provided a summary of content I covered in much greater detail during the orientation and training session. For the purposes of quick reference while in the field, I included a brief “Introduction to Photovoice Methodology” and recommendations for “Explaining Photovoice in Your Community.” I based the contents of this document on two instructive Photovoice best practice resources that also aided me in developing the orientation and training session. The first resource was the “Activity: Photovoices” section from a guide called *Collective Leadership Works: Preparing Youth & Adults for Community Change* (2008), a joint collaboration between The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development (ICCYD) and the Kellogg Leadership for Community Change (KLCC). The second key resource was “Explaining Photovoice”, part of an online reference guide on participatory methodologies offered by the System ExChange PhotoVoice Teams at Michigan State University (retrieved April 10, 2015 from <http://systemexchange.msu.edu/services/participatory-methods/photovoice>).
4. *Overview of Photovoice Ethics: “Safety, Impact, and Obligation”*: This document delved deeper into essential considerations for practicing ethical and safe photography as part of this Photovoice project. I used this document to summarize important information covered more extensively in the orientation and training session for the participant-photographers to reference while on their journeys abroad. In it I covered vital topics such as the following: “Key Safety and Photo Subject Concerns”; “Ethical Practices to Avoid Concerns”; “Ethical Responsibility to Photo Subjects”; “Impact on the Communities You Visit”; and “Key Questions to Ask Yourself When Choosing the Subject(s) of Your Photos.” Perhaps most of all, this document functioned as a practical guide for participant-

photographers on how best to complete their Photovoice photography assignments in a thoughtful and ethically responsible manner. I adapted the contents of this resource from the “Photovoice Ethics: Safety, Impact, and Obligation” section of *Collective Leadership Works: Preparing Youth & Adults for Community Change* (ICCYD & KLCC, 2008).

5. *Photo Reflection Sheet: Guide for Keeping Photo Logs*: This brief document supplied participant-photographers with an example template on key information to include in their photo logs, along with question prompts to aid them in reflecting on their photos in preparation for the individual interviews. While it was not a requirement that participant-photographers adhere to this specific template, I strongly encouraged them to use it as a guide. I adapted this template from “Handout 7G: Photo Reflection Sheet” in *Collective Leadership Works: Preparing Youth & Adults for Community Change* (ICCYD & KLCC, 2008).
6. *Photovoice Photo Release Form*: The final component of the participant-photographer packet was a set of blank copies of a standard Photo Release Form tailored for this specific project. I included these forms more as a precautionary measure. Recognizing that obtaining written consent would prove to be a major challenge given the contexts in which the participant-photographers would be carrying out their photography assignments, we decided as a Photovoice team to strive for avoiding personally identifiable photographs of subjects unless at least verbal consent was possible. To ensure ethical standards were upheld and subjects were protected, participant-photographers were also aware that all photos would be vetted by myself as co-principal investigator in conjunction with the participant-photographers during their individual interviews. Anything

deemed as a violation of the discussed ethical photography protocol (intended or not) would be withheld from associated study presentations and publications.

Originally, I had planned on having a single orientation and training session for all participant-photographers to attend. However, the reality of conflicting schedules at the end of the Spring 2015 semester made this impossible. Instead, I ended up facilitating multiple group sessions (one of which was for the entire Guatemala 2015 GSS cohort) and a few personalized sessions for those who were unable to attend the group offerings. I made these necessary adjustments to ensure that the core Photovoice team was appropriately prepared for their roles as participant-photographers. Additionally, I distributed a copy of the “Photovoice Participant-Photographer Information Packets” to each of the faculty-leads of the Brazil, Guatemala, and Spain/Morocco GSS programs. This was particularly important for the Guatemala and Spain/Morocco programs as I was not able to join their SEL communities in-country. Instead, I asked the faculty-leads to serve as an extra layer of support for the project should the participant-photographers need additional guidance while on their trips abroad. However, the participant-photographers were dissuaded from asking specific content-related questions about how to respond to the photography assignment prompt (see stage 3 below) so as not to skew their perspectives. Instead, they were advised to be creative and take ownership in their photography assignments while holding themselves accountable to the ethical standards and protocols we agreed upon as a Photovoice team. The exception, of course, was if they were seeking permission or confirmation of appropriateness to take photographs in a certain context.

Stage 3: Photographic data collection by participant-photographers (took place over the duration of the GSS programs). Over the full course of the Brazil, Spain/Morocco, and Guatemala GSS Summer 2015 programs, participant-

photographers were asked to complete their Photovoice photography assignment based on the following prompt: *“Capture in photograph form examples of potential contributions to sustainable wellbeing and potential barriers preventing sustainable wellbeing in the context of global environmental change.”* The images they captured were meant to highlight potential themes based on values and perceptions the participant-photographers associated with conditions for sustainable wellbeing throughout their journeys in Brazil, Guatemala, or Spain/Morocco.

I intentionally made the Photovoice prompt broad and ambiguous. Doing so permitted participant-photographers the freedom to interpret sustainable wellbeing and global environmental change however they saw fit. This broader prompt also encouraged participant-photographers to interact with their surroundings in a more intimate way, often blurring the lines between observer and subject. Perhaps most challenging and equally rewarding about the nature of this prompt was that it called for participant-photographers to confront ambiguity (in role, values, perception, power, impact, etc.) head-on. With this photography assignment I aimed to challenge participant-photographers to fully explore and embody their roles as visual storytellers attempting to craft their own narratives through what they observed, documented, and interpreted with the power of the photographic lens. The more seriously the participant-photographers took this challenge, the more their authentic perceptions could shine through their photographs.

In addition to an open interpretation of the prompt, the collectively agreed upon protocol for the photography assignment gave some basic guidelines but otherwise left specific decisions on subject identification and number of photographs to the discretion of participant-photographers. Essentially this was to empower participant-photographers to let the moments—and their unique experiences and perceptions of

them—speak through their work. If a situation did not present itself, or it was perhaps unsafe or unethical to take a photograph in that moment, then it was best to practice thoughtful restraint. Instead of setting a specific minimum of photographs required per day, I strongly encouraged participant-photographers to do their best to take photos at various points in their journeys to capture as much of their full narratives as possible (along with values and perspective changes along the way). However, I was careful not to make participant-photographers feel like they needed to force any photos just to meet a minimum. In short, the quality (i.e. meaningfully responds to the prompt; is visually perceptible), ethical standards, and authenticity of the resulting photo narratives were stressed over quantity.

As part of the photography project, participant-photographers were asked to generate photo logs associated with each of their final photo submissions. Depth and breadth of the logs were up to the individual participant-photographers, but they were each given the “photo reflection sheet” document (see information packet discussion above) as a guide in this process. Upon conclusion of their GSS 2015 summer programs, participant-photographers submitted their photographs and photo logs to me in electronic form for preparation for the individual interviews (see Stage 4 below). We did identify an approximate goal for each participant-photographer to submit at least between 10-25 photographs total to ensure we had enough photos to work with in future stages of the Photovoice project. However, the final submission counts varied. Finally, participant-photographers agreed to refrain from sharing their Photovoice project photographs in any public forum until the photographs had been properly vetted and we were able to collectively decide the most appropriate mediums (if any) for dissemination. Unless the participant-photographers sought special permissions from me as project co-PI, the only exception was if they were submitting a photo for a GSS program’s course

assignment. Adherence to this agreement was heavily stressed in the protocol with the aim of “maintaining study integrity through data protection.”

Stage 4: Post-program individual semi-structured interviews with participant-photographers (between 75-120 minutes). As mentioned in the “semi-structured interviews” methods section above, I interviewed each of the individual participant-photographers following their return from their SEL GSS 2015 summer programs. These interviews took place during the Fall 2015 semester. Since the interview protocol in the Photovoice project was adapted from the other subset of program participant semi-structured interviews, I will address only the supplemental components of the Photovoice version of semi-structured interviews in this section—the photo-sorting and elicitation discussion activity.

At the start of each Photovoice interview I asked the participant-photographer to complete a photo sorting activity that served as the basis for a reflective open-ended discussion. The main objective of the photo sort was to have participant-photographers categorize their own photographic submissions into themes. The participant-photographer would then explain each theme and select at least one photo representing each theme for further discussion (as time permitted). Aside from letting the themes and images themselves drive the discussion, I asked participant-photographers to consider how the identified themes and selected photos responded to the initial photography assignment prompt. As a precursor to the regular interview protocol questions, this activity was meant to unearth the individual photo narratives as seen through the lens of the participant-photographers. Moreover, the activity directly engaged the participant-photographers in analyzing their own visual ethnographic data, revealing more authentic interpretations of the images through thematic categorization. Doing this activity in an individual interview rather than in a collective setting (e.g. focus group) thus helped

avoid group bias in the participant-photographer responses. The integration of this Photovoice activity into the interviews also assisted participant-photographers in processing their SEL community experiences as a whole—an unexpected though most beneficial by-product of the Photovoice project.

This supplemental portion of the semi-structured interviews lasted between 25-40 minutes. Generally participant-photographers were given 10-15 minutes for the initial photo sort and the remainder was spent on discussion. For those with a substantially larger quantity of photo submissions, I permitted some additional time to complete the photo sort. However, this still proved to be a major challenge and thus caused me to adjust the protocol early on in the interview schedule to allow for participant-photographers to finish their photo sorts via a secured electronic database at a later agreed upon date. Additional time allotted was no more than 15-30 minutes and participant-photographers noted any changes they made between their original interview photo sorts and the photo sorting extension period (e.g. new or revised themes, photo additions or alterations within each theme, etc.).

Stage 5: Focus group and visioning exercise: After the individual interviews, all participant-photographers were invited to attend a single focus group session in the Fall 2015 semester. Unfortunately, due to scheduling constraints and heavy loads carried by the participant-photographers, only about half of the Photovoice team members were able to attend the focus group session despite multiple attempts at arranging “make-up” alternative options.

During this workshop, participant-photographers from 2 of the 3 represented GSS 2015 summer programs were brought together to collectively deconstruct the meanings and implications of each other’s photos. They were also taken through a visioning exercise where they were challenged to brainstorm potential mechanisms,

actors and pathways (MAPs) (Haglund & Stryker, 2015; see Figure 2) for realizing their collective future vision for sustainable wellbeing based on what they witnessed and experienced throughout their journeys as members of these international SEL communities.

Designed as a gateway to post-program action, this visioning exercise—and the focus group session as a whole—aimed to help further elucidate the perceived agency of the Photovoice participants and the potential for both individual and collective capacity for eco-citizenship. Additionally, it allowed participant-photographers to consider how others interpreted and were impacted by the photo narratives they chose to share. By encouraging participant-photographers to become agents of change and opening up their minds to alternative perspectives, the Photovoice focus group constituted another opportunity for capacity building built into the methodology of this dissertation research.

Despite the struggles with focus group attendance, there were other unexpected action-oriented opportunities presented to participant-photographers to utilize their Photovoice training, experiences, and/or produced photo narratives in the service of advancing sustainable wellbeing.

Phase 2: Supplemental Data Collection Efforts. Phase 2 of this study encompassed exploratory data collection on the Sustainable Neighborhoods for Happiness (SNfH) Project initiative's Fall 2015 SEL course cohort that will be used to inform future research. Two primary data collection methods were employed, including participant observation and semi-structured interviews. While time did not permit to launch a second Photovoice project with the SNfH cohort there were several members of the GSS Photovoice team who also identified as members of the SNfH SEL community in Fall 2015. In anticipation of building on this exploratory work in future research, the

strategies for deploying these methods largely mirrored that of the strategies used in Phase 1, albeit to a less intensive degree. As such, the following descriptions concentrate mainly on points of divergence in how these methods were used with the SNfH SEL project/community.

Participant observation. The SNfH SEL community stemmed from a locally-based applied research course (a different form of SEL) offered through ASU at its Tempe, AZ campus. As a result, participant observation of the SNfH SEL community took place mainly in the classroom setting. I received permission from lead course instructor and SNfH initiative founder to attend and observe several sessions of this evening course over different periods throughout the Fall 2015 semester. The instructor welcomed me to observe his (brief) lectures and participate in the discussions and group activities at my discretion. While I was unable to participate directly in some of their official Tempe neighborhood events and outreach efforts, I did make a point to speak informally and during the interviews with members of the SNfH SEL community about these experiences. I had also brought previous experience as an invited guest at a preliminary SNfH initiative community meeting arranged by the initiative director and his organizational and institutional partners in the Spring 2015 semester. Though this meeting was not a part of this official study, it offered context for the efforts to establish the Tempe-based SNfH project that would later become the foundation for the domestic SNfH Project Initiative. The main impetus for conducting participant observation in Phase 2 was that it enabled me to see firsthand the facilitation style of the faculty-lead from the Guatemala GSS SEL program who oversees the SNfH Project Initiative and taught the Fall 2015 cohort. Additionally, it enabled me to see firsthand how some of the GSS SEL participants from multiple Summer 2015 GSS SEL programs/communities

were able to continue their engagement and apply their agency post-program through this SNfH Project Initiative course.

SNfH Fall 2015 course participant interviews. The only semi-structured interviews conducted in Phase 2 were with the SNfH course student participants who constituted the core group of the SNfH SEL community. These interviews took place post-course at the start of the Spring 2016 semester. In this case, I used a combination of purposive sampling facilitated through the course instructor via email and official Blackboard course communication tools.

The main challenge with this cohort was recruiting interview participants who fit my primary criteria for Phase 2 semi-structured interviews: *former members of the Fall 2015 SNfH SEL community who had not yet participated in any GSS program, nor any other form of sustainability-focused Study Abroad program, during their time at ASU. Those considering (or who had already applied for) participation in such programs for the upcoming Summer 2016 period were still eligible for the interview so long as they had not previously participated in one of the above.*

I explicitly stressed these criteria because several of the GSS 2015 SEL community members had also gone on to become members of the SNfH SEL community. As articulated earlier in this chapter, my discovery of this unexpected linkage played a major role in my decision to incorporate this Phase 2 cohort. During Phase 2, I conducted a total of 11 semi-structured interviews with members of the SNfH Fall 2015 SEL community. The 11 interviews in Phase 2 included only those who met the aforementioned criteria; they were entirely distinct from the additional 7 semi-structured interviews I conducted in Phase 1 with GSS program participants who also happened to identify as members of the SNfH SEL community. The purpose of this criteria was in anticipation of future research that would be based on a comparative

design between different SEL approaches (e.g. comparative study between the GSS Program Initiative and SNfH Project Initiative).

Ancillary resources. To obtain a more holistic understanding of the GSS Summer 2015 SEL programs/communities, and the structural and socioecological contexts in which they were formed, primary data was supported with secondary and auxiliary organizational resources. Examples included the following:

- Official GSS 2015 program participant lists
 - These were mainly used to support outreach efforts and later to help identify SEL community membership linkages between the GSS and SNfH cohorts.
 - Information from these lists such as GSS program participants' majors and grade levels was also utilized in generating the ethnographic micro-ecologies of the four GSS SEL programs/communities (see Chapter 4).
- GSS program syllabi and itineraries and SNfH course syllabus.
- GSS Walton Scholars profiles (publicly available)
 - Offered insight into GSS participants' backgrounds and their pre-program perceptions and values that served as motivation to join one of the GSS Summer 2015 SEL communities.
- GSS Walton Scholar blogs (publicly available)
 - Featured Scholar program reflections that offered additional insight into GSS participants' program experiences.
- Publicity materials and information handouts for the different GSS program offerings (publicly distributed by GSS administrative staff and faculty-leads at various pre- and post-program events)

- Website descriptions of the GSS and SNfH initiatives (publicly available)
- Materials providing descriptive information on the GSS programs' in-country partners, where applicable (publicly available on organizational websites)
- Other materials providing relevant contextual information about the School of Sustainability and Global Institute of Sustainability such as mission/vision statements, program initiatives, etc. (distributed in public venues and featured on public websites)

The secondary and auxiliary organizational resources were useful in helping fill in some of the contextual gaps in my primary data, including getting a better sense of the pre-program motivations and perceptions that drove program participants to embark on these GSS SEL journeys (e.g. Scholar profiles and blogs). It also equipped me with valuable information essential to situating the individual GSS SEL programs/communities within the larger GSS Program Initiative, and the GSS Program Initiative within its encompassing ASU institutional domain. Chapter 4 of this manuscript unveils the resulting ethnographic depictions.

Analytical methods

Micro-level analyses. My micro-level analyses focused on primary data collected in Phase 1 and targeted the following main units of analysis: the SEL communities and their individual members (emphasis on student/program participant members), and the different SEL program models (i.e. design and implementation components). Employing an applied thematic analysis (ATA) approach, I followed recommendations by Guest et al. (2012, p. 40) for “bounding the analytic view” by focusing my micro-level analyses on a subset of data. This level of analyses probed into the GSS student program participant interviews. The micro-level analyses simultaneously probed into the Photovoice data because of the way I had intentionally

structured the Photovoice project to integrate the semi-structured interview into its protocol. The analytic purpose driving this strategy was to identify themes within the qualitative interview data that indicated participants' perceptions, values, and/or perceived agency post-program, as well as engagement mechanisms and strategies employed in the SEL programs/communities. The four main thematic categories of "values," "perceptions," "perceived agency," and "engagement" represented the primary coding targets. Together they formed the foundation of my micro-level analyses coding structure, acting as a guidepost for emergent sub-themes. As such, they were integral in my process of theme organization and interpretation, enabling me to more meaningfully respond to my study's research questions and objectives. Following in line with the ATA approach, I maintained a "flexible and responsive" coding strategy that allowed for the identification of additional emergent themes that otherwise did not fit within one of the four primary thematic categories (Guest et al., 2012, p. 45).

To support an internal comparison of results between the different GSS SEL programs/communities, I grouped my micro-level analyses by interview participants' SEL program/community affiliations. Once compiling and organizing the resulting themes for each GSS SEL program/community, I compared across the four programs/communities and synthesized these themes as a representation of the Summer 2015 GSS cohort as a whole (see Chapter 5 of this manuscript for a presentation of these synthesized findings). From there, I considered the connections between these synthesized thematic results and capacity building for eco-citizenship. In particular, I examined the extent to which these themes pointed toward signs of eco-consciousness and norm activation, and ultimately a potentiality for eco-citizenship (i.e. aligned with eco-citizen principles, qualities and/or action potential as articulated within the T-Pathways to SWB framework). Key indicators for eco-consciousness included critical

thinking/questioning of underlying drivers of socioecological injustices and other sustainability/SWB problems (including the ways our own values, perceptions, and/or actions are implicated in those drivers); and an awareness of consequences of sustainability/SWB problems and solutions to self, others and/or the environment (including the interconnected nature of these consequences). Key indicators of norm activation included a sense of personal and/or collective responsibility in addressing sustainability/SWB problems and working toward plural solution pathways; and an expressed desire and/or ability to contribute to the realization of socioecological justice and sustainability/SWB. As articulated in the proposed T-Pathways to SWB framework and its *transformative capacity building model* (see Chapter 2), eco-consciousness-raising and norm activation are considered core components of capacity building in this study.

Additionally, I searched for indicators of transformative sustainability learning mechanisms and strategies, and other experiences that might indicate knowledge-making and socialization processes unfolding within the SEL programs/communities and the ways in which these may have shaped participants' values, perceptions, and perceived agency. For transformative sustainability learning, I was particularly interested in examining if and how three main types of engagement approaches were represented among the results and their potential contributions to enhancing eco-consciousness-raising and/or norm activation. Drawing upon Sipos et al.'s (2008) "Transformative Sustainability Learning (TSL) framework," I pulled the resulting thematic codes linked with "engagement" and broke them into three sub-themes: "cognitive (head) engagement," "psychomotor (hands) engagement," and "affective (heart) engagement." Incorporating these extra layers of analysis enhanced my ability to link findings back to theory and respond more directly to my core research questions and

objectives. Thus, my micro-level ATA analysis plan could be characterized by an “iterative” process involving both inductive and deductive reasoning (Guest et al., 2012, p. 49-50). I used a combination of Word and Atlas.ti software to support me in these analytical activities.

Meso-level analysis. Beyond the micro-level analyses of the interview data, I also applied an adapted version of the “Mechanisms, Actors, and Pathways (MAPs)” framework to comparatively analyze the different knowledge-making and socialization processes across the individual SEL programs that were evidenced in the multiple data sources (Haglund & Stryker, 2015; Haglund & Agarwal, 2011; for an overview of the MAPs framework, see Chapter 2 of this manuscript). The purpose of carrying out this additional analysis activity was two-fold: 1) to illustrate the implications for how the design and implementation strategies (i.e. mechanisms), the program contexts (i.e. pathways), and the different groups and institutional partners who make up the GSS SEL communities (i.e. actors), might influence program participants’ values, perceptions, and perceived agency in support of opening up T-Pathways to SWB; and 2) to provide a deeper understanding of how the GSS Program Initiative fits within the broader climate of capacity building models found in sustainability experiential learning.

Meta-level analysis. To contextualize my findings on the GSS Program Initiative within the broader sphere of sustainability experiential learning (SEL), I added a meta-level descriptive analysis of the programmatic and institutional data collected. This involved reviewing and synthesizing procedural, structural, and other ethnographic-related information captured in the GSS faculty/staff leads and administrator interviews, supplemental and auxiliary data resources, and participant observation. Findings from the meta-level and meso-level analyses provided the basis for the situated ethnographic depictions of the GSS Program Initiative and its individual Summer 2015 GSS program

offerings featured in Chapter 4. Those ethnographic depictions are meant to highlight potential internal and external barriers and contributions to capacity building for eco-citizenship (fulfilling core objective 3 of this study). Furthermore, this meta-level analysis helped me identify from this study's findings key implications for formal and informal SEL models. Those implications greatly informed the recommendations I put forth in the concluding chapter of this manuscript, including the proposed SEL capacity building model for plural transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing (fulfilling core objective 4 of this study).

Discussion and Reflection

Adopting a critical and empowering research approach

Inspired by work of early pioneers in critical ethnography, particularly in educational anthropology (Anderson, 1989), I carefully crafted and employed this mixed-methods toolset in an effort to move from an unapologetically extractive to an intentionally empowering research design. This study may not fit within the traditional mold of action research. However, the dialogical strategies and skills (e.g. engagement, reflexivity, flexibility, empathy, authenticity, transparency) I strove to employ while embarking on participant observation, conducting interviews, and facilitating the Photovoice project sought capacity building as both a research subject and an aspirational impact of the research process itself. As much as my study participants served as informants and sources of diverse knowledges, I offered myself in return as a resource to them. Moreover, I chose methods that would enable me to best capture the voices and narratives of my participants and endeavored to find opportunities for participants to take more active roles in the research process with the goal of contributing to their individual and collective agencies—a key focal point in this study.

The capacity building implications for restructuring the participant-researcher power relationship in the research design cannot be overlooked. These are summarized by critical researcher Mischler (1986):

Through their narratives people may be moved beyond the text to the possibilities of action. That is, to be empowered is not only to speak in one's own voice and to tell one's own story, but to apply the understanding arrived at it to action in accordance with one's own interests (Mischler, 1986, p. 20).

In other words, I armed myself with methods that both examined the role of SEL in fostering critical ecological consciousness-raising and norm activation among SEL community members, whilst simultaneously endeavoring to use these as mechanisms for such modes of capacity building. Inspired by the work of renowned emancipatory scholars like Freire (1972), I adopted an applied critical research approach—or what Anderson (1989, p. 26) refers to as “Freirian empowering research”—in hopes of helping to bridge the gap between scholarship and activism. By adopting such an approach, I strove to also take up the calls of contemporary scholars for an “emancipatory” approach to sustainability learning that strives for the co-production of knowledge-making and action to address sustainability challenges (see Wals & Jickling, 2002; Wals et al., 2009). In so doing I sought to not only study but also embody the identity and formation of a global ecological citizen. In short, my research design is best understood in the context of a broader vision for transformative capacity building for pathways to socioecological change (i.e. sustainability transformation pathways) made possible, in part, through transformations in approaches to sustainability learning.

Being driven by this broader vision no doubt brought with it a series of challenges. Some of these could be considered typical research obstacles, while others were directly related to adopting an applied critical research approach. The remainder of

this section will highlight some of the key limitations and delimitations of this study with a focus on the primary case study population, the GSS SEL communities.

Study limitations and delimitations

A common obstacle that any researcher faces when embarking on a research study is fitting an ambitious, multi-layered project into less than favorable time constrictions. This study was no exception. The first obstacle I faced was working around the timing of the GSS programs' travel periods. Given that the 2015 GSS programs ran (i.e. embarked on travel experiences) during the first half of the Summer 2015 semester and involved pre-departure activities beginning in the Spring 2015 semester, I was forced to compete with the already overloaded docket of potential study participants. The reality of establishing acceptable protocols, conducting outreach, and securing proper permissions (e.g. IRB, dissertation committee, key contacts within the GSS program initiative, etc.) delayed me in fully moving forward with the research process longer than I would have liked. As such, I found myself somewhat disadvantaged by an already constrained time-window to recruit participants and begin steps for data collection before the SEL communities departed for their GSS SEL program travels.

Conducting any type of research with university-based participants (e.g. students, faculty, and staff) during a single, regular academic semester (e.g. Fall or Spring) is difficult enough. Trying to engage university participants in research that spans multiple academic semesters, including the dreaded Summer semester period, is all the more taxing, especially when students make up the core sample population. The normal curricular demands placed on part-time and full-time students in today's American higher education system, regardless of academic level, can be quite overwhelming on their own. So naturally one could expect students to treat anything that might add to their heavy loads—such as agreeing to participate in a voluntary research study—with

some degree of hesitation. I expected to encounter resistance from potential participants due to overwhelming obligations and scheduling conflicts that persisted throughout the multi-semester study period. This was certainly true, though understandable, for a portion of my potential study participant pool. Just getting their attention from the outset of the project as they juggled end-of-semester finals, the added preparations for their international travels, and non-academic life responsibilities was a victory in itself. On the other hand, I was also confronted with the “over-achiever” types (a group to which I too ascribe). I found myself struggling to work around the hectic schedules of students who, despite their multitude of obligations, were still willing to participate in the study. Scheduling conflicts also factored into data collection with my faculty, staff, and host community participants, but these sample groups were much smaller and tended to be more accommodating.

To earn the trust, respect the authority, and address any concerns of GSS faculty/staff leads and program administrators up front, I had to go through specific channels of recruitment outreach that were agreed upon and/or orchestrated directly through these key contacts. Going through these indirect channels both helped and hindered my efforts in some regards. It helped by having the faculty/staff leads and GSS administrators serve as trusted intermediaries for me and my project. By welcoming me into their classrooms, private Facebook program groups, email chains, and social gatherings these intermediaries demonstrated to my core sample group, the student/program participant members of the GSS SEL communities, that they respected me as a researcher and found this project to be of some value—at least enough to allow me to present opportunities for participation to their SEL communities. The hindrance came mainly in how the added steps for going through these channels slowed down the recruitment process, and in some cases restricted my potential participant pool (e.g.

having to exclude the Hong Kong SEL community from Photovoice recruitment). Nevertheless, gaining the support of the GSS faculty/staff leads and administrators was essential to my ability to recruit study participants throughout the duration of the project, which included the faculty/staff leads and administrators. For that I am eternally grateful to them for their support and contributions.

Recruiting participants is one thing. Retaining committed participants is a whole other matter. As the most time-consuming data collection method, Photovoice proved to be the most difficult to recruit AND retain participants throughout the duration of the Photovoice project. I ended up losing some early volunteers including one during the GSS program travel period, and one after having returned from the GSS programs. In both cases, unexpected and overwhelming life circumstances caused the Photovoice participant-photographers to prematurely remove themselves entirely from the project. I managed to compensate for this loss with other late-stage volunteers, requiring some flexibility in how I implemented the different stages of the project. Additionally, there were a select few participant-photographers who struggled greatly to fulfill their agreed-upon commitments in the Photovoice project. These participant-photographers faced similar issues of becoming overcommitted and on the verge of burnout. However, by practicing patience, open communication, flexibility, and empathy toward their life circumstances, I was able to guide them through the remainder of the project.

Though not without stumbling blocks, on whole the participant-photographers lived up to their agreed upon Photovoice project expectations. The bulk of the photography assignment took place during the program travel periods, which meant participant-photographers did not have to set aside additional time beyond what they were already going to be engaged in while abroad. The individual interviews in the Fall 2015 semester were a bit more demanding for the Photovoice participant-photographers

compared to the rest of my interview sample groups. This was mainly because as an added step to the interview process participant-photographers had to submit their photos/photo logs. This was more manageable for some than others, especially the later into the semester the interviews were scheduled. But the interviews were successful nonetheless. Unfortunately, the focus group seemed to be the point of surrender. In the end, scheduling conflicts made worse by high-volume academic and personal responsibilities throughout the Fall 2015 semester proved too problematic for some members of the participant-photographer team. Despite my efforts to accommodate everyone's needs, including multiple attempts to schedule alternative focus group sessions, only about half of the Photovoice team was able to participate in the focus group stage of the project. Out of respect for the time and needs of the Photovoice team, I decided it best to be grateful for the contributions they already had made and concluded the Photovoice project without having realized my full vision for the focus group stage. Nonetheless, these struggles offered valuable lessons in how better to design a Photovoice project of this nature in the future (see Chapter 6 for further discussion).

Out of all the methods I had intended to utilize in this study, the most problematic turned out to be the least time-consuming data collection method—the surveys. My original research plan had included a pre- and post-survey design that would collect responses from GSS SEL community members prior to their program departures and upon return home from their travels abroad. Despite my tenacious survey recruitment efforts, asking the GSS SEL community members to voluntarily complete an online pre- and post-program survey was futile. The timing of the pre-departure survey was the main factor in what turned out to be a poor response rate. Spending 30 minutes on a thought-provoking survey may not seem like a lot to ask of students. But when under incredible pressures already, it is no surprise that there was

little motivation to complete one more academic-related task, especially if NOT required. Bad timing was also a major factor in the poor response rate for the post-program survey I subsequently attempted, but for somewhat contrasting reasons. The conclusion of the GSS programs marked the official start of summer for most. Getting students to complete anything that could be associated with academics without direct incentives during the summer break proved to be a lost cause.

Perhaps if I had been able to offer attractive incentives or had the time to develop a long-standing pre-program rapport with the study participant pool the turnout might have been different. Incentives were not an option in this case due to lack of funding and the protocols I had established for the project. Furthermore, the frequency and structure of the pre-departure activities were not conducive to me developing a strong rapport prior to the program departures. However, the rapport I developed with the different SEL communities during (in the case of the Brazil GSS program) and post-program (in the case of the remaining three GSS programs) aided me in my interview recruitment and implementation process over the course of the Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 semesters. An additional benefit during these semesters was having more time and flexibility to schedule the interviews. The setbacks of the original pre- and post-surveys notwithstanding, I felt confident that not being able to obtain what I had always considered as supplemental data would not derail me from answering my core research questions and fulfilling my study's core objectives. Had I employed a more traditional program evaluation approach, or intended this research to serve as a longitudinal study, the pre- and post-program surveys would have been more significant. Though these are certainly worthwhile research contributions that would have added to my research, this critical ethnographic case study pursued alternative aims. In Chapter 6 I propose

possible alternative strategies for incorporating a survey design into future related research.

Time constrictions also shaped how I carried out the different components of my participant observation. The fact that the 2015 GSS programs overlapped with one another during the Summer 2015 semester meant I would not be able to engage in participant observation with each of the four SEL communities during their program travels. Even if they did not overlap, inadequate funding alone would have made participant observation in all four programs unlikely. To aid me in still obtaining a more robust ethnographic picture of the different SEL communities and their experiences abroad, I made a point to engage in participant observation with the SEL communities during pre- and post-program activities (formal and informal) whenever possible. I also intentionally designed my semi-structured interviews for the student program participants and the faculty/staff leads to include questions that would shed light on what it was like to be a member of each cross-cultural SEL community. These alternative strategies may not entirely replace the value gained from traveling to diverse regions of the world as a fellow GSS SEL community member on all four GSS SEL programs. However, I felt that my multi-year involvement with the Brazil GSS SEL program coupled with my previous experiences both facilitating and participating in other forms of international experiential learning programs armed me with incredibly useful first-hand SEL insight to successfully carry out this project.

Navigating Multiple Positionalities / Roles During Fieldwork¹⁰

Whether “in the field” for 3 days or 3 years, in a university classroom or on a boat in the Amazonian rainforest of Brazil, fieldwork no doubt brings its own set of unique challenges. Some obstacles I faced in conducting participant observation during the intensive three-week GSS Summer 2015 program, “Human Rights and Sustainability in Brazil,” had to do with holding multiple positionalities. My membership in the Brazil SEL community encompassed two primary roles: co-facilitator of the learning experience; and active participant in and observer of the formation and dynamics of the Brazil SEL community. This duality resulted in intersecting responsibilities and perceptions of how to best fulfill those responsibilities. Together these enabled a deeper level of engagement for my research, while at the same time posing potential conflict.

Balancing multiple roles sometimes meant sacrificing documenting observations due to factors such as time constraints, competing demands on attention, and what I determined as ethically and culturally appropriate in a specific context. For example, though not required, I made it a habit to seek permission from both local presenters and my fellow SEL community members to document observations during community talks or activities out of respect to them and the experience. But during very personal engagement opportunities, such as a meditation session or group reflections, I chose to refrain from documentation as it might have detracted from the creation of a welcoming and empathic environment. While it could be argued that collective settings are inherently observational spaces, visible reminders that one is being observed during

¹⁰ A related though not identical version of this segment under the heading “Navigating Multiple Positionalities / Roles During Fieldwork” was previously published as a reflection piece by Julianna Gwiszcz in the Spring 2017 edition of *Sectors*, 4(1). *Sectors* is an online newsletter of the American Sociological Association’s Sociology of Development Section. The published version of this short reflection piece was entitled “Navigating Multiple Positionalities in Short-Term Ethnographic Fieldwork.” See Gwiszcz (2017) in bibliography for full citation.

vulnerable moments are not conducive to honest and open sharing necessary for mutual understanding (what I consider “safe space” environments).

Though a thorough discussion is beyond the scope of this chapter, my multiple positionalities made me evermore mindful of the extent to which a researcher’s presence influences subject responses. Participants may be more inclined to monitor their behaviors and verbal responses when aware of the observational gaze. This can call into question objectivity and validity of participant observation data and create barriers to capturing more important information (e.g. sensitive or less favorable details) (England 1994). Recognizing that my multi-layered embeddedness within the Brazil SEL community made me a part of the “intersubjective creation” of that community and the experiences we shared, I made a conscious effort to prioritize reflexivity throughout the research process (England, 1994, p. 244).

Reflexivity is critical to conducting social science research, especially when conducting fieldwork in the international sustainable development context where power imbalances may already be at play. As England (1994) defines it,

...reflexivity is self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious *analytical* scrutiny of the self as researcher....it induces self-discovery and can lead to insights and new hypotheses about the research questions. A more reflexive and flexible approach to fieldwork allows the researcher to be more open to any challenges to their theoretical position....[and] require[s] careful consideration of the consequences of the interactions with those being investigated” (England, 1994, p. 244, emphasis in the original).

In an effort to be more reflexive, I continuously reflected on aspects of my positionality and the relational nature of my membership within the Brazil SEL program. I

endeavored to use the insight gained from reflexivity to guide me from the research design phase through analysis and write-up phases of this study.

The following are some “self-critical” (England, 1994, p. 244) questions that came to mind during my participant observation in Brazil. When I weighed in on discussions, was I imposing too much of my own ideologies on the rest of the SEL community? To what extent was I accepted or viewed as an equal member of the SEL community? Did my leadership and researcher roles make the student members less likely to be themselves around me? Perhaps the most difficult was balancing how much I immediately divulged of my own perspectives and values with encouraging others to be more vocal and forthcoming with theirs. Given my personal passions for socioecological justice—a major focus of this GSS program—I often found myself struggling to hold back until the end of a discussion before weighing in on an issue. In such instances, I questioned whether it was more important for me as co-facilitator of the learning experience to help shed light on alternative perspectives, or for me as a participant observer to let my fellow SEL community members discover these perspectives for themselves?

To address some of these concerns, I placed great importance on authentic and empathic engagement aimed at fostering strong trust relationships with fellow SEL community members before, during, and following program travels. While in Brazil I made special efforts to be more attentive to others within the SEL community. I regularly checked in with student members on a one-on-one basis and intervened on their behalf (with their approval) when there were issues that needed additional support to be addressed. My past trainings in active listening was a major contributor in such cases.

As the cornerstone of any community, trust was essential to effectively fulfilling my roles. However, trust can also lead to unexpected consequences and conflicts. For

example, fellow SEL community members treated me as a confidante, sharing personal struggles regarding other community members, or their experiences in Brazil as a whole. I had to take personal revelations in stride and make difficult decisions on where to draw the line between “on and off the record” without excluding data that could provide important insights into the knowledge-making and socialization processes unfolding throughout the journey. Though I was in no way perfect, I came to rely heavily on important skill-sets such as adaptability, empathy and reflexivity. Together these aided me in striking a balance between multiple roles while striving to fulfill my own and my fellow SEL members’ expectations for ethical and competent research and practice.

Broadening Out Perspectives

As discussed in my introductory chapter, I intentionally chose to focus on the more privileged groups in the cross-cultural exchanges of SEL programs for this study for several reasons. These included the need to cast a more inward critical reflection on the role SEL programs and their associated communities can or should play in preparing the next generation of sustainability change agents, and whether or not we are doing justice to the international communities with whom we engage and work. Given the limitations in resources (time, funding, personnel support, etc.), my decision to focus on this privileged population meant having to partially exclude—at least for this initial study—the broader perspectives of the local host communities within the four countries where the GSS programs were based. I attempted to capture a very small subset of the local host community perspectives by interviewing representatives from the key partner institutions. But I recognize that this is not an adequate approach for such an important and diversified population.

As someone who adamantly advocates for inclusive sustainability research and practice, this decision was a difficult one for me to make. However, as privileged

members in a global society, we are too quick to cast the gaze outward at international “others,” overlooking how we ourselves are implicated in the sustainability challenges and impacts our global counterparts face. As such, this research seeks to shed light on a potential intervention point necessary for fostering collaborative transformative knowledge-making and action in support of socioecological justice. My hope is that this study will inspire future applied research that mutually engages the diverse perspectives, values, strengths, and needs of SEL community members—including the sending and receiving institutional and community-based partners—in the process of pursuing transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing. I will take up this topic of implications for future research again in the final chapter of this manuscript.

A common thread between these various challenges associated with time constraints and their impacts, broadening out perspectives, and multiple positionalities is the need for balance. Transparency, reflexivity, authenticity, and adaptability are key tools that aided me in finding balance. But this was an ongoing battle that continued beyond the field experience. The decisions we make in how we analyze and present data we collect—be it in the form of participant observation or otherwise—are equally important to the fieldwork itself. Ethical responsibilities do not end once fieldwork concludes. Power inequality can be at its worst once the researcher has returned to the highly-privileged spaces of academia. What we choose to do with data post-fieldwork can mean the difference between exploitation and empowerment. My research (as I hope is the case for all) continues to strive for the latter.

CHAPTER 4

SITUATING THE CASE STUDY “SITES”: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC SKETCH OF THE GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES/PROGRAMS/COMMUNITIES

This chapter puts forth the first major integration of ethnographic findings extracted from the full spectrum of mixed-methods data collected in the case study of the Global Sustainability Studies (GSS) Program Initiative and its Summer 2015 GSS sustainability experiential learning (SEL) program offerings. The chapter begins with an ethnographic sketch of the GSS Program Initiative as a whole and features a more macro-level structural mapping of the GSS Program Initiative’s ecology of actors. The purpose of this broader ethnographic sketch is to explicate how the specific GSS SEL program offerings are embedded within the School of Sustainability (SOS), the Julie Ann Wrigley Global Institute of Sustainability (Wrigley Institute), and Arizona State University (ASU) as a whole. This lays the groundwork for the subsequent sections, which concentrate their gaze on the four individual GSS Summer 2015 SEL programs and emerging SEL communities that constitute the core case study cohort at the heart of this research. The ethnographic sketches presented for each GSS Summer 2015 SEL program/community simultaneously function as deconstructions of the case study cohort using the “mechanisms, actors, and pathways (MAPs) framework” (Haglund & Aggarwal, 2011; Haglund & Stryker, 2015).

The MAPs framework is used here to break down each GSS Summer 2015 SEL program/community into comparable models organized by the framework’s three essential components: 1) “mechanisms”, which account for the strategic processes and resources employed to facilitate, or in some cases obstruct, transformative sustainability learning from occurring and/or contributing to capacity building for eco-citizenship; 2) “actors” (or “ecology of actors”, a concept put forth in Evans, 2002), which encompasses

the collection of “individuals, groups, and organizations” involved to varying degrees and points in time in implementing those mechanisms; and 3) “pathways,” which constitutes the specific contexts and conditions in which the mechanisms and actors operate (Haglund & Stryker, 2015, p. 5; Haglund & Aggarwal, 2011). These three MAPs components provide the scaffolding for the meso-level ethnographic sketches of the individual GSS Summer 2015 program offerings. Taken together, the macro- and meso-level sketches situate the GSS case study cohort in the broader socioecological environments in which they are embedded. The MAPs modeling elucidates critical knowledge-making and socialization processes (i.e. MAPs elements) that have the potential to better facilitate transformative sustainability learning and ultimately contribute to capacity building for global eco-citizenship. This sets the backdrop for Chapter 5, which presents the micro-level analyses of the SEL community members’ values, perceptions, and perceived agency post-program and draws connections between these three factors and the knowledge-making and socialization processes identified herein through the MAPs analysis.

A Birds-Eye View of the Global Sustainability Studies (GSS) Program Initiative

The Global Sustainability Studies (GSS) Program Initiative is a part of the Walton Sustainability Solutions Initiatives (WSSI), a unit of the Julie Ann Wrigley Global Institute of Sustainability (Wrigley Institute) at Arizona State University (ASU). The GSS Program Initiative falls within the “Educate” track of the WSSI, which aims to “educate future leaders in real-world sustainability strategies through professional degree programs, rigorous international study courses and a solutions-focused fellowship program” (Reiter, n.d., “About”). In the “Educate” track there are three signature program initiatives: the “GSS Program,” the “Executive Master of Sustainability

Leadership,” and the “Walton Fellowship Program” (WSSI Organizational Chart, 2016). Cross-collaboration and transdisciplinary collaboration are strongly encouraged within and between the “Educate” track’s program initiatives as well as the program initiatives within the other two WSSI tracks, “Solve” and “Engage.” The “Solve” track focuses on the “Global Sustainability Solutions Services” program initiative, which is a large undertaking, whereas the “Engage” track involves three program initiatives of its own, including the “Sustainability Teachers’ Academies”, the “Sustainability in Science Museums”, and the “Sustainability Solutions Festival” (WSSI Organizational Chart, 2016). A prime example of cross-collaboration evidenced in the GSS Program is the development of two GSS programs by Walton Post-Doctoral Fellows in the Walton Fellowship Program (Participant observations, 2015-2016; Personal communications with previous and upcoming FSL, Fall 2015).

Consistent with other programs under the WSSI umbrella, the GSS Program Initiative has been primarily funded through a multi-year grant from The Rob and Melani Walton Fund of the Walton Family Foundation. Representatives of the Walton Family Foundation played a role in determining the original grant metrics and outputs (i.e. deliverables) for the GSS Program Initiative that would continue to influence the design and implementation of its broader model and program offerings over the span of its grant period set to expire in 2018 (Admin/staff, research interview, July 2015). The most basic of these deliverables regards expectations of “providing at least 90 students with academically rigorous, sustainability solutions focused international experiences annually” (Official Job Posting for GSS Program Manager, Fall 2015). The first GSS program offerings ran in the Summer of 2013. According to a more recent annual report prepared by WSSI administrators, as of August 2017 the “Educate” track of the WSSI featured 21 GSS-related programs servicing a total of 434 ASU program participants

between 2013 – 2017¹¹ (WSSI, August 2017, GSS Program Totals Table in *WSSI Annual Report 2016 – 2017*).

Though its funding is only guaranteed through 2018, the GSS Program administrators have been actively seeking alternative funding sources and potential partnerships to at least sustain, if not expand, the GSS Program Initiative well into the future. One such option is shorter travel study programs under the title of “Global Intensive Experience” (GIE) that would run during the spring semester (Admin/staff, research interview, March 2016). Funding benefits for such programs would include already built-in faculty and tuition expenses, which are significant portions of the GSS Summer program costs, in addition to capitalizing on student financial aid resources that are more prevalent and applicable during the traditional Fall/Spring academic year. These factors are anticipated to greatly reduce total program costs, and more importantly, the burden of costs bore by student participants, thus making these kinds of international sustainability experiential learning (SEL) opportunities more accessible to a wider demographic of students who may have otherwise been excluded due to lack of financial means. GIE offerings could be a way to ensure the “legacy” of the GSS Program Initiative thrives without the security of and dependency on external funding¹² (Admin/staff, research interview, March 2016).

¹¹ The total programs include other models besides the summer intensive programs that were represented in the history of the GSS Program Initiative, including internships and a studio course from its first year of operation, as well as its latest program iteration piloted in 2017, the Global Intensive Experience. Additionally, the total participant counts included projected figures for participants in all 2017 GSS-related programs.

¹² Follow-up personal communications in 2017 with an administrator confirmed that two pilot Global Intensive Experience (GIE) programs ran in Spring 2017: one to Costa Rica and one to Cuba. Both were deemed “successful” and plans were in the works for future GIE programs to run along with the traditional GSS summer programs.

The GSS Program Initiative's Ecology of Actors

Not unlike many grant-funded programs embedded within larger institutions, the GSS Program Initiative is officially run by a single staff person directly assigned to it, the GSS Program Manager (PM) (WSSI Organizational Chart, 2016). To date, three individuals had taken on the extensive (and seemingly exhausting) duties of the GSS PM position, a position that might prove demanding for even the most skilled 'jack(ie)-of-all-trades'. Such duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

- refining and implementing the GSS Program Initiative's strategic plan and meeting grant deliverables;
- overseeing the Walton Scholars program that offers substantial financial support for GSS program participants;
- managing all aspects of the GSS programs (e.g. recruiting and supporting faculty/staff leads in developing and implementing their GSS programs);
- creating and disseminating student recruitment materials;
- fielding student, faculty, and staff program-related questions;
- administering applications and other formal paperwork;
- providing logistical oversight for program leads, participants, and in-country partners;
- organizing pre-departure orientations, course sessions, workshops, trainings, receptions, etc.;
- supporting the establishment of post-program engagement opportunities for GSS alumni (e.g. student-run GSS conference, alumni presentations, informal gatherings);
- acting as liaison between GSS program leads, participants, and in-country partners);

- and coordinating collaborations between GSS/WSSI and other key internal and external partners. (Official Job Posting for GSS Program Manager, October 2015; Participant observations and personal communications with administrator/staff, Spring/Fall 2015).

The GSS PM may be the sole staff member directly responsible for the GSS Program Initiative, but the sample list of duties provides evidence that he/she hardly works in isolation. Bringing new or returning GSS program offerings to life each year is a massive undertaking achievable only through the tremendous collective efforts of its internal ASU and external (domestic and international) partners. These partners are essential to the overall, systems-level GSS “ecology of actors/agents”, defined by Evans (2002, p. 22) as “an interconnected, interdependent set of complementary actors” working toward a shared purpose or cause. Whereas Evans (2002) was focused on the ecology of actors applying collective agency toward “livability and sustainability” in urban regions, the GSS ecology of actors can be seen as agents of change in the context of capacity building for global eco-citizenship through SEL. Key internal ASU partners represented in the systems-level GSS ecology of actors include the following: fellow WSSI and Wrigley Institute administration/staff (e.g. upper-level administrators; staff assigned to the three WSSI tracks; WSSI Communications team members; WSSI Administration and Finance team members; and senior leadership members within the Wrigley Institute Directorate); School of Sustainability faculty, staff, and administrators; Study Abroad Office; Student Services office; the International Students and Scholars Center, and the Financial Aid office; student workers and volunteers from various offices and schools/departments; and faculty/staff program leads representing schools and departments from across the university. An additional internal partner group is the student GSS program participants themselves, for without their willingness to embark

on these journeys there would be no GSS Program Initiative. Essential external partners include the following: funding institutions (primarily The Rob and Melani Walton Fund of the Walton Family Foundation); travel agencies/vendors that offer logistical travel support (e.g. everything from VISA and Passport acquisition to flights, lodging, transportation, etc.); host country liaisons responsible for helping to coordinate in-country travel itineraries and community engagement activities (could be individuals or local groups established through personal faculty/staff relationships, and/or more formal boundary organizations such as immersion or eco-tourism agencies); and the local in-country institutions and communities with whom each GSS SEL community engages during their programs (Participant observations and personal communications with GSS administrators/staff, FSL, and external partner representatives, 2015–2016).

While not an exhaustive list, this structural mapping overview gives a sense of how the bloodline of the GSS Program Initiative as a whole is not fueled by one person, but rather a multi-layered ecology of actors made up of a transnational community of people and institutions who, when they come together in complementary and collaborative ways, are responsible for implementing the mechanisms that make the different GSS program offerings possible each year. Moreover, these interdependent actors bring with them not only vital resources and strategies, but their own sets of values, perspectives and agency that can positively or negatively influence the capacity-building potential of the GSS SEL programs/communities. Finally, the specific composition of this systems-level GSS ecology of actors goes through its own metamorphosis from year-to-year due to the altering nature of the individual GSS program offerings (e.g. the Summer 2015 programs). Each GSS SEL program enlists a new set of agents, who both inhabit and represent a significant portion of the broader systems-level GSS ecology of actors and make up their own micro-ecologies of actors at

the communal level in the form of GSS SEL communities. The GSS SEL communities are first and foremost comprised of the faculty/staff leads and student participants for each of the GSS SEL programs. These groups could be considered the internal GSS SEL community members. In each program there are also a set of key in-country partners who represent the external SEL community members. For some programs, these distinctions are less rigid, meaning the external and internal SEL communities are more deeply embedded with one another throughout the programs. This depends largely on the level of engagement and the structure of the programs themselves, among other factors. Further discussion on the micro-ecologies of actors can be found in the ethnographic sketches of the GSS SEL programs/communities later in the chapter.

GSS Program Initiative Vision and Purpose

Prior to the 2013 launch of the Global Sustainability Studies (GSS) Program Initiative, there was no stream of study abroad programs or courses specifically housed within the School of Sustainability (SOS) at Arizona State University (ASU) dedicated to providing SOS students a global sustainability experience. The minimal global learning opportunities SOS students were engaging in at the time were primarily through the study abroad programs offered through other units, mainly ASU's School of Human Evolution and Social Change (SHESC). Other global engagement occurring within SOS and the Wrigley institute (previously referred to as the Global Institute of Sustainability (GIOS)] at the time tended to dominate among select faculty and staff and seemed to lack a clear strategy or mission that connected the individual actors to one another, let alone facilitating much student engagement abroad (Admin/staff, research interview, October 2015). The founding of the GSS Program Initiative thus represented a more strategic approach or mechanism within the Wrigley Institute and SOS to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring that students did not leave SOS without having some form

of “global experience, some experience working on sustainability in or on another culture” (Admin/staff, research interview, October 2015). This global sustainability experience commitment is an example of larger changes occurring within the Wrigley Institute. The commitment was embedded within a broader framing that was unfolding wherein the “global” part of the “Global Institute of Sustainability” was conceptualized to stand for “conducting research on [sustainability] problems that by their grand nature were global”, and “...working in a more systematic way to solve problems...where the solutions had global implications”, and ideally could be adapted to wherever faculty, staff, and/or students were working (Admin/staff, research interview, October 2015). This global framing, with its support from key actors reaching the highest echelons of the Wrigley Institute and ASU, remains an essential part of the GSS Program Initiative’s identity and justification for its current and future existence, in whatever form that takes.

The commitment to living up to this global standard remains a top priority of a chief Wrigley Institute administrator, who (at the time of this study) had been channeling efforts into a new initiative stemming from the Office of the President at ASU, the Global Consortium for Sustainability Outcomes (GCSO). The goal with the GCSO is to build a global network of institutions around the world working on not only global sustainability research and education, but on real solutions to sustainability challenges. While the GCSO network is geared toward institutional and faculty level scales, this Consortium is seen as having the potential to generate more opportunities for global engagement for students through the various funding and other resources that come with an institution’s and faculty member’s involvement in the network (Admin/staff, research interview, October 2015). What remains to be seen is whether and how the GCSO can best be leveraged as a complementary mechanism to the GSS Program Initiative in support of capacity building through SEL.

While each of GSS program offerings embody unique contexts (i.e. pathways) and strategies such as specific foci, designs, and goals (i.e. mechanisms), they are united by a common purpose under the GSS Program Initiative: to offer student participants the “opportunity to apply classroom learning in a global context and witness and learn sustainability principles and solutions in international community, urban, and political settings” (Walton Sustainability Solutions Initiatives, n.d., WSSI website, <https://sustainability.asu.edu/sustainabilitysolutions/programs/global-studies/>).

Emphasizing applied, engaged, and immersive learning—core elements of its fundamental mechanism referred to in this study as sustainability experiential learning (SEL)—this current shared purpose is based upon a founding vision that has evolved and shifted focus over the years. The early aspirations of the GSS Program Initiative’s originators was to create accessible “transformative experiences” whereby students could engage with global communities around the world in an effort to “co-create solutions to their [the communities] sustainability problems” (Admin/staff, research interview, July 2015). The original intent was for these programs to have a direct impact on the communities in which they were based through the development and implementation of sustainability solutions. Among its originators in 2013 were key figures within the Wrigley Institute (referred to as GIOS at the time), including the Executive Director (ED) of the Walton Sustainability Solutions Initiatives (WSSI), and leaders of the School of Sustainability (SOS). The GSS Program Initiative was originally modeled after GlobalResolve, another solutions-oriented, global engagement program within the Ira A. Fulton School of Engineering at ASU. Noting financial and time constraints as significant barriers for participants involved in programs like GlobalResolve to get on-the-ground, in-country engagement experiences, the originators of the GSS Program Initiative saw the GSS as a way to help provide students more feasible opportunities—in time and

affordability—for applying their knowledge and skills toward devising and implementing (ideally with the communities) sustainability solutions in diverse regions around the world (Admin/staff, research interview, July 2015).

Over time, it became clear that while the GSS Program Initiative was able to increase student access to international sustainability experiences—an ongoing priority of leaders within the Wrigley Institute and SOS—the limitations of time and resources, along with the varying capacity levels of student participants, continued to serve as barriers to implementing the originators’ ambitious vision for a co-created AND implemented sustainability solutions engagement model. As such, the GSS Program vision evolved into “a more robust, but still rigorous, academic program” that fell more within the realm of an “exposure learning” model (Admin/staff, research interview, July 2015). Direct engagement with communities on the ground remains to this day an important component and essential strategy of the GSS program offerings. As one of the GSS Summer 2015 faculty-leads put it,

... the experience of being somewhere else in the globe and looking at sustainability problems, wherever that may be, is a game-changer, because what it does for students...is they realize that sustainability is a global challenge.... And so, it provides a perspective on sustainability as a globally-connected concept that there’s just no substitute for, the experience of being there.” (research interview, October 2015).

However, in the GSS Program Initiative’s exposure learning model, engagement strategies focus more on learning with and from those communities (e.g. through cultural and knowledge exchange, field research, etc.) about their sustainability challenges than playing a significant role in influencing direct change through

sustainability interventions within host countries (Admin/staff, research interview, July 2015).

A former administrator shared personal experiences in helping to realize this shift in focus and vision for the GSS Program Initiative. When first hired “deliverables or expectations were that the students were supposed to have a local impact with their solutions being implemented by the local communities” (Admin/staff, research interview, October 2015). The GSS Program Initiative’s emphasis on program deliverables in the form of sustainability solutions were attributed, in part, to the original grant proposal’s “corporate perspective with very strong indicators wanting measurable success” (Admin/staff, research interview, October 2015). This is not surprising given the “data-driven culture” in which higher education and related grant-funded and non-profit institutions, programs, etc. must thrive (Boyce, 2017, p. 272).

Grant-driven programs, especially those adopting a “corporate perspective” or those beholden to corporate partnerships, are often inundated by the pressures to deliver results through some form of data tracking and evaluative reporting. Unfortunately, funding often favors quantity (e.g. total served or impacted, total programs implemented, etc.) over quality, which can often force those involved to focus their already overextended attention on producing the biggest counts as opposed to the most effective and transformative programs to maintain funding and stay afloat. As unanticipated consequences arise, sometimes expected results prove unfeasible and/or not in the best interest of those whom the programs are meant to serve. It would seem that the GSS Program may have been up against similar challenges as a time-limited, grant-funded initiative, potentially limiting its future pathways for facilitating capacity building through SEL.

Committed to ensuring the GSS Program Initiative offered accessible high-quality, high-impact sustainability experiential learning (SEL) for its participants, GSS administrators worked alongside fellow WSSI administrators to usher in a shift in direction that would lead the GSS Program Initiative to pursue its current pathway focused on the mechanism of facilitating sustainability experiential learning (SEL) through cross-cultural, international engagement opportunities. As with direct engagement, the solutions-orientation strategy also remains at the heart of the GSS Program Initiative, albeit with an adapted focus. The solutions-orientation has become less about actually solving the problems for communities and more about developing the knowledge and skill-sets needed to think through how to solve global sustainability challenges and develop solutions that are tailored to particular problems and contexts (Admin/staff, research interviews, October 2015, July 2015). The GSS Program Initiative was seen as essentially operating within a “practicum model” whereby program offerings would facilitate participants’ exposure to and understanding of the complexities of sustainability problems and solutions (Admin/staff, research interview, October 2015). Rather than enter host countries as outsider “experts” ready to implement pre-determined answers to complex sustainability problems, GSS program participants would instead engage in a “learning process”, witnessing and experiencing firsthand what it takes to move from sustainability problem formation to solutions development in a particular international context. This process ideally would involve some degree of feedback and mutual learning with and understanding of the local communities that would become the “deliverable” to the country partners, rather than implementing specific interventions. However, how best to facilitate the meaningful cross-cultural community engagement necessary for mutual learning and understanding to occur is an ongoing challenge for faculty/staff leads of GSS program offerings (Admin/staff,

research interview, October 2015). This challenge is linked to a broader concern for balancing the needs and expectations of the students with those of in-country community partners. Maintaining such a balance requires continuous reflection and adaptation to the changing needs of each new GSS program and all who engage with those programs from ASU and the different host countries' community partners. The following sections return the gaze back to the core case study population, offering a closer ethnographic look at the individual GSS Summer 2015 SEL programs/communities.

Unpacking the GSS Summer 2015 SEL Programs/Communities

The GSS Summer 2015 programs thrust Arizona State University (ASU) students into remarkably diverse and unknown global terrain—from the shrinking Mayan villages of Guatemala, to the desert sands of Morocco, the high-rise city of Hong Kong to the riverside communities of the Brazilian Amazon rainforest. Four GSS SEL program courses ran in the Summer 2015 semester: 1) *“Sustainable Neighborhoods for Happiness”* (Guatemala; May 18 to May 30); 2) *“Sustainable Development across the Mediterranean”* (Spain and Morocco; May 23 to June 16); 3) *“Cities, Sustainability and Public Policy”* (Hong Kong; June 5 to June 20); and 4) *“Human Rights and Sustainability in Brazil”* (Brazil; May 31 to June 19) (ASU WSSI, 2015). A fifth GSS program, *“Rural-Urban Sustainability: Transitioning Livelihoods”* (Nepal) was originally slated to run that year but was canceled due to the earthquake natural disaster that struck the country in April 2015. Students who had already been accepted into the Nepal program were given the option of either deferring their participation until Summer 2016 when the program was rescheduled, or they could attempt to transfer their applications and scholarship funds (if applicable) to one of the other four GSS Summer 2015 program offerings (Personal communications with GSS administrator, Spring 2015-

Fall 2015). To my knowledge, several students deferred their participation for the following year, a select few joined the Guatemala program as late additions to its SEL community, and at least one student volunteered on an informal post-earthquake relief trip later in the summer of 2015 (Participant observation, Spring/Summer 2015). Of the four GSS SEL programs implemented in Summer 2015, all but one had been previously instituted by returning GSS faculty/staff leads in the same countries, and with similar program designs and foci (albeit with some adjustments). The Summer 2015 cycle marked the 3rd year for the Spain/Morocco GSS program, and the 2nd year for the Brazil and Hong Kong programs. The Guatemala program was the newest of the GSS SEL program offerings, launched for the first time in 2015.

United they may be by the GSS Program Initiative's shared purpose and vision, the individual GSS Summer 2015 SEL program offerings interpreted, internalized, and realized this shared purpose and vision in their own ways. Both similarities and differences can be seen when examining the particular mechanisms, actors, and pathways embodied within each program. Applying the MAPs framework, the following ethnographic sketches highlight some of these similarities and differences, drawing particular attention to pivotal program components, including: the program contexts (e.g. host countries, length of time in countries, travel plans), representing "pathways"; the program models, structures, and other strategies exercised in program implementation (e.g. choice of program foci, goals and objectives; internal and external engagement opportunities), representing the "mechanisms"; and last but not least, the core members or entities who make up the internal GSS SEL communities and their external SEL community partners, representing the micro-ecologies of "actors"¹³. These ethnographic sketches are generated through data from participant observation from

¹³ These actors are in addition to those previously listed for the GSS Program Initiative as a whole.

pre- and post-program engagement activities as well as during the Brazil GSS SEL program, research interviews with faculty/staff leads and student program participants, and supplemental resources (e.g. course syllabi, GSS Program promotional and outreach materials). The fourth and final ethnographic sketch of the Brazil GSS SEL program/community features more prominently as it was the selected case study sample site for conducting participant observation during the program itself.

GSS SEL in Guatemala: Sustainable Neighborhoods for Happiness

Guatemala micro-ecology of actors. At the helm of the internal Guatemala SEL community was its faculty/staff leadership team consisting of a first-time faculty-lead from SOS working alongside two additional staff leads who held administrative positions in the Wrigley Institute. The implementation support of the two staff leads was in lieu of having the more traditional program/teaching assistant setup. The leadership team brought backgrounds in engineering and social sciences, as well as sustainability expertise in areas such as green building and energy efficiency, circular economy and economic development, and corporate social and environmental responsibility, among others (FSL, research interview, November 2015; Online university profiles, retrieved from www.asu.edu, December 2017).

In contrast to having one of the largest leadership teams, the internal Guatemala SEL program/community actually had one of the smallest student populations among the Summer 2015 cohort. The Guatemala SEL community featured 14 students in total with a near even split of undergraduate (n=8) and graduate (n=6) students. Those identified were categorized as “White” (n=12) with the remainder (n=2) uncategorized (left blank).¹⁴ Most of the student members were in or entering their 20s and 30s, with the majority of student participants (n=10) falling between 21-25 years old in 2015.

¹⁴ Other data sources indicate that the uncategorized were actually of South Asian descent, putting them within the “non-white (Asian)” category.

Outliers fell within the 18-20 years age range and the 46+ years age range. All but one student was based in SOS, enrolled as either a Sustainability major in the undergraduate program, or as a student in the Masters of Sustainability Solutions graduate program. Several undergraduates also minored in another field, including Urban Planning, Anthropology, American Indian Studies, and Educational Studies. Industrial Design was a unique, non-SOS addition to the mix of majors (Official list of “Global Studies SAO Participants”, 2015).

The various partner groups that comprised the external Guatemala SEL community stemmed largely from connections made by the program’s main in-country partner, Habitat for Humanity Guatemala. These external partners included Guatemalan residents, local institutions and NGOs with whom the ASU group engaged in local communities (Zacapa, Chocóla, the towns surrounding Lake Atitlán , and Antigua). As is often the case with international programs, the external partners were chosen, in part, based on the pre-existing relationships that the main in-country partner had established through its local work. As a result, most of the research activities and deeper level engagement with the local Guatemalan communities took place in Zacapa and Chocóla neighborhoods where Habitat for Humanity Guatemala had intervened. The internal Guatemala SEL community could be described as having more of an evolving external community partner network that grew as they began to conduct their outreach and research over the course of their time in-country.

Guatemala Pathways. The Guatemala GSS Summer 2015 SEL program took place over the span of two intensive weeks in this Central American country. During this time, the Guatemala SEL community traveled to and engaged with local communities in multiple regions, including Zacapa, Chocóla, Antigua, and the surrounding small towns of Lake Atitlán. The first two, Zacapa and Chocóla, were typically described by internal

Guatemala SEL community members as rural or village communities, seemingly more removed from the influence of tourism than places like Antigua and Lake Atitlán (Participants, research interviews, Fall 2015). Compared to one another, Zacapa would appear better resourced and more established than Chocolá, likely due to it being the capital city of the Zacapa department of Guatemala and serving as a major “commercial and manufacturing centre for the agricultural and pastoral hinterland” (Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d., “Zacapa Guatemala”). In contrast, Chocolá evidences pervading ties to the Mesoamerican heritage and Mayan civilization for which Guatemala is known (Kaplan & Valdes, 2004). It appeared to be the most remote, least developed, and most under-resourced of the places the Guatemala SEL community visited (Participants, research interviews, Fall 2015). This is not surprising given that the indigenous peoples are often those most deleteriously impacted by the socioecological concerns facing this developing nation, including economic insecurity, vulnerability to climate change, inadequate health resources, and conflict, among others (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018a, “Guatemala” in *The World Factbook*). Though Lake Atitlán is also characterized by a continued presence of Mayan culture in its surrounding lakeside villages, tourism features heavily there since the lake was first turned into a national park. One of the SEL community members surmised that the tourism industry was enabling the lakeside communities to have greater access to resources despite it being home to a series of indigenous towns. Finally, Antigua was perhaps the most developed and well-resourced cities they visited. Once the “cultural, economic, religious, political and educational centre for the entire region until the capital was moved,” Antigua today is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site (United Nations, n.d., “World Heritage List—Antigua Guatemala”). With its recognizable Western cultural influence interspersed throughout its remarkable historical architecture that boasts of its

Spanish colonial legacy, Antigua holds prominence as a well-known tourist hub in Guatemala (Participants, research interviews, Fall 2015; Personal observations from previous travels to Antigua, Guatemala).

An important aspect of the Guatemala SEL program was its integration as part of a broader, relatively new initiative led by SOS faculty at ASU—the “Sustainable Neighborhoods for Happiness™ (SNfH) Project”. Based in SOS, the ongoing SNfH Project is a multi-year initiative that engages partners stemming from civil society, community-based and non-profit institutions, higher education, and the local community in a joint effort to assess sustainability problems and potential solutions at the neighborhood level. As the project name implies, these context-driven solutions are aimed at improving sustainability conditions to foster communal wellbeing conceptualized as happiness (Pfeiffer & Cloutier, 2016).

Guatemala Mechanisms. The Guatemala SEL program employed a “project-based learning”/“workshop course” model centered around “sustainability and happiness in relation to community development” (Guatemala May 2015 Course Syllabus). A guiding force behind this program was the intention of applying the Sustainable Neighborhoods for Happiness (SNfH) Project’s “Sustainability Through Happiness Framework (STHF)” and its “Sustainable Neighborhoods for Happiness Index (SNHI)” to a local Guatemalan context (see Cloutier & Pfeiffer, 2015, for an overview of the STHF, and Cloutier, 2014a, for an overview of the SNHI). The faculty-lead had initially developed and begun to apply this framework in multiple locations domestically (including Arizona), but this was the first time it was being applied to an international context in any SEL program. The overall purpose and focus of the Guatemala SEL program/community was to get student participants on the ground to “... engage locals to co-create solutions to provide opportunities for happiness through

sustainability....” (FSL, research interview, November 2015). To realize this purpose, the leadership team adopted a co-created solutions approach influenced heavily by design thinking. Such an approach calls for entering Guatemalan communities without preconceived solutions, armed instead with the goal of eliciting local residents’ perspectives on what they want/need and then working with them in a collaborative way to develop solutions starting from where those community members are currently at (mentally, physically, economically, socio-culturally, etc.) within a particular context. This goal was summarized as follows:

It’s very much just kind of going down there with no sure intentions. And we have expertise and we have student interest, but we go down and we engage residents and we find out what things they need and we start to develop solutions in that space alongside the residents. [FSL, research interview, November 2015]

It is important to note that while the SEL community members may not have entered the local Guatemalan communities with ready-made, prescriptive solutions, the SEL community members were not exactly blank canvases either. For one, the “Sustainability Through Happiness Framework (STHF)” (Cloutier and Pfeiffer, 2015) helped to provide direction and purpose for why the Guatemala SEL community members were there, but this could be seen as setting certain parameters—albeit more open and flexible ones—for what factors might fall within the realm of “sustainability and happiness.” This was perhaps most evident in how the Guatemala SEL community members were broken up into different working groups organized by specific thematic areas related to the broader course theme of sustainability and happiness. The thematic areas represented sub-themes or topics and included the following: “water; waste; transportation; business and economic development; neighborhood design, which is the feel of a place and the culture and art, and ... food” (FSL, research interview, November

2015). Over the course of their two weeks in Guatemala, the working groups were charged with researching the “context of these different areas...or...sub-systems” in order to formulate a “general conception of what these things look like” within the different Guatemalan communities visited (FSL, research interview, November 2015). The co-creation of knowledge to support this “current state analysis” depended heavily on active engagement directly with the local communities, something that was repeatedly stressed in the course syllabus itself (Guatemala May 2015 Course Syllabus).

From there, the SEL community sought to use this newly acquired knowledge to determine “how do we take the next step in designing [solutions] within those spaces in a way that’s meaningful to residents?” (FSL, research interview, November 2015).

Determining what is “meaningful to residents” of any community requires engaging members of that community on a deeper level. In this way, engaging with the local Guatemalan communities was of paramount importance, necessitating a host of different strategies—from exchanging ideas and perspectives, to fostering mutual understanding, to nurturing strong collaborative partnerships built on trust, to imbuing a sense of ownership over the co-creation process and outcomes. One faculty/staff lead noted this as precisely where “experiential learning” featured most prominently during the Guatemala GSS SEL program, as it forced Guatemala SEL members to push past the boundaries of their preconceived knowledge, perspectives, and expectations by meeting with residents, holding workshops (e.g. initial visioning workshop), eliciting feedback (e.g. through neighborhood surveys), and ideally harnessing their collective strengths in an effort to explore ways to address together the sustainability problems Guatemalan communities faced (FSL, research interview, November 2015).

The ultimate goal underwriting the choice of mechanisms used within the Guatemala GSS SEL program/community was to experience first-hand the process of

moving from co-created knowledge to co-created, context-specific action (i.e. solutions) aimed at supporting the local Guatemalan communities in identifying and establishing their own pathways “toward a sustainable and happy future” (Guatemala May 2015 Course Syllabus). This could be considered the Guatemala SEL program/community’s approach to generating T-pathways to SWB. Rooted in this program goal was thus concern for how the Guatemala GSS SEL program and the presence and actions of its SEL community impacted both the internal Guatemala SEL community members from ASU and the external Guatemalan community partners with whom they engaged.

Whether intended or not, the Guatemala SEL program in a way represents an attempt to rejuvenate the broader GSS Program Initiative’s original vision and shared purpose upon which it was founded. However, much like the originators of the GSS Program Initiative, the Guatemala SEL community also was forced to confront its own limitations and barriers to realizing such an ambitious goal. While this SEL community certainly had the drive, talent, and desire to address the solutions part of the process, doing so co-creatively with—not for—the Guatemalan communities, posed significant challenges, especially time constraints. Despite having only two short weeks in-country, the Guatemala SEL community was able to implement some small-scale, immediately actionable “solutions” through various outreach and engagement efforts (e.g. development of a protective shield and rainwater capture to counteract the destruction of the community gardens and conserve water in the process) (FSL, research interview, November 2015). However, the bulk of their efforts focused on the knowledge-generation side of the co-creation process, as well as establishing stronger local in-country partnerships. The SEL community then collectively drafted a final report based on their research and experiential knowledge gained through engagement in Guatemala. This final report presented a compiled current-state assessment of sustainability and

happiness, organized by the sub-themes explored. The Guatemala SEL community then handed this report to the next SEL community cohort intended to conduct a follow-up program in Guatemala the subsequent year (Summer 2016) (FSL, research interview, November 2015; Participants, research interviews, Fall 2015).¹⁵

GSS SEL in Spain and Morocco: Sustainable Development Across the Mediterranean: Morocco and Spain (May 23-June 16, 2015)

Spain and Morocco Micro-Ecology of Actors

The Spain and Morocco (S/M) GSS SEL program/community had a more typical two-member program leadership team comprised of a faculty-lead and program/teaching assistant configuration (usually a graduate student or recent graduate). While the Guatemala leadership team was beginning anew with their program, the S/M leadership team was comprised of seasoned veterans. Both the faculty-lead and program/teaching assistant had been involved from the start, working together in collaboration with another ASU faculty member at the time to develop the initial program proposal that got it launched three years earlier (FSL, research interviews, September 2015, November 2015). One of the major advantages of this recurring leadership team was that they were able to build on established in-country partnerships which they strengthened each year as they deepened their professional and personal connections with, and knowledge of, local people, institutions, communities and the problems and solutions Spaniards and Moroccans were facing in these two countries. In fact, the S/M GSS SEL program was inspired, in part, by the faculty-lead's longtime place-connection to Morocco that began with an international service program appointment decades earlier. Through this transformative experience of having

¹⁵ Unfortunately, the Guatemala GSS Summer 2016 program ended up being canceled late in the spring 2016 semester due to several factors, particularly a zika virus scare that raised safety concerns and negatively impacted enrollment of program participants.

previously lived and worked in Morocco, the faculty-lead developed a personal commitment to the country and its people, leading her to seek ways to maintain continued engagement in multiple capacities over the years (FSL, research interview, September 2015). This passion for and more intensive knowledge of Morocco and the Mediterranean carried over to the program/teaching assistant whose own research focused on the complexities of renewable energy and energy policy in this desert region (FSL, research interview, November 2015).

Beyond a personal and professional connection to these contexts, the faculty-lead brought substantial expertise in the areas of international studies and international education gained through years of experience conducting research in or on international contexts, and developing, overseeing, and facilitating study abroad experiential learning programs and cross-cultural classes at multiple universities. Though not based in SOS, the faculty-lead's affiliation as a sustainability scientist with the Wrigley Institute stems from work on the use of technology as a pathway for international sustainable development efforts in regions such as the Middle East, Europe, and Latin America (FSL, research interview, September 2015). The program/teaching assistant also had an educational background in the natural sciences before switching to the social sciences during graduate studies. This lent itself well to the kind of transdisciplinary perspectives necessary for addressing sustainability problems and solutions (FSL, research interview, November 2015).

Another characteristic that made the internal S/M SEL community stand out was it being the largest group of ASU participants in the GSS Summer 2015 program cohort. Its total of 22 students was actually a slight downsize from previous years where the total neared 30 participants. Of the 22 student participants, 12 were female and 10 were male, 15 were categorized as "White" and 7 as non-white (including 1 as "Asian", 3 as

“Black/African American”, and 3 as “Hispanic/Latino”). Like Guatemala, the S/M SEL community also included a blend of undergraduate and graduate students, albeit with the undergraduates (n=19) far outnumbering the graduates (n=3). As is typical with university study abroad SEL programs, the majority of student participants fell within the 18-25 age range in 2015. The remaining student participants (n=3) spanned their 30s, with the oldest nearing the end of the 36-40 age range. Not surprisingly, with such a large group there existed an interesting mix of schools and disciplines represented. While more than half (n=13) came from SOS and majored or minored in Sustainability or the Masters of Sustainability Solutions, there were an additional six schools at ASU represented with majors and minors spanning fields as diverse as Finance, Marketing, Supply Chain Management, Civil Engineering, Industrial Design, Mass Communication & Media Studies, Design Management, Global Technology and Development, Political Science, English Literature, Biological Sciences, Nonprofit Leadership & Management, and Women & Gender Studies (Official list of “Global Studies SAO Participants”, 2015).

Continuing the S/M program’s trend of diversity, its external SEL community partners in Morocco and Spain accounted for a wide breadth of sectors and foci in the areas of international development and sustainability. The types of partners ranged from government officials and decision-makers serving in urban political centers; to scholars from academic and related institutions in disciplines such as policy, technology, and energy studies (e.g. boarding schools, universities, major research facilities); to representatives from non-government organizations working on development concerns in areas such as sustainable technologies and energy, climate change, education, policy, economic empowerment, and community development, among others; and finally community members from cities and remote villages across Morocco and Spain. Additionally, the S/M external community partners encompassed representatives from

several cultural and tourism institutions who helped to expose the internal S/M SEL community members to the multifaceted cultural heritages and identities of Morocco and Spain, while also enabling them to gain access to more unique engagement experiences such as a camel trek in the Sahara desert, a visit to an UNESCO World Heritage Site, walking tours of historical cities, visits to remote villages, and a bus trip through Dades Valley and the High Atlas Mountains. Beyond the leadership team's personal contacts, their key collaborator in establishing these partnerships and orchestrating the engagement opportunities with them was the S/M SEL program's main in-country partner, the Moroccan team of International Studies Abroad (ISA). ISA is an "educational travel provider" that supports colleges and universities in North America in offering their students opportunities to "explore" and gain a better "understanding of the world" (ISA, n.d., "About ISA"). Such providers are often used in study abroad programs like the GSS, especially when generating a program itinerary or establishing new local connections. The main liaison from ISA in Morocco had begun working with the ASU S/M SEL program/community since its first launch in 2013 and has remained an integral part of their team on the ground since then. Not only was she responsible for the coordination of logistics and student services during the program, but she also traveled with the ASU SEL community members throughout their journey. Her expertise in international communications, her own desire to learn about different cultures and contexts, and her deeper understanding of Moroccan socioecological environments and cultural practices as a fellow Moroccan made her an integral addition to the S/M micro-ecology of agents. As such, it is not surprising that the ASU leadership team and student participants embraced this liaison more fully as part of their internal S/M SEL community (S/M community partner, research interview, February 2016; Participants, research interviews, Fall 2015).

Spain and Morocco Pathways

The Spain and Morocco (S/M) GSS Summer 2015 SEL program took place over three weeks and featured many unique components compared to its fellow cohort members. Most noticeable was its multi-national context achieved through combined travel to two countries in one trip. The S/M SEL community began their journey with two very intense weeks in Morocco, a North African, Muslim-dominant nation notable, among other things, for its legacy of independence, its strong religious identity, and its rich, diverse cultural heritage that have and continue to influence the country's development pathways (Miller, 2013). The S/M SEL community spent their third and final week in southern Spain, which they entered by way of an industrial port starting in Morocco and leading them across the Strait of Gibraltar. One of Spain's site appeal was it offered a comparative context for students to grapple with sustainable development issues impacting two distinct countries in the Mediterranean and understand how these issues are influenced by factors such as "cultures, languages, customs, architecture, attitudes towards socioeconomic development, sustainability and renewable energy, etc.," as well as the occasionally contentious relations between these two nations (S/M May-June 2015 Course Syllabus).

Interestingly this program was regularly promoted through GSS outreach efforts as the "Spain and Morocco" program. But it was quite apparent in everything from the travel itinerary, the description of the program in the official course syllabus, the Photovoice entries, and the reflections shared during the interviews of the S/M SEL community members that Morocco was not only the main feature but also the most powerful and valued part of the SEL experience. Thus, it is not surprising that Summer

2015 marked the final year that Spain would be incorporated into this particular GSS SEL program. The subsequent Summer 2016 GSS program was restructured and implemented as an entirely Moroccan experience (FSL, research interview, September 2015; Participants, research interviews, Fall 2015; GSS Program Initiative recruitment materials and presentations for Summer 2016 program offerings).

Spain and Morocco Mechanisms

While in Morocco, the SEL community engaged with an impressive assortment of government policymakers and corporate leaders involved in sustainable development efforts across the country, as well as representatives from the academic and local urban communities, including young scholars currently pursuing their degrees in various fields at International University of Rabat (Université Internationale de Rabat, UIR).

Additionally, they spent what could be characterized as more immersive, interactive time with Moroccans, including visiting with members of more traditional and historical cities, towns and villages involved in local co-ops and community organizations, dorming at a Dar Taliba all-girls boarding school aimed at reducing the gender education gap, and carrying out a hands-on project at a school in a remote village (Participants, research interviews, Fall 2015). The S/M SEL community was exposed to and engaged with a broad collection of Moroccan people and places representing diverse cultural practices and traditions, perspectives, and socioecological environments—from the political hub of Rabat and the historical and economic mecca of Marrakesh, to the harsh climate of the vast Sahara Desert and remote Berber villages of the Atlas Mountains often lacking sufficient access to basic resources like water and education (Participants, research interviews, Fall 2015; S/M May-June 2015 Course Syllabus).

The planned engagement activities in Spain in places like Andalusia and Madrid focused on more formal meetings with industry leaders and academics involved in

sustainable development in Spain, emphasizing solar and other renewable energy efforts. Despite these planned activities, the SEL community members tended to portray this final week abroad as less structured and scheduled, as well as less immersive than Morocco. Both the faculty/staff leads and student participants found their time in Spain to be very “touristy” and difficult to engage deeply with the culture and communities, feeling more like a vacation ending to their comparatively intense and highly demanding (cognitively, emotionally, and physically) two weeks in Morocco (FSL, research interview, September 2015; Participants, research interviews, Fall 2015). Nonetheless, this extensive multi-national journey aimed to fulfill the “overall goal of the program”:

to provide a comprehensive introduction to the cultural, political, historical context and connection between the two countries and to develop the ability to assess current issues and solutions in sustainable development in local and comparative contexts (S/M May-June 2015 Course Syllabus).

Beyond a thoughtfully crafted and diversified itinerary, a core program design element adopted in support of realizing the program goal was a research-centered model that enabled participants (the student SEL community members) to gain the experience of conducting independent research in a multi-international context. While this is a common model utilized in traditional study-abroad programs, the emphasis for the S/M SEL program was on developing its SEL community members’ skillsets in what best resembles a comparative historical analysis research methodology¹⁶. The S/M SEL community members were then charged with applying those analytical skills, and the knowledge gained from them, toward exploring contemporary sustainability problems and solutions through their research and participation in engagement activities while abroad (S/M May-June 2015 Course Syllabus). In this way, a cross-cultural comparative

¹⁶ For an overview of comparative historical analysis methodology and how its uses in social science research, see Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003)

historical perspective of sustainable development functioned as a guiding framework for the S/M SEL community that provided a common point of exploration in pursuit of shared understanding.

The independent projects required of the S/M SEL community members featured heavily in the S/M SEL program design. The success of this independent research model depended upon the SEL community members not only having at least a basic understanding of their different topics and how they factored into the Spain and Morocco contexts, but also having ample time to carry out their field research during their limited period of immersion in those countries. To better facilitate this more complex process, the faculty-lead elected to include a required pre-departure course. The S/M GSS SEL program was the only one of the four cohort members in Summer 2015 to require this pre-departure course and offer credit for it in the Spring 2015 semester. The other programs had mandatory pre-departure meetings, but these focused more like orientations and logistical info sessions rather than credit-bearing courses.

Much of the time in the S/M pre-departure course was dedicated to orienting the student S/M SEL community members to the Spain and Morocco contexts while also giving them a head-start on necessary background research for their projects. Research topics varied widely based on their individual interests, majors, degree types, etc. Topic examples included, but were not limited to, the following: gender equality's impact on Morocco's plans for sustainable development; traditional cultural influence on historical vs. contemporary architecture and urban development in Morocco; government/governance drivers for Moroccan sustainability practices; and perceptions of genetically modified organisms—including drivers of those perceptions—among Spanish and Moroccan groups (e.g. farmers, policy-makers, consumers, shop-owners) (Participant observation, S/M pre-departure meeting, May 2015). Therefore, while the

guiding framework may have provided a point of shared understanding to guide their overall program experiences, the various topical areas chosen provided additional lenses through which the SEL community members personally saw, engaged with and reflected upon their time abroad.

**GSS SEL in Hong Kong: Urban Sustainability in Hong Kong-ASU/
Sustainable Development of Hong Kong-CITY U (June 5 – June 20, 2015)
Hong Kong Micro-ecology of Actors**

The Hong Kong SEL program/community had the largest leadership team of the GSS Summer 2015 cohort, with four team members spanning two institutions and nations. The leadership team was comprised of a faculty-lead and staff lead from ASU, each with high-level Wrigley Institute administrative positions, working in collaboration with a faculty-lead and staff lead from their main in-country partnering institution, the City University of Hong Kong (City U).

Beyond their programmatic and educational administration roles at the Wrigley Institute, the ASU faculty/staff leads brought substantial educational training, research, and practice experience working in public policy, law, and the non-profit sector on sustainability-related issues such as urban and economic development, environment, education, and employment. Their efforts as administrators and contributions as Senior Sustainability Scientists in the Wrigley Institute have stressed global education, research, and action in addressing sustainability problems and solutions. Through their combined efforts, the ASU leadership team members have been able to build impressive collaborative partnerships with international actors working on the ground toward sustainability solutions around the world, including their own SEL program's City U partnership (FSL, research interviews, October 2015, November 2015; Online university profiles, retrieved from www.asu.edu, January 2018).

The faculty-lead from City U of Hong Kong was the key player in this partnership, having worked closely with the ASU leadership team in developing and evolving the HK GSS SEL program since its first iteration. The Hong Kong faculty-lead also came with considerable education, research and practice experience working on sustainability concerns in China—both directly with the ministry and other top-level decision-makers and through his appointment as an educator teaching policy and sustainable development at City U. This, coupled with personal sociocultural, political, and ecological knowledge from having lived as a member of Hong Kong society, while also having completed an advanced degree in the United States, made him well-suited to serve as co-instructor and co-leader of this cross-cultural SEL program/community (HK community partner, research interview, February 2016).

Unlike their counterparts in the GSS Summer 2015 cohort, the HK SEL program's internal SEL community encompassed student participants from two separate institutions and nations—ASU in the United States and City U in Hong Kong. The internal HK SEL community consisted of 15 ASU student participants and 14 student participants from City U, making this the largest and only cross-institutional and cross-national internal SEL community that lived and learned together throughout the duration of the program. Of the 15 ASU student participants, 11 were female and 4 were male, 10 were categorized as “White”, 1 had no categorization (“not reported”), and among the non-white participants, 2 were categorized as “Hispanic/Latino” and 2 as “Asian” (Official list of “Global Studies SAO Participants”, 2015). This SEL program/community also included a mix of graduate (n=4) and undergraduate (n=11) ASU student participants with most (n=11) falling within the 21-30 age range and the remainder (n=4) in either late teens or early 30s in 2015. The oldest ASU student participant was only in the mid-30s, making this a more typical and balanced participant

pool in terms of age. The ASU student participants represented six different schools and eleven different majors and minors. The dominant major/minor was yet again Sustainability, with fairly even representation from the other disciplines, including Sustainability Solutions (a graduate program), Biological Science (Conservation Biology & Ecology), Global Health, Public Administration, Business Entrepreneurship, Business (Global Politics), Interdisciplinary Studies, Landscape Studies, Political Science, and Nonprofit Leadership and Management (Official list of “Global Studies SAO Participants”, 2015).

Unfortunately, less detailed information was available for the Hong Kong student participants given the focus of this study was on the ASU SEL community members. However, the leadership team and members of the ASU student participant group characterized the Hong Kong student participant group as among the more traditional college age range (typical undergraduates in Hong Kong are in early 20s), representing a variety of disciplines, and having less experience or knowledge of sustainability or related fields (FSL and participant interviews, Fall 2015). The original intention was for the ASU student participants to contribute the sustainability knowledge and training, whereas the Hong Kong student participants would contribute the policy knowledge and training along with their local cultural understanding and experiential knowledge from having grown up in the midst of local sustainability concerns.

The recruitment process did not work out as planned with the end result being a mix of Hong Kong students who may or may not have had any background in or passion and interest for policy studies, let alone sustainability-related topics. Some reportedly joined simply to have the cross-cultural opportunity to interact with American students (HK community partner, research interview, February 2016). In serving as both members of the internal HK SEL community and as the core in-country partnership for

ASU, the City U Hong Kong student participants still offered invaluable contributions by virtue of their diversity of perspectives, interests, knowledge levels, and life experiences, and their personal connections to the culture, people, places, and concerns present in Hong Kong's socioecological environments.

Hong Kong Pathways

The Hong Kong (HK) GSS SEL Summer 2015 program represented the second iteration of this fast-paced, two-week program based in Hong Kong, one of the world's densest urban regions which also serves as a global economic hub for trade (GovHK, n.d., "Hong Kong—the Fact Sheets"). Out of all the Summer 2015 GSS program offerings, the HK SEL program was the most localized in terms of its in-country travel. That is not to say the HK SEL community did not have a packed travel itinerary. Rather, as an urban sustainability program based in a location that boasted a population of 7+ million crunched into a mere 427 sq. miles, their exploration kept them primarily concentrated in the core urban city-regions of this autonomous territory known officially as the Hong Kong Special administrative region of the People's Republic of China (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018b, "Hong Kong" in *The World Factbook*). This included Hong Kong Island, a champion of vertical development and the nerve center for the territory's historical heritage and political and economic affairs, and Kowloon, a major residential city featuring the City University of Hong Kong, which functioned as both their main program partner and the place the ASU HK SEL community called home for the duration of their stay. Most of their travel consisted of formal field site visits to various agencies, NGOs, corporations and related institutions working on Hong Kong's urban sustainability concerns.

These more formal scholarly engagement experiences were interspersed with various cultural and environmental outdoors engagement opportunities throughout

Hong Kong such as self-guided tours of wet markets (traditional and renewed), a group trip to the interactive conservation and ecotourism destination (Wetland Park), and the memorable group orientation featuring a ferry ride to a fishing village and hike of Victoria Peak on day two of their program (FSL, research interview, October 2015; HK June 2015 Course Syllabus; Participant observation, HK Post-Program Sustainability Series event—“On the Front Lines of Urban Sustainability: Destination, Hong Kong”, September 2015). Even with the packed schedule and short duration of the program, the HK SEL community members still were afforded opportunities for their own exploring, resulting in some members gaining exposure to other parts of the Chinese continent (e.g. a small group of students took a day trip to the Macau autonomous region on the south coast of China) and unique places within the Hong Kong territory (Participants, research interviews, Fall 2015).

Hong Kong Mechanisms

Several aspects of the HK SEL program made it stand out from the rest of its counterparts within the Summer 2015 GSS program cohort. The most remarkable distinction was its co-taught, dual-course design directly pairing the ASU student participants enrolled in the “Urban Sustainability in Hong Kong” GSS program/course with the City U student participants enrolled in the accompanying “Sustainable Development of Hong Kong” program/course. This pairing was not just for certain activities or projects, such as those the Brazil GSS SEL program had incorporated into its multitude of engagement opportunities. The ASU and City U participants learned with and from one another throughout the duration of their program as part of an integrated cross-institutional, cross-national, and cross-cultural SEL community (FSL, research interviews, October 2015, November 2015). This design was aimed at affording student participants a chance to see and experience firsthand “how urban sustainability policy

translates into real-world application, specifically using Hong Kong as a case study” (FSL, research interview, November 2015).

One of the core mechanisms the faculty/staff leads used to implement their program’s unique design and realize its purpose was to adopt a group-based, collaborative research model. This collaborative engagement design strategy was of great importance to the ASU and HK faculty/staff leads as a strategic tool for intentional facilitation of cross-cultural sustainability learning (FSL, research interviews, October 2015, November 2015; Participant observation, HK Post-Program Sustainability Series event—“On the Front Lines of Urban Sustainability: Destination, Hong Kong”, September 2015). In fact, one of the ASU faculty/staff leads even went as far as to describe the cross-cultural component as more important than the sustainability learning that took place during their time in HK when referencing the paired ASU/HK group structure:

I can tell you the most important part of the experience was about working cross-culturally, not as much working on issues of sustainability in an urban area. That was important but working with people from another culture was particularly important. (Participant observation, HK Post-Program Sustainability Series event—“On the Front Lines of Urban Sustainability: Destination, Hong Kong”, September 2015).

While this collaborative research model bore some resemblance to the model used in the Guatemala SEL program, the HK SEL program employed somewhat different strategies. Similar to the Guatemala SEL program, the HK SEL community’s small groups centered their research around a set of pre-determined sustainability topics or categories, emphasizing in this case urban sustainability. This broader set of categories included the following: 1) housing; 2) conservation/biodiversity; 3) land use; 4) energy;

5) waste (Participant observation, HK Post-Program Sustainability Series event—“On the Front Lines of Urban Sustainability: Destination, Hong Kong”, September 2015). During their three required pre-departure meetings (which were not credit-bearing), the ASU student SEL community members had the opportunity to select which group they were in based on their personal interests. From there they conducted some preliminary background research to help them begin to identify the specific issue area(s) within each category on which they would focus their research and policy proposal projects. These pre-departure meetings also afforded the ASU group members an initial opportunity to get to know one another in person and begin to develop a sense of community among their fellow ASU student participants (FSL, research interview, November 2015). The HK faculty-lead seemed to express regret in not being able to offer the City U student participants the same pre-departure opportunity. This was not possible as the City U students were already facing significant challenges from the two-week program conflicting with their other summer courses and academic activities (e.g. internships) (HK community partner, research interview, February 2016).

While in HK the ASU and HK SEL community members were charged with working in their cross-national groups to “identify and research sustainability issues on the ground” and to develop “viable” sustainability solutions to address those particular issues in the form of policy proposals (Participant observation, HK Post-Program Sustainability Series event—“On the Front Lines of Urban Sustainability: Destination, Hong Kong”, September 2015). The leadership team strove to work around limitations they faced with their student participant groups—be it in terms of knowledge gaps, interests, time constraints, or even personal commitment to the topics or program as a whole—by thoughtfully selecting their participants from the program applicant pools available and generating positive matches when pairing them for boarding together on

City U's campus and working together on their projects. They did this to better ensure the student participants were afforded the chance to delve deeper into the issues that interested them most in order to more effectively apply their knowledge toward generating policy solutions (HK community partner, research interview, February 2016).

Most groups targeted more commonplace urban sustainability issue areas for their work. For example, the "waste" group chose to focus on food waste, and the "housing" group chose to focus on affordable housing, particularly for a population referred to as the "sandwich class" in Hong Kong. However, one group took a more distinctive approach of targeting an underlying problem that them down a less often explored problem/solution pathway. Once becoming aware of how pervading social problems were influencing land use policies in Hong Kong, the "land use" group focused their work on urban renewal through a community engagement strategy. This reflects the importance the HK SEL program/community placed on letting the context in which they were embedded drive their sustainability problem and solution framings, at least with respects to their research and policy proposals. To aid them in their research and policy proposals, the leadership team encouraged the groups to interact with the sustainability and policy experts and local Hong Kong residents they met through their program's planned guest lectures, fields trips, and other activities, as well as to initiate their own outreach. For example, some groups organized their own field interviews within various expert contacts and local community members in Hong Kong (HK community partner, research interview, February 2016). Not surprisingly, while all the groups used a mix of research methods to inform their projects, the land use group appeared to evidence the strongest level of direct engagement with the local community in conducting its research and prioritized feedback from interviews with local Hong Kong residents when developing their proposals.

Ultimately, the issue-based groups were required to present their proposed solutions on two occasions during the program: 1) final in-class presentations to the ASU and HK internal SEL community members; 2) public poster session open to the local Hong Kong community residents and invited guests. Throughout the two-weeks the faculty/staff leads provided ample feedback and guidance to the groups to better prepare them for presenting these policy solutions to the broader public that included top-level influencers in Hong Kong's public policy and sustainability spheres. The ASU student SEL community members also presented abbreviated versions of their policy proposals to the wider ASU community upon their return to the United States at a special post-program engagement event held in September 2015. The event "On the Front Lines of Urban Sustainability: Destination Hong Kong" was a featured "Sustainability Series" event presented in the School of Sustainability by the Julie Ann Wrigley Global Institute of Sustainability (Participant observation, GSS Post-program engagement, September 2015). The HK SEL program/community was the only one to offer this kind of post-program engagement opportunity. However, student participants from other Summer 2015 GSS SEL programs/communities did initiate and organize the first Global Sustainability Studies academic conference for alumni of these and other similar SEL programs (e.g. semester-long study abroad programs or internships in sustainability). Members from each of the four Summer 2015 GSS SEL programs/communities participated in this academic conference in different capacities, and one of the lead organizers was from the Spain/Morocco Summer 2015 GSS SEL program/community.

GSS SEL in Brazil: Human Rights and Sustainability in Brazil (May 31 - June 19, 2015)
Brazil Micro-ecology of Actors

As was the case for its fellow Spain and Morocco GSS Summer 2015 cohort member, the Brazil GSS SEL leadership team was comprised of the traditional faculty-lead and teaching associate (TA)/program assistant (PA) duo, both of whom were facilitating this GSS program together for the second year in a row. The Brazil faculty-lead was a sociologist by training whose research and teaching have focused extensively on the intersections between human rights and environmental sustainability, as well as related areas such as the impacts of globalization, institutional structures, and governance on processes of social transformation (FSL, personal communications, 2015-2016; Online university profiles, retrieved from www.asu.edu, January 2018).

Similar to the Spain and Morocco GSS program/community, the Brazil faculty-lead was based in a different school/department at ASU while holding an affiliation with the Wrigley Institute as a Senior Sustainability Scientist. The Brazil faculty-lead brought ample experience working in or conducting research on international contexts, most notably a study applying the comparative historical research method and a justice lens to examining mechanisms of resource rights realization in three megacities of the Global South, including São Paulo, Brazil (Personal communications with FSL, 2015-2016; Online university profiles, retrieved from www.asu.edu, January 2018). This work, coupled with previous research and time living in Brazil, had enabled the faculty-lead to establish a personal place-connection with Brazil and growing professional in-country network prior to leading the Brazil GSS SEL program. This resulted in her forming a strong sense of understanding, appreciation, and passion for the country, its culture, and its dynamic people (Participant observation, May-June 2015). Add to that fluency in Brazilian Portuguese, the dominant language spoken throughout most of Brazil, and it

would appear that this scholar was more than qualified to take on such a responsibility as faculty-lead in such a demanding context as Brazil. As the faculty-lead would commonly say to fellow SEL community members, “Brazil is not for beginners” (Participant observation, May-June 2015).

While the faculty-lead was relatively new to facilitating this kind of group- and travel-based experiential learning program (the previous year’s Brazil GSS SEL program was her first introduction to facilitating this kind of teaching/learning), her fellow leadership team-member brought several years of experience both leading and participating in domestic and international experiential learning programs and initiatives at ASU and other institutions which dealt with community and international development and sustainability concerns. This experiential knowledge, combined with her transdisciplinary background in social and ecological justice research and practice, her education and training in sociology, social work, anthropology, and sustainability, and her administrative experience in higher education, made her a well-suited addition to this leadership team and its Brazil SEL community. Furthermore, beyond their history of working together on the Brazil GSS program, this leadership team had also collaborated in other research and programmatic capacities during their time at ASU, another characteristic they shared with the Spain and Morocco leadership team. This meant they were quite familiar with one another’s strengths and weaknesses, making them better able to support one another in tackling whatever unexpected challenges (and there were many) that came their way pre-, during, and post-program.

The nucleus of the internal Brazil SEL community was its student participants. Of the 15 total ASU student participants, 13 identified as female and 2 as male, 13 were categorized as “White” and 2 categorized as non-white (1 as “Black/African American”; 1

as “Hispanic/Latino”) (Official list of “Global Studies SAO Participants”, 2015).¹⁷ As was the case with the other three GSS Summer 2015 SEL programs/communities, the internal Brazil SEL community included both graduate (n=4) and undergraduate (n=11) student participants, with the School of Sustainability drawing the largest grouping (n=8), and Sustainability dominating among the majors (n=6) and minors (n=2). The other half of the ASU student participants in the Brazil SEL community were pretty evenly distributed between the remaining seven majors and two minors represented, contributing perspectives from the fields of Sustainable Solutions (a graduate program), Engineering Management, Nutrition (Food/Nutrition Management), Economics, Nonprofit Leadership & Management, Communication, Business (Sustainability), Urban Planning, and Global Health. More than two-thirds (n=11) of the student participants fell within the typical college 18-25 years age range. The remainder were split between the latter half of their 20s and early 30s, with one outlier in the 46+ years age range.

At the heart of the external Brazil community partnerships was its central in-country collaborator, Campus Brasil. This São Paulo-based organization is a “an international education facilitator specialized in expanding experiential learning opportunities” throughout Brazil (Campus Brasil, n.d., “Who We Are”). Over the years Campus Brazil has worked with institutions, educators, and learners from around the world to aid in the design and implementation of programs like the GSS, especially by facilitating local connections to the Brazilian communities, institutions, and resources

¹⁷ I recognize that the “Ethnic” categorizations extrapolated from the official “Global Studies SAO Participants List” for 2015 may come across as perhaps too simplistic—and some might even argue a bit Eurocentric—in that it does not quite capture the diversity and multifaceted nature of ethnic identities present within the GSS SEL communities. For example, while the GSS SEL communities portray a dominant “White” group, this cursory depiction fails to further distinguish the international roots of participants, including those who were international students having left their home countries in regions such as the Middle East to pursue their higher education in the United States. As will be discussed in the next chapter, important identity factors such as these contributed to a richness of diverse perspectives and values that, when shared within the SEL communities, impacted the SEL community members in ways that could not be planned or predicted. However, for the purposes of consistency across the four GSS SEL programs/communities, I chose to present the categorization as originally documented, limited as it may be.

necessary for bringing those programs to fruition. Having joined forces with the Brazil GSS SEL program in its inaugural year (first iteration ran in Summer 2014), Campus Brazil served as the main liaison—a bridge builder—for the multitude of external local community partners with whom the internal Brazil SEL community engaged throughout their expansive journey. It also handled most of the logistics that were essential to ensuring such an ambitious itinerary could not only be achieved safely, efficiently, and ethically, but also be there to handle crises if/when they arose (e.g. lost passports, problems with flights, sick or injured participants, canceled site visits, etc.) (Participant observation, Brazil, May-June 2015). In this way, Campus Brasil functioned similarly to the ISA partnership with the Spain and Morocco GSS SEL program/community.

The importance of this core partnership and the invaluable contributions that the Campus Brasil team brought to the Brazil GSS SEL program/community cannot be overstated. For one, Campus Brasil paired the ASU group with two (a male and female) team members who traveled with them for the full duration of their time in Brazil. While not a part of the Campus Brasil organization full-time, these team members were specially selected for this ASU group for the ways in which their personal and professional attributes could enhance the capacity of the internal Brazil SEL community to gain the most out of their SEL experiences. Beyond their deeper understanding of Brazilian culture, systems, and practices (not to mention being fluent in both Brazilian Portuguese and English), some of the attributes these Campus Brasil team members contributed included the following: knowledge and experience working on grassroots level sustainability concerns in Brazil, connections to local sustainability- and/or human rights-related organizations and initiatives, background in social entrepreneurship, training and experience working with cross-cultural groups through the tourism industry, and last but not least, unwavering dedication to the Brazil SEL community and

to ensuring the success of the Brazil GSS SEL program. Several other Campus Brasil team members, including one of its co-founders, shared in engagement experiences with the internal Brazil SEL community at various points in their journey but did not remain with them for the full duration. In short, Campus Brasil was not only an indispensable external in-country partner, but its team quickly became honorary members of the internal Brazil SEL community (Participant observation, Brazil, May-June 2015). In fact, both members of the ASU leadership team for the Brazil GSS SEL program continue to collaborate with Campus Brasil in multiple research and practice capacities nearly three years since the program concluded (Personal communications with FSL and community partner representatives).

Apart from Campus Brasil, the internal Brazil SEL community generated quite the assortment of local partners who made up the rest of its external SEL community. The level, type, and knowledges contributed by the partners varied widely depending on the location and thematic foci of the program at the point in which they were engaged. The external community partners ranged from public prosecutors (e.g. Ministério Público); to natural resource managers (e.g. SABESP water and waste management company owned by the state of São Paulo); to local co-ops, NGOs, and community-based organizations (e.g. CooperCaps Center waste pickers cooperative in São Paulo; The Health and Happiness Project (Saúde e Alegria) based in Santarem); to leaders from grassroots level social and ecological justice movements (e.g. Landless Workers Movement (MST)); to university faculty and students (e.g. the University of São Paulo (USP); the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR) in Curitiba); to urban sustainability leaders and researchers based at municipal agencies in the sustainability mecca of Curitiba (e.g. Institute for Urban Planning Research (IPUCC)); to representatives from the natural resource extraction industry (e.g. Alcoa Mining company contrasted with a

sustainable forestry extraction reserve in Pará state); to state secretariat officials in charge of environmental sustainability management in Amazonia (e.g. Pará State Secretariat of the Environment and Sustainability (SEMAS-PA)); and finally, Amazon riverside communities off the shores of Santarém in Pará state (e.g. Ana community) (ASU & Campus Brasil, May/June 2015, “Human Rights & Sustainability” Itinerary). This impressive list of partners represents actors who were a part of the multitude of planned educational engagement activities, and were supplemented by the unstructured encounters with people in the various communities, cultural institutions, and public establishments with whom the internal SEL community members engaged as they journeyed throughout different parts of Brazil (e.g. fellow visitors of the Botanical garden of Curitiba (Jardim Botânico de Curitiba) and the municipal market in São Paulo; shopkeepers and artisans spread along the *Santarém* port, etc.).

Brazil Pathways

The Brazil GSS SEL program ran for three weeks, beginning at the end of May and through most of June 2015. Similar to its Spain and Morocco counterpart, the Brazil SEL program used its travel opportunities to evoke a comparative lens through which the SEL community members could see and experience firsthand some of the complexities of sustainability and human rights challenges facing this South American country. However, rather than traveling to two separate countries, the Brazil SEL program migrated throughout multiple regions in this massive country, which was more than enough to expose the Brazil SEL community members to drastically diverse communities, socioecological environments, and sustainability and human rights problems and solutions. Throughout their time in-country, the Brazil SEL community’s journey took them from São Paulo, to Curitiba, to Santarem, and lastly a boat tour of the Amazon riverside communities in Pará State. As the Brazil SEL community quickly

learned, tremendous diversity and complexity existed within and between each of these locations, beginning with their first and longest in-country destination, the greater metropolitan city-region of São Paulo.

São Paulo is one of the most rapidly growing cities in the Global South and the largest city in Brazil with more than 21 million people according to 2015 statistics (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018c, “Brazil” in *The World Factbook*). As of 2017, “86.2 %” of Brazil’s total population lives in urban environments such as São Paulo (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018c, “Brazil” in *The World Factbook*). São Paulo represents a prime example of how such rapid growth and overpopulation can lead to intersecting human rights abuses and sustainability concerns such as lack of access to basic resources (e.g. water, sanitation, food, housing, etc.), economic exclusion, the spread of urban pollution, and natural resource degradation in the name of development (Evans, 2002; Rees & Wackernagel, 1996; Cities Alliance, 2009; IPCC, 2014). This, coupled with political upheaval amidst increasing vulnerability to climate change impacts, made São Paulo, and Brazil as a whole, an especially fitting case for examining “urban ecology and human rights” (Brazil May-June 2015 Course Syllabus). In fact, while there the Brazil SEL community was able to see firsthand a major global city struggling to cope with having been struck by one of its worst droughts in decades. The disproportionate impacts of the drought on more impoverished communities such as those living in informal settlements (e.g. favelas) served as a stark reminder of how the persistence of economic inequality and other human rights abuses exacerbated these communities’ vulnerability to environmental sustainability concerns while simultaneously undermining efforts to increase sustainable wellbeing for Brazilians and their ecological environments (Participant observation, Brazil, May-June 2015).

By contrast Curitiba, the second major destination in their journey, is much smaller and compact than São Paulo, and is looked to by sustainability scholars, practitioners, and decision-makers as the gold standard for urban sustainability and urban planning innovation. From its innovative eco-friendly transportation system, to its thoughtfully designed public green spaces and infrastructure, to its urban planning policies, programs, and institutions, sustainability is not only a desired goal, but an ethos deeply embedded within those who govern, live and work in the communities of Curitiba (Participant observation, Brazil, May-June 2015). In fact, Curitiba led the way in environmental sustainability with its development of the first municipal environmental agency in the continent. Curitiba's Municipal Secretariat of the Environment set the tone for sustainable thinking and planning for its own community as well as the country as a whole, placing a strong emphasis on educational outreach and community engagement in environmental sustainability concerns as a way to further enculturate the mindset and practices that contribute to sustainability throughout the city (Participant observation, Presentation at the Municipal Secretariat of the Environment Curitiba, June 2015). While its leaders may not refer to it in this way, Curitiba's more holistic sustainability-related urban policies, design, and planning could be characterized as grounded in a sustainable wellbeing framework that sees the integrity and wellbeing of its people, systems, and environments as incontrovertibly intertwined.

Following Curitiba, the Brazil SEL community ventured into the Amazonia state of Para. Before departing for a four-day boat tour around the Amazon riverside communities, they stopped off in the city of Santarem. By comparison to São Paulo and Curitiba, Santarem is far less developed and struggles with finding more sustainable and less environmentally destructive ways to ensure economic opportunity and security for its people in order to meet the basic needs of its community without compromising the

integrity of its precious Amazon rainforest and the wellbeing of the indigenous and traditional communities who inhabit it.

The Santarem port serves as a gateway connecting members of the Amazon riverside communities to resources and services that are not otherwise available to them in their communities. For example, civil society organizations like Saude e Alegria are based in Santarem but travel around the Amazon by boat to provide vital health, education, and related resources to the traditional riverside communities. Members of these riverside communities also journey by boat on their own to the city for things like education and more extensive health services. Many of the artisanal products that the riverside communities generate are also sold through a networked goods economy orchestrated by Saude e Alegria in fellow riverside communities, Santarem, and elsewhere in the country. The traditional riverside communities strive to live in closer harmony with the earth by developing sustainable livelihood options such as hand-made manioc flour, fish farming, bee-keeping for honey, artisanal weaving, and the like. These livelihood practices serve the full function as providing community subsistence internally and generating a modest economic income or access to other resources (through trade of goods) they would otherwise not have available to them. In many ways, the riverside communities have come to operate around a circular economy. Despite their efforts, they are the ones most negatively impacted by unsustainable extractive industry practices and at times find themselves in direct conflict with these industries, putting their livelihoods, traditional culture, and the socioecological environments they depend upon in jeopardy (Participant observation, Brazil, May-June 2015). After returning to Santarem from the Amazon boat tour, the Brazil SEL community concluded their journey with a final excursion to the city of Juruti to visit the well-known ALCOA mining company. One could argue this site visit epitomized the conflicting interests between protecting the

rainforest and its peoples and economic development through the extractive industry (Participant observation, Brazil, May-June 2015).

Brazil Mechanisms

The focus or overarching theme of the Brazil GSS SEL program was on exploring “the connections between human rights and environmental sustainability in the Brazilian context” (Brazil May-June 2015 Course Syllabus). To guide this exploratory process, the faculty-lead chose to structure the program around three sub-themes or topics: 1) “urban water and the right to the city”; 2) “human right to food and agricultural sustainability”; 3) “resource extraction and (indigenous) human rights” (Brazil May-June 2015 Course Syllabus). These topics provided an organizational structure for the educational materials, assignments, and scholarly engagement activities built into the program, and were context-specific, meaning they were linked with the main destination points and site visits that acted as the living and learning environments for the Brazil GSS SEL community. As with the other GSS SEL programs in this cohort, these Brazil program themes functioned as lenses through which its SEL community members perceived, engaged with, questioned, and responded to what they saw and experienced as they journeyed throughout the country. The faculty/staff leads utilized these themes and the following program/course objectives to guide the SEL community members through these knowledge-making and socialization processes:

1. “To clarify the official and unofficial meanings of “human rights” and “sustainability”
2. To demonstrate various ways that Brazilian policy makers and advocates have attempted to promote human rights vis-à-vis sustainability challenges
3. To examine critically the unequal distribution of environmental injustices in poorer communities

4. To further student engagement with human rights and sustainability challenges, as well as with just and sustainable alternatives” (Brazil May-June 2015 Course Syllabus, p. 2, bulleted list in original).

The Brazil GSS SEL program followed a more traditional short-term study abroad course model complete with in-country lectures, guest presentations, and academic discussions; site visits to the various institutions, organizations, and communities identified above as partners in the external Brazil SEL community; cultural and environmental tours, excursions, and activities; a series of small group projects in collaboration with the students from the two partnering universities in São Paulo and Curitiba; group check-in discussions; and finally explicitly demarcated free time for the SEL community members to explore the surrounding areas on their own and/or practice much needed self-care.

The scheduled “free time” is worth highlighting because it represented a significant improvement to the structure of the program after the leadership team discovered in year one (2014) that the intensity of such a crowded itinerary with very little scheduled personal time resulted in near burnout for some of the SEL community members by the time the program reached its end. The itinerary for its Summer 2015 iteration was still extremely full, but this time around the Brazil leadership team really strove to protect that free time for the group (which sometimes got cut short due to unavoidable circumstances) and stressed the importance of self-care to the Brazil SEL community. To help open up space in the itinerary for this free time, the 2015 version of the program cut out an entire city from its destinations (Brasilia), and instead spent more time in the other three locations, especially São Paulo (Participant observation, Brazil, May-June 2015; FSL, research interview, November 2015). Nonetheless, some student participants still remarked feeling as though they did not have enough

opportunities to create their own raw, authentic experiences outside of the confines of the group and the program's tightly structured schedule (Participants, research interviews, Fall 2015). The faculty/staff leads also felt that despite its lighter load, the 2015 Brazil SEL program was still a bit too full, overwhelming the SEL community members at certain points and causing them to become less engaged in certain activities, discussions, etc. (FSL, research interview, November 2015; Participant observation, Brazil, May-June 2015).

The Brazil SEL community members were not the only ones among the Summer 2015 GSS program cohort to share similar concerns, however. This is a common barrier for short-term programs that often struggle to strike a balance between cramming as much as possible into what little time they have in-country vs. cutting back on the quantity and expansiveness of planned travel and activities and focusing on achieving more immersive, meaningful, and authentic engagement opportunities¹⁸.

Other design strategies worth noting that represented changes from the previous year of the Brazil GSS SEL program included the restructuring of assignments so that much of the independent work could be completed pre- and/or post-program (e.g. blog post assignments required before departure rather during the program). There was also the addition of small group comparative projects in collaboration with local university students that were based around the program's three human rights and sustainability sub-themes/topics. (e.g. urban water project in São Paulo, urban agriculture project in Curitiba) (Brazil May-June 2015 Course Syllabus; Participant observation, Brazil, May-June 2015). This opportunity to engage with Brazilian peers was considered a positive feature for the ASU student participants (Participant observation, Brazil, May-June 2015). However, they also felt the intensity of the project coupled with too short a time-

¹⁸ See program recommendations in Chapter 6 for further discussion on this topic.

frame to complete them appeared to really detract from the overall collaborative engagement experience. Perhaps they would have benefitted from having one substantive project that flowed throughout the duration of the program similar to that of the research projects featured in their Spain and Morocco and Hong Kong counterparts.

Finally, the faculty-lead made a conscious decision to seek out opportunities in each of the main destination stops for the Brazil SEL community members to engage with the natural environment. This stemmed from the faculty-lead's personal values and connection to nature, and her goal to design the program in such a way that the Brazil SEL community members could "see and feel the importance of the natural environment", even in a mega-city like São Paulo, Brazil (FSL, research interview, November 2015). Examples included having group picnics in local São Paulo metro parks, visiting the Botanical Gardens of Curitiba and going on an evening bike tour of the city, and hiking and canoeing in the Amazon rainforest (Participant observation, Brazil, May-June 2015). This was also one of the impetuses behind the flow of travel, beginning in a massive urban environment, moving to a smaller, more sustainable city, and then concluding in the Amazon. The faculty-lead saw this progression—from heavily removed from the natural environment due to urbanization to directly surrounded by it within the Amazon rainforest—as a way for the SEL community members, particularly the student participants, to compare their own experiences and reflect on their personal relationships with nature (FSL, research interview, November 2015). These environmental engagement opportunities were welcomed complements to the cultural engagement opportunities commonly found in international study abroad programs. It was no surprise that as the Brazil SEL community moved along that urban-natural continuum envisioned by the faculty-lead, the natural and cultural worlds became more intimately interconnected. In other words, nature was ingrained in the culture and

livelihoods of the riverside communities. Nature was culture, and culture nature. And for those four short days of the Amazon boat tour, the Brazil SEL community got a chance to experience a taste of that interconnectedness firsthand.

Conclusion

The macro- and meso-level ethnographic sketches presented above are by no means comprehensive. Rather, they highlight key program components that represent the “cogs and wheels” (Hedström & Ylikoski, 2010, p. 50, as cited in Haglund & Stryker, 2011, p. 5) of the knowledge-making and socialization processes at play in the GSS SEL Program Initiative, its individual program offerings, and the SEL communities that formed within each. The MAPs modelling analysis hopefully began to show how these program components operate synergistically—or at least strive for this ideal—that results in significant overlap between the three MAPs categorical components. As such, rather than draw rigid distinctions, the ethnographic sketches sought out to reveal the underlying narratives of aspiration, acclimation, and interdependency as evidenced in each GSS SEL program/community. The next chapter picks up with a discussion of the implications these interconnected MAPs program components and processes have in influencing the values, perceptions, and perceived agency of the GSS SEL community members, and examines the extent to which these factors can, or do, contribute to capacity building for global eco-citizenship through transformative sustainability learning.

CHAPTER 5

THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF VALUES, PERCEPTIONS, PERCEIVED AGENCY, AND ENGAGEMENT IN THE GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES (GSS) SEL PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITIES: A PRESENTATION OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS FINDINGS

This chapter focuses on presenting and discussing a synthesis of key findings from the applied thematic analysis of interviews conducted among the student participant members of the four Summer 2015 Global Sustainability Studies (GSS) sustainability experiential learning (SEL) programs/communities. As a reminder, these interviews were conducted post-program during the Fall 2015 semester, giving the student participant SEL community members time to process their experiences and return back to their otherwise “normal” life routines as university students. The goal of this analysis and this chapter as a whole is to highlight insight gained from probing into the student participants’ values, perceptions, and perceived agency post-program, as well as additional engagement strategies employed during their GSS SEL programs.

The subsequent sections offer different layers of insights from the thematic analyses, organized by the core targets of analysis (values, perceptions, perceived agency) and the emergent themes that were revealed within each of the four Summer 2015 GSS SEL programs/communities. When conducting the thematic analyses, the identified themes were originally broken down by individual GSS SEL program/community and then internally compared between programs/communities. The thematic findings were then synthesized to represent the Summer 2015 GSS SEL program/community cohort as a collective whole. The synthesized thematic findings presented herein highlight the themes/trends that can be drawn between the individual programs/communities, as well as possible influencing knowledge-making and socialization factors revealed in participants’ reflections on their SEL community experiences such as engagement mechanisms and strategies. The engagement strategies

are discussed primarily in relation to agency thematic findings, building upon those strategies revealed in the previous chapter's MAPs analysis. Altogether, this chapter is meant to lay the empirical groundwork needed to respond to one of the core framing questions that inspired this study: How can capacity for "opening up" (Leach et al. 2010) plural transformation pathways be understood through the examination of SEL participants' values, perceptions, and perceived agency for eco-citizenship?

Synthesis of Key Themes/Trends Identified in the Thematic Analyses of the Global Sustainability Studies (GSS) Sustainability Experiential Learning Programs/Communities

Values/Priorities

The dominant value themes indicated in the GSS SEL communities tended to present with an anthropocentric orientation, emphasizing the human dimensions of sustainability/sustainable wellbeing (SWB). Some of the common human-centered value themes identified included the following: community/connectivity, happiness, human wellbeing/human flourishing, quality of life, access to and security of basic human needs/resources (physical, economic, and social), social equity/social justice (including human rights), and understanding/empathy.

By far, happiness—which was either equated with or considered essential to human wellbeing/human flourishing—was a prominent theme that transpired across all Guatemala interview participants. This was not surprising given the program itself was focused on the "Sustainability Through Happiness Framework (STHF)" (Cloutier and Pfeiffer, 2015). One participant shared how he and his fellow SEL community members chose this particular program because they were "trying to...learn how happiness ties into sustainability..." while also "... trying to seek happiness and how happiness can, or should be the purpose for everything..." It would seem this SEL community lived up to the maxim, "practice what you preach." Not only did the Guatemala participants appear

to internalize this value/priority in their personal lives and their internal Guatemala SEL community, they simultaneously described it as a key attribute they noticed among some of the external Guatemalan SEL communities with whom they engaged, expressing a sense of awe in how happy the Guatemalans appeared to be despite having so much less on a material scale compared to people in the USA. As one participant described it,

...I thought before Guatemala that if ... people had more money and more freedom then it would create happiness....And then we came from outsiders into places that had very little and we were less happy based on our own personal reports compared to theirs.

Happiness was also a value theme that emerged in each of the other three GSS SEL communities, most especially among the Brazil participants. However, the happiness value theme appeared less commonplace and prominent in the other SEL communities (with some minor exceptions), evidencing as one of many human/social values—mainly attributed to human wellbeing—rather than as a unifying dominant theme within the Guatemala SEL community that ran throughout their interviews.

Another central and important value theme that emerged across all four of the GSS SEL communities was that of seeking understanding/empathy. This value theme appeared to be linked, in part, to the overall goals and engagement approaches or strategies utilized by the GSS SEL programs/communities, evidencing most clearly in the ways participants appeared to be impacted by their engagement experiences (see solutions framings section below for further discussion). For example, just as exploring ways to enhance happiness through creating more sustainable communities was the core theme or foci of the Guatemala GSS SEL program, seeking understanding/empathy was the main purpose of their research and outreach engagement efforts in Guatemala. Much like the happiness theme, the Guatemala participants came to adopt

understanding/empathy as a guiding principle in their own SEL community, while simultaneously considering it an integral part of pursuing any sustainability/SWB solutions pathways. The Spain/Morocco SEL program/community's comparative historical lens, multi-country structure, and individual research design seemed to impress upon the participants the importance of seeking understanding/empathy across cultures. This was further reinforced by their exposure to such diverse perspectives, values, and sociocultural contexts—particularly throughout their time in Morocco. Becoming more aware of the different ways that cultures and communities in countries like Morocco, Spain, and the USA think about and approach sustainability/sustainable development provided participants “another lens” through which to see the world and appreciate the diverse ways in which sustainability is perceived, valued, and enacted (or not) around the world (Spain/Morocco participant).

While no doubt present, value themes associated with the environmental/ecological dimensions of sustainability/SWB such as living within ecological limits, environmental wellbeing / sustainability, environmental justice, and maintaining (or restoring) a strong human-environment relationship appeared to be less pronounced than the human dimension themes when considering the different SEL communities as a whole. This prioritization of human-centered over environmental-centered values was most noticeable within the Guatemala SEL community, but also evidenced in the Spain/Morocco, Brazil, and Hong Kong SEL communities. That is not to say that environmental values were not present among the GSS SEL community members. The participants were sustainability students after all. In fact, several participants reflected on how they felt their sustainability education prior to embarking on their GSS programs had been biased towards environmental sustainability concerns. This was a recurring discussion point among the Spain/Morocco participants who

contrasted this environmental sustainability bias with what they perceived as a social sustainability bias of the Moroccan communities. However, where environmental values did evidence among participants, the values pointed to a concern for the natural environment that was underscored in most cases by a utilitarian anthropocentric (i.e. human-centered) orientation with tenets of both “egoistic” and “social-altruistic” value-orientations, albeit leaning more toward the latter (Stern & Dietz, 1994, pp. 69-71). Within such value-orientations, concerns for environmental wellbeing stem from motivations to contribute to human wellbeing/flourishing of selves (egoistic end of the spectrum), and other individuals or society at large (social-altruistic end of the spectrum). For instance, participants in the Spain/Morocco and Brazil SEL communities primarily projected environmental values from an environmental stewardship standpoint. They stressed the need for protecting and/or sustaining the natural environment as a benefit to human wellbeing (and thus SWB) such as through the provision of natural resources (e.g. water, food, energy) essential for healthy, happy, and fulfilling lives.

There were of course exceptions among the participants in each of the SEL communities who did evidence signs of leaning towards a more ecocentric/ecological orientation grounded in an ecological rationality whereby concerns for environment are driven by respect for the integrity and interconnectedness of all living things (Bendik-Keymer 2006; Hancock 2003)¹⁹. What made some participants stand out from the rest of their SEL community members was that the motivations behind their environmental concerns were rooted, in part, to their personal emotional and/or spiritual connections to the natural world. These were often associated with previously held

¹⁹ Value-Belief-Norm theory posited by Stern & Dietz (1994), uses the term “biospheric value-orientation” to identify similar values associated with an ecocentric/ecological orientation. However, for the purposes of aligning with Bendik-Keymer’s (2006) conceptualization of global eco-citizenship—a central theoretical underpinning of this study—I chose to use ecocentric/ecological orientation in its place. For a discussion of global ecological citizenship, see Chapter 2 of this manuscript.

values/beliefs/priorities that evolved from past personal experiences connecting with and/or studying the natural world. For example, a Guatemala participant attributed his strong human-environment relationship and long-held concern for environmental wellbeing to his previous engagement as an avid outdoorsman. Particularly impactful was his time spent living and learning on a permaculture farm in East Asia before the Guatemala SEL program, which had deepened his appreciation and concern for the natural world. Other participants from the Guatemala, Brazil, and Spain/Morocco programs expressed a personal emotional and/or spiritual connection to the environment. One of the Spain/Morocco participants shared how her personal “emotional/spiritual connection to water”, which she described as her “happy place”, inspired her research during the program on understanding how different cultures “value water”. A Brazil participant who had an educational and professional background in environmental sciences and whose faith was a significant part of her identity, also evidenced a similar spiritual connection to the natural environment. She also expressed awe and respect for the inherent integrity of the natural world, stating how “Nature on its own is this really beautiful and incredible thing and has value on its own”. Though she still held this value, the Brazil participant also shared how her valuing of nature had evolved and shifted towards a more anthropocentric orientation as she became more aware of and “angry” over the ways that humans are “messing up nature” and in turn “humans are messing up humans by messing up nature”. This participant’s concern over the human impacts of environmental degradation appeared to be grounded in her belief that human wellbeing is dependent upon the wellbeing of the natural world, acknowledging that “...we wouldn’t exist without nature.”

The participants who evidenced more ecocentric/ecological orientations appeared to carry forward similar values post-program, claiming these values were

reinforced by their experiences abroad, especially when such environmental values/priorities were manifested in the communities with whom they engaged (e.g. different Guatemalan and Brazilian communities finding pathways to “bridge that gap between man and nature” such as living off and/or in harmony with the land) (Guatemala participant). However, regardless of where participants appeared to fall on the anthropocentric-ecocentric spectrum, even those who evidenced the strongest tenets of an ecocentric/ecological orientation expressed having come away from their GSS SEL programs/communities placing greater importance on human wellbeing as a core aspect of sustainability/SWB. In other words, their concerns for the human side of the interconnected human-environment wellbeing relationship grew stronger as they became more keenly aware of the human/social consequences of sustainability/SWB problems and solutions in diverse communities around the world, most of which could be traced back to how humans—and the systems and structures we create—value and treat both nature and one another.

An interesting and unexpected value theme that emerged mainly within the Guatemala and Brazil SEL communities, and to a lesser extent in the Spain/Morocco and Hong Kong SEL communities, was the preservation of cultural and/or traditional/indigenous knowledges, especially in terms of potential sustainability solutions pathways. This value theme was also directly associated with participants’ emphasis on context-specific, locally-driven, bottom-up solutions pathways. In reality, most of the value themes revealed themselves through the problem and solution framings of the participants, especially when discussing different barriers and contributions to sustainability/SWB that they became aware of while engaging with external SEL community partners in their host countries (see below for elaboration).

Perceptions

Framings of sustainable wellbeing (SWB). As the value themes began to reveal, interview participants from across all four of the SEL communities overwhelmingly framed sustainable wellbeing as human-centered, just as they framed sustainability. As most were unfamiliar with the term “sustainable wellbeing”, most participants tended to use sustainability and sustainable wellbeing interchangeably throughout their interviews²⁰, perceiving the enhancement and sustaining of human wellbeing/human flourishing as the main goal or purpose of sustainability/SWB. Noticeable distinctions came when participants explicitly referenced environmental sustainability, but this too was typically framed as a contributing factor to human wellbeing/human flourishing and thus sustainability/SWB. The few exceptions of participants who broadened out their conceptualizations to encompass wellbeing of environmental and other systems (e.g. social and economic wellbeing) initially associated sustainability/SWB with human wellbeing.

While their framings of sustainability/SWB shared many similarities, the dominant human wellbeing/human flourishing elements emphasized in the participants’ conceptualizations tended to differ somewhat between the four SEL communities. For the Guatemala participants, sustaining happiness over the long-term was widely considered an essential component, if not equivalent to, human wellbeing/flourishing, and thus an ultimate aspiration of and requirement for sustainability/SWB. As one one

²⁰ The majority of interview participants from all the SEL communities often used “sustainability” and “sustainable wellbeing” interchangeably in their interview responses. For that reason, the two are included together when discussing the findings. While the interview questions explicitly used the language of sustainable wellbeing, some participants were just not accustomed to hearing that terminology and fell back on what they knew. Once discovering this trend, I made a point to confirm early on in the interviews whether they were making a distinction by using “sustainability” instead, or if it was simply a habitual reaction. Predominantly it was the latter. Another means for making this clarification known was the separate question that asked participants what they think of when hearing the term “sustainable wellbeing”?

participant put it, “...you can’t have true wellbeing without _____” [referring to happiness]. Another Guatemala participant even went so far as to refer to “happiness as sustainability”. There were, however, different dimensions that the individual Guatemala participants attributed to sustaining happiness for human wellbeing and ultimately sustainability/SWB. These included the following: happiness through human security (of needs/resources, health, etc.) that respects ecological limits; happiness through contentment and gratitude for what we have; happiness through community connectivity/social cohesion; and happiness through “living a life in line with my values”. Finally, a Guatemala participant evidencing one of the strongest ecocentric/ecological orientations among those from across the GSS SEL communities explicitly framed sustainability/SWB as encompassing both human wellbeing and environmental wellbeing. For this participant, sustaining happiness—seen as a component of both the “physical and mental security” dimensions of human wellbeing--was intimately linked to maintaining the functioning of the natural environment.

For the Spain/Morocco, Hong Kong, and Brazil participants, happiness was referenced but to a lesser degree. The more dominant overarching theme that ran across the sustainability/SWB framings in each of these three SEL communities was the meeting of essential human needs/resources. As was already discussed, that theme was also present in the Guatemala community but was ultimately linked back to happiness. For the other SEL communities, sustainability/SWB essentially came down to the meeting of essential needs/resources that would enable humans to live “decent” or “quality” lives in the present, with the potential to “grow” or flourish well into the future. What the participants constituted as essential needs/resources and how they characterized a decent quality of living and flourishing was more nuanced in the Spain/Morocco, Hong Kong, and Brazil SEL communities, however. For example, to

some participants a decent quality of life meant having what you need to be “healthy”, “balanced”, “self-sufficient”, or “thriving” in life, or to be able to care for yourself and your family, including ensuring that your “spiritual, emotional, physical, and financial” needs are met. The more common essential needs/resources that participants attributed to a decent quality of life included access to basic level needs such as clean water and air, food, and shelter. Beyond that, participants also included access to resources such as energy, finances, healthcare, outdoor and/or communal spaces, meaningful work, education, positive social interactions, and human rights, among others. Interestingly, several Spain/Morocco participants’ framings of sustainability/SWB emphasized an added proviso that meeting essential human needs/resources should not come at the expense of the natural environment. This ‘do no harm’ sentiment is best captured in the following Spain/Morocco participant’s conceptualization of sustainability/SWB:

I basically just think it’s how to interact with ecological environments and social environments in a positive way that doesn’t hurt you, or your community, or your environment....you want it to last for generations in the future too. So it’s just a type of living that’s unharmed....

Those participants in the Spain/Morocco, Hong Kong, and Brazil SEL communities who included the added dimension of growing or flourishing saw this as opportunities for personal and communal development. As one participant put it, it’s the “state whereby someone is able to do things for the betterment of...self, and others, and the environment.” On a more individualistic level, these opportunities for personal development might come through access to education, finances, or meaningful work. On a broader socioecological systems level, factors noted by participants that could be associated with growth and flourishing included nurturing positive social interactions, coming together as a community in pursuit of shared goals for sustainability, realizing

human rights, and fostering equitable, inclusive, and sustainable social, economic, and environmental systems.

An important characteristic of the largely human-centered sustainability/SWB framings revealed in the GSS SEL communities as a whole was an emphasis on the individual nature or personalization of sustainability/SWB—be it in the form of sustaining happiness or meeting of essential needs/resources. While one might equate the participants’ individualized framings with an egoistic anthropocentric orientation, when considering their broader problem/solution framings this personalization seemed to indicate the participants’ openness to and appreciation for understanding diversity in values, perceptions, and agency—and the contexts in which these form—when addressing sustainability/SWB concerns. In other words, the individual nature of participants’ framings was more about respecting self-determination and the freedom of people as unique, complex beings to define what will make them happy (e.g. “living a life that aligns with my values”—Guatemala participant) and/or what needs and resources will enable present and future generations to thrive and flourish. Furthermore, several participants included communal and/or environmental dimensions often tied to justice considerations either directly in their conceptualizations of sustainability/SWB, or their broader problem/solutions framings. There was the ‘do no harm’ (to people or planet) sub-theme that emerged in the Spain/Morocco SEL community’s sustainability/SWB framings, and an emphasis on social justice elements such as “equity” and “human rights” in the Brazil SEL community’s problem/solution framings. On whole, when considering the perceptions shared by participants during their interviews, the majority of participants from across the four GSS SEL communities appeared to embody stronger tenets of a social-altruistic anthropocentric orientation.

Problem/Solution framings (i.e. barriers/contributions to sustainability/SWB). The problem framing themes that emerged among participants within the GSS SEL communities as a whole ranged from complex, systemic-level issues impacting global and local communities as well as the environments on which they depend, to more communal and individualized concerns. Examples of recurring systemic-level problem framing themes included the following: global capitalist exploitation; inequality (in terms of economic, social, and environmental resources and opportunities); exploitation and marginalization of traditional/indigenous communities; government corruption and/or incompetence (e.g. failure to enforce sustainability regulations); lack of institutional support; genocide/conflict; consumption-centered development models; systemic resource scarcity; and so forth. Examples of recurring problem framing themes among the more communal and individualized concerns include the following: absence of community connectivity/social cohesion; misguided values/priorities (which stem from the intersecting norms and ideologies of individuals and their socioecological environments); lack of access to essential needs/resources; human rights abuses; unhealthy or unsafe environments; living beyond ecological limits; inability to adapt to change; lack of opportunities for growth and development (e.g. education and employment); lack of awareness, communication and/or understanding; and a disconnect between humans and the natural environment. As one might have surmised, the issues encapsulated in these problem framing themes are intersecting, at times blurring the line between systemic-level and communal/individual level.

Most of these systemic-level and communal/individual level themes appeared in at least one participant's problem framings across all four GSS SEL communities. The more distinct aspects of these problem framing themes shone through the emphasis that participants from the different SEL communities placed on certain themes and the

connections they drew between different themes, as well as whether their foci were on more systemic-level or communal/individual level concerns. Such distinctions often came down to the specific examples of barriers to sustainability/SWB that participants discussed having seen or learned about while abroad in the various countries and communities they visited during their GSS SEL programs. Some participants also made explicit linkages between the barriers they raised in their problem framings to their home countries and communities (e.g. USA, local cities in Arizona).

A prominent systemic-level issue that was repeatedly raised among Guatemala participants was the exploitation of traditional/indigenous communities. For example, several Guatemala participants reflected on how the Mayan peoples' traditional/indigenous culture has been exploited by the massive tourism industry in Guatemala from which they reap little benefit, and their more sustainable livelihoods practices were threatened by a capitalist-driven global food system that ushered in large-scale industrial agriculture against which the small-scale farmers could not compete. In the process, their traditional/indigenous knowledges and culture were being threatened.

In terms of barriers, I would say it's the... disintegration of the local indigenous knowledge system that was there. And because of that, a lot of things are lost. Things about medicine, like the local medicine, the herbs and everything they had, that would be lost. And that would have what is considered lack of health access. That's basically a result of the disintegration of that knowledge.... And similarly, when the food system, ... a lot of it was subsistence right. And that sort of shifted to large agriculture coming in and buying up those lands and now they lose that sense of security and independence now that they're working on those farms.... (Guatemala participant)

And criticism was widespread among the participants' problem framings when referring to the negative impacts of global corporations on local Guatemalans. The following quote from one participant captures these criticisms quite effectively. The participant shared his impassioned perspective of the structural inequities in Guatemala in which he directly calls out a series of American-based global corporations for perpetuating exploitation through global capitalism:

...I think the biggest thing in Guatemala was...it's structural. It's an inequity that's built into the system; in almost every system there its inequities are built in. And I have to say that North America is probably one of the reasons that those are built into it.... My belief is that if our economy wasn't making so many demands on Guatemala's...resources, they might be better off.... We capitalists up here in the United States are driving their economy to drain it for ... everything it's worth.... I was aware of it beforehand. But once I got down there and started hearing some of the stories about what was going on—in terms politically, economically, you know, health system, agriculture, you know, all those things—and when you see the names on the you know corporations are all American names, you can't draw any other conclusion....[Names several well-known USA corporations] all of those companies are down there just ripping that country apart. (Guatemala participant)

Similar to the Guatemala SEL community, the systemic-level issue that not only stood out most but seemed to tie into all the other problem framing themes raised by Brazil participants was that of the negative impacts of the global capitalist system. Participants framed the capitalist system as a major underlying cause to social and ecological justice concerns in Brazil and the broader global community. This is best captured in the following quote:

Alright, so there are things that are pretty obviously not helping [SWB], such as capitalism...I mean, that seems like a cop-out because you can't just blame it all on capitalism all the time. But when literally everything operates under this paradigm, like almost the entire world operates under it, then you kind of have to trace everything back to the fact that at best, this paradigm enables unsustainability, at worst it encourages it. Either way it needs to be adjusted.

(Brazil participant)

The broader common narrative that appeared to be interwoven throughout the Brazil SEL community could best be summarized as follows. The Brazil participants saw people around the world, but especially in wealthier, more developed nations like the United States, as trapped within this consumer and competition-driven capitalist system that has infiltrated the very institutions and societal norms and ideologies that shape human decision-making and action. Capitalism itself is framed as promoting a profit ideology and motivations over human and environmental wellbeing, which has led to gross inequalities and the exploitation of people and planet. Examples of such injustices participants linked to capitalism in Brazil and elsewhere included the historical colonization of indigenous communities, the commodification and exploitation of natural resources, and extreme poverty and economic inequality. And perhaps the most important feature of this problem framing narrative was that all people who have not found a way to break free, or at least become less dependent upon, this dominant system are in essence contributing—directly or indirectly—to the problems that serve as barriers to sustainability/SWB for themselves and for communities around the world, including the most remote communities like those who inhabit the far reaches of the Amazon rainforest.

For the Spain/Morocco participants, there were two foremost problem framing themes that they saw as intimately connected. The first was inadequate education, employment, and other human/social development opportunities for women, which they tied to culturally-embedded norms/values and perspectives that perpetuate inequality and unsustainability. In particular, the participants consistently referenced the gender disparities in Morocco where women have traditionally been relegated to an inferior status and consequently prevented from pursuing educational, employment, or other opportunities that would enable them to become more self-reliant and less beholden to the control of men. As one female Spain/Morocco participant succinctly states, “I just think that breaking the social norm [referring to gender disparity] and ... what their traditions were was their biggest barrier to sustainable wellbeing.” These themes point to a deeper level critical consciousness among Spain/Morocco participants of the role that gender and social norms can play in limiting freedoms and capacities of women to pursue and reap the benefits of sustainability/SWB. These themes were also linked in some participants problem framings to additional barriers, mainly resistance to change exacerbated by ignorance and/or lack of understanding and knowledge/awareness of an issue or concern.

It was somewhat more difficult to pinpoint a dominant theme at the systemic level in the Hong Kong problem framings. This was likely due, in part, to the participants having focused so intensely on individual topics for their group policy solutions proposals in Hong Kong, which consequently also became primary subjects in their individual interviews. However, the Hong Kong participants were clearly united by a shared focus on policy implications for urban sustainability concerns, much of which could be traced back in some way to structural pressures from rapid urbanization and extreme density due to overpopulation, coupled with inadequate policies for coping with

such pressures. Participants connected these pressures and policy failures to a host of social problems such as pervasive inequality that participants identified as especially widespread in Hong Kong's housing and economic systems, among others, as well as high levels of pollution and waste (e.g. massive trash problem and food waste). Even those participants who were not in the housing policy group discussed poor living conditions of impoverished communities and how the rising costs in the housing market, coupled with gross economic inequality, has generated a housing crisis that impacts the most vulnerable in Hong Kong. One participant vividly described the dire living conditions of some Hong Kong residents as "caged housing" where as many as 15 families would be cramped into one sub-leased room sleeping on nothing more than a mat. The Hong Kong participant portrayed this as an example of "how money buys you sustainable wellbeing", demonstrating the connections she and others made between the structural problems of housing and economic inequality in Hong Kong.

At the more communal and individual level, a dominant problem framing theme in all four of the GSS SEL communities was a lack of access to essential needs/resources. This is not surprising given the prominence that access to essential needs/resources had in the overall sustainability/SWB framings of GSS SEL communities. The prioritization of basic needs/resources resembles Maslow's (1943, p. 370) hierarchy of needs, which includes similar basic needs/resources in the first two motivations categories of the hierarchy pyramid--"physiological needs" and "safety and security". On a more fundamental level, the lack of access to or security in basic essential needs/resources like food, water, shelter, health services, and so forth was perceived by participants as the first line of attack against human wellbeing/flourishing and in turn sustainability/SWB. This problem framing theme could also be linked to related systemic-level problem framing themes that were touched on by participants such as resource scarcity;

inadequate, poorly managed, and/or inequitable resource distribution; and the way people and society value the environment and the natural resources it provides (e.g. exploitation, commodification, or overconsumption of natural resources).

Brazil participants also extended this lack of access to essential needs/resources theme to encompass the broader problem framing theme of human rights abuses, which is fitting given their program focused on “Human Rights and Sustainability in Brazil” and delved into human rights issues such as the rights to water, housing, and food, among others. In fact, water was actually the essential need/resource that was referenced most in the problem framings of participants across all four of the GSS SEL communities. Water insecurity in the form of lack of access to potable water resources and contaminated water bodies appeared to be serious concerns in Guatemala, Brazil, Hong Kong, and Morocco alike. Beyond witnessing the water insecurity concerns that plagued the people of these nations and undermined their sustainability/SWB, the participants also experienced a taste of that insecurity firsthand (albeit to a far lesser degree) as they too had to worry about whether the water they came across was “safe” to consume, bathe or swim in while abroad. A Spain/Morocco participant even shared how she began to question to what extent their presence in Morocco was adding to the pressures of already insufficient water resources, especially when visiting the most remote communities of Morocco’s desert and mountain regions. While the insecurity was short-lived, this just goes to show how SEL in developing nations such as these can be an effective mechanism for raising awareness in a very personal way about particular concerns such as the global water crisis.

Interestingly, an equally dominant problem framing theme at the communal/local level for the Guatemala participants was the absence of community connectivity/social cohesion. A perspective that emerged among the Guatemala

participants was that despite having a lack of access to basic needs/resources and often living in impoverished, unhealthy, or exploitative conditions, many of the Guatemalan communities with whom they engaged still came across as happy—significantly happier than a large portion of Americans living in the much wealthier United States. The participants attributed this prevailing happiness to the tremendous social cohesion and strong community ties that they witnessed among the Guatemalans who seemed so willing to help one another, which in turn made those cohesive Guatemalan communities resilient and able to adapt in the face of adversity. For that reason, the participants expressed concerns for factors they saw as contributing to an erosion of community connectivity/social cohesion in Guatemala and elsewhere (including in the USA). Several Guatemala participants raised the issue of a growing sense of Western-influences such as an individualistic or consumeristic culture that they had attributed, in part, to globalization and the lure of “development” infiltrating Guatemala. The participants who raised these concerns saw them as creating barriers to sustainability/SWB by imbuing in some Guatemalan communities misguided values/priorities, or general mindsets similar to those encapsulated in the underlying “economic rationality” of dominant development approaches that hold profit and wealth as the measure of human (and country in the case of Global Domestic Product) wellbeing. These “false wellbeing” narratives, as one participant put it, can stem from society at large and/or the people who surround us and can pose yet another threat to community cohesion and happiness, as well as the erosion of Guatemala’s traditional collectivist culture.

Another intriguing and unexpected problem framing theme worth noting is a lack of awareness, communication and/or understanding. This theme could be considered spanning both the systemic and communal/individual levels. For example, Hong Kong and Spain/Morocco participants framed this as a problem of “poor communication”—or

in some cases outright refusal to communicate—that often emanated from those in power (e.g. government and other decision-makers such as urban planners) through to local communities and individual residents of Hong Kong. But they also saw it as an issue of simple misunderstanding due to differences in how people see, perceive, and interpret the world around them: “people can look at the same situation and interpret it differently....but...neither would be wrong” (Hong Kong participant). Perhaps even more importantly, participants turned the critical gaze inward with this particular problem framing, acknowledging how they too were implicated in the ways that they entered these nations with preconceived notions about the sustainability problems and solutions they would find. This was especially widespread among the Hong Kong participants, who had already begun developing policy solutions they thought would be appropriate before stepping foot in Hong Kong. They based these early renderings on preliminary research they had started pre-program, only to find that the information and narratives such research conveyed was partial at best, leaving out the essential perspectives and voices of those most impacted by Hong Kong’s urban sustainability concerns. In this way, the Hong Kong participants saw themselves as having potentially perpetuated that lack of awareness, communication and/or understanding, recognizing the power they held in the process of developing policy solutions proposals.

Unsurprisingly, the participants’ solutions framings tended to directly counter their problem framings themes with two dominant themes once again recurring: meeting essential human needs/resources; and fostering community connectivity/social connection. Additionally, there was what might be considered three interrelated overarching solutions framing themes: shifting of norms/values; facilitating context-specific, local/bottom-up (i.e. grassroots) approaches to change; and seeking understanding/empathy. These themes were considered by participants as key

contributions to sustainability/SWB, which as previously indicated, they perceived of as ultimately being about enhancing and sustaining human wellbeing/flourishing, and consequently (in some cases at least) could also contribute to environmental wellbeing. As such, these solutions framing themes represent goals the participants ascribed to sustainability/SWB. Rather than previously discussed themes, the focus here remains connections between solutions framing themes, calling particular attention to the overarching solutions framing themes.

The shifting of norms/values theme reached across both the systemic and communal/individual levels. This overarching theme largely stemmed from the participants' critical perspectives of the materialist and consumption-driven motivations that shape the decision-making and action of people and institutions and drive our local and global systems. Such perspectives revealed themselves in many of the structural-level problem framing themes previously discussed and underscored for participants the incredibly influential roles that norms and values play in sustainability/SWB. In the words of a Hong Kong participant, "Values does a lot to determine wellbeing to a [individual] person....But that could also be society's values as well; that influences a person too." Seeing this problem as so pervasive, participants—especially in the Brazil and Guatemala SEL communities—stressed the need for shifting dominant norms/values away from such materialist and consumption-driven motivations and toward the prioritization of norms/values that enhance human wellbeing/flourishing and ultimately sustainability/SWB. As one participant described it,

I think it starts with a redefinition of the quality of life. Like popular definition of the quality of life is more materialist and based on consuming resources and...pretty much based on comfort and convenience. I think that has to be redefined. And then if you redefine that to ... the ideal of something that has

lower resource consumption, you would immediately have a better wellbeing in terms of environmental wellbeing because you are consuming less resources, and human wellbeing because you're not, your expectations are lower. You don't have so many needs so all the manufactured ones are taken out. (Guatemala participant)

Participants emphasized potential communal/individual level solutions pathways such as ensuring everyone's basic needs were met, building stronger relationships and fostering community cohesion/social connectivity (e.g. through the creation of more shared social spaces for interaction), and decreasing how much we consume so as to reduce pressures on the environment and live more in balance with the natural world. In essence, they were making the case for changing the way we humans value one another and the natural environment to better reflect lives of solidarity rather than competition and consumerism. To do this, however, meant also opening ourselves up to change and taking the time to educate ourselves and others on how to live more sustainably and be overall better citizens to one another and to the earth (in other words, eco-citizens). A Spain/Morocco participant's perceptions on contributing factors to sustainability/SWB embodies this sentiment:

Probably just being receptive to change and adapting to make yourself the best citizen in every sense. Like reducing your waste or educating others on the benefits of nature. You know just all the categories of sustainability, being aware of each one and trying to support and share that education with others.

(Spain/Morocco participant)

Acting as a bridge between the communal/individual and systemic levels, participants also proposed nurturing personal and social development through opportunities like education, meaningful employment, civic engagement, and the like.

These solutions pathways could be seen as shifting the focus away from economic growth and toward building human/social capital. This is very much in line with the kind of “freedom-based” approach to sustainable development for which Sen (2013, p.10) advocates²¹. As previously discussed, the solutions framings of the Spain/Morocco participants emphasized these personal and social development solutions pathways, which they perceived as leading priorities for sustainable development among Moroccans. In this case, the shifting of norms/values had the added dimension of targeting gender inequality by relying on education, employment and related opportunities as tools for women’s empowerment. Additionally, participants perceived of the promotion of local businesses and economies as a mechanism for facilitating what one Guatemala participant referred to as more “circular flow of resources” and in turn foster more “resilient” and “self-reliant” people and communities. The Guatemala participants mentioned several examples of the latter in the form of family or small-scale agriculture. They considered these locally-embedded farms as much-needed alternatives to the large-scale industrial farms and other corporations that hold monopolies over the global food system, not to mention the local food systems of Guatemala. Every Brazil participant explicitly cited the Landless Workers Movement (MST) community they visited as a prime example of these different solutions pathways coming together in support of sustainability/SWB. The following impassioned quotes are from two separate Brazil participants relating their perceptions of the MST and what it was like for them to bear witness to such an extraordinary example of sustainability/SWB in action, in a massive urban city-region like São Paulo no less.

MST ... was like a really beautiful example of ... what we can accomplish together.

And like the feeling that it created...inside me, and I think inside other people,

²¹ See discussion of this “freedom-based” approach in previous chapters of this manuscript..

was ... just like you could feel the human connection....because I mean ... they've lived it. They are living a sustainable life and it's due in a huge part to their connection to other people and their connection to their land. (Brazil participant)

[referring to the MST] But the effect of seeing those things actually happen, seeing...people actually operating outside of a capitalist mindset, really hit home. That it was possible. It was, like people did it. People actually got out of this and lived these beautiful, happy sustainable lives with their cows, and their chickens, and stuff off on the hillsides of São Paulo. I had never even thought about that....I guess I didn't realize that I wasn't able to really conceptualize what a world outside of capitalism would be until I saw it [in Brazil]. And then was like, "Holy shit. This is happening. They're doing it. Oh my God. Cry tears of joy. (Brazil participant)

Embedded in these solutions framing perspectives shared by the Brazil participants is a sense of hope in the possibility of other communities and cultures being capable of embracing similar alternative pathways for sustainability/SWB. Taken together, these examples of solutions pathways for shifting norms/values can be seen as alternative mechanisms for counteracting the global development paradigm and its underlying economic rationality. The kinds of alternative solutions pathways conveyed by participants point to another overarching theme—facilitating context-specific, local/bottom-up (i.e. grassroots) approaches to change.

The two remaining overarching solutions themes—facilitating context-specific, local/bottom-up approaches to change, and seeking understanding/empathy—are fundamentally linked. For participants, facilitating sustainable solutions pathways that are context-specific and driven by and for the local communities, especially those most

impacted by sustainability/SWB problems, ultimately depends upon building a foundation of understanding/empathy. At the most basic level, developing a deeper understanding and being able to empathize with the lived realities (including their perceptions and values) of others requires engaging on the ground and communicating with those who may be different from ourselves.

Hong Kong, Spain/Morocco, and Brazil participants posited the more traditional participatory approaches as one potential solutions pathway. They saw participatory approaches that enable multi-level action and communication as a possible way to foster understanding/empathy while simultaneously bridging the power divide between decision-makers (e.g. government officials, business executives, other institutional leaders) and the local communities and individual actors. A participant captures this when speaking about advancing change in Morocco:

...I think it's just a marriage of both [the community and policy scale] that need to be addressed...they need to listen to the community, the policymakers, and then the community needs to voice their opinions too. There needs to be communication there to make change that everyone will be happy with....

[Participant later continues]There should be work on every level towards it. It's kind of the goal that if you really want to see change you can't just leave it up to one person. I mean sustainability itself is very interdisciplinary. You want to get the different opinions and the different methods to really make the whole system work....I think that there needs to be a level of support on every level that makes it happen. Because if you constantly have that friction or fighting over something that needs to change then that's not going to get you anywhere.

(Spain/Morocco participant)

The Guatemala participants emphasized more of a co-creation/collaboration approach to context-specific, local/bottom-up solutions pathways. For them, communities of trust based on understanding/empathy were seen as pillars of this co-creation/collaboration approach. Cultivating those communities is not an easy process and takes time, especially when entering a different country or community where there are “so many cultural issues that you don’t understand”, as one Guatemala participant articulated. Beyond time, cultivating communities of trust also demands a certain degree of openness to diversity (of perspectives, values, cultural practices, and pathways for change), and a willingness to embrace vulnerability and humble ourselves to the lived realities of others. In other words, it requires humble engagement. That same Guatemala participant sums up the importance of humble engagement in the following solutions framing reflection:

And so ... it’s sort of this thing where, you know we think we can go in there and just dispense solutions, and that’s not the reality. The reality is you have to go and live with these people, understand what they’re going through, and figure out a way that helps them without creating further harm. (Guatemala participant)

On a more interpersonal level, Hong Kong participants underlined the importance of communicating differences and cultivating understanding/empathy as a way to prevent or overcome conflict and instead “facilitate cooperation”. One participant illustrated this in the example of inequality, what she and others saw as a pervasive issue in Hong Kong:

If everyone can empathize and realize that like the people upstream didn’t like try to intentionally jip the person downstream....And you know, we can communicate our differences and try to help each other out when someone else gets a worse hand of cards, so to speak, then that can facilitate cooperation. (Hong Kong participant)

For Brazil participants, grassroots level change started from collective action within the communities themselves, as was evidenced in the examples they gave of MST and the Amazon riverside communities. That is not to say that grassroots movements like the MST did not have help. In the least, the right kind of socioecological conditions must be in place to create an enabling environment for change to happen. Ultimately, context matters—a perception repeatedly conveyed by participants throughout the four GSS SEL programs/communities. As a Hong Kong participant surmised, “If you get the context wrong or you make assumptions that aren’t true you’re just going to fail. So it’s not like a cookie-cutter solution...” Many other participants echoed these sentiments, including the following participant’s reflection:

...sustainability is not to me anymore a one-size-fits-all solution. Sustainability is local. And it’s hyper-local.... everybody has their own personal view about what sustainability is. And that comes from inside them. And unless you know what’s inside them and what’s going on with them, you can’t make a sustainable solution for them now. (Guatemala participant)

Being on the ground in these different countries and communities helped participants to realize just how important understanding that local context is. This brought many participants to conclude that context-specific and locally driven/bottom-up solutions pathways are essential to sustainability/SWB. As will be discussed below, these overarching solutions framings themes raised significant implications for the shaping of participants’ agency and overall capacity.

Perceived Agency

Indicators of individual and collective agency within the four GSS SEL communities evidenced in two key ways: potential/intended agency and realized agency of participants. Themes indicating potential/intended agency (individual and collective)

were best expressed in the participants' responses to questions such as the following: "Who do you think should take action" to address sustainable wellbeing concerns?²² What role do you see yourself playing in addressing sustainable wellbeing concerns? Responses to these questions brought to light participants' "awareness of responsibility" (individual and/or collective) to effect change in support of T-pathways to sustainability/SWB—a key indicator of "norm activation" (Schwartz, 1977). In the process, responses also shed light on participants' justifications for how, why, and/or when people should take action, adding greater depth to their problem/solutions framings.

In considering who should take action, by far the dominant perspective spanning all four GSS SEL communities was that "everyone" can/should be involved in addressing sustainable wellbeing concerns. On a fundamental level, those issuing this broad-spanning call-to-action wanted to believe that we all have something we can contribute in support of sustainability/SWB, we all have "a role to play" and "can work better, work towards where we need to be" (Brazil participant). Participants evidencing this hopeful, positive can-do attitude made the case for power in "every day action and efforts", especially from those who had the "drive" to make a difference (Spain/Morocco participant). On a deeper level, participants saw taking action in support of sustainability/SWB as a "necessity" for some, mainly those whose own SWB was compromised or lacking in some way (e.g. lacking in basic needs/resources, or overall happiness). This necessity is captured in the following Brazil participant's response to who should take action: "Anybody who ... doesn't have wellbeing. Anybody who is not happy. Personal responsibility I guess."

²² The quoted section of this question, "Who do you think should take action", is derived from Kelly & Abel, 2012, p. 6. The study presented in the article helped to inform several interview questions utilized in this GSS case study.

Beyond taking “personal responsibility” for one’s own SWB, several participants contended there exists a “moral imperative” for all who are able to take responsibility for the sustainability/SWB concerns of others and the world around them (Brazil participant). Participants falling into this camp exhibited an apparent social justice attitude indicative of a social-altruistic orientation that appeared to be associated with their critical perspectives of injustices they saw as major barriers to sustainability/SWB. Taken together, these could be considered important indicators of both critical eco-consciousness and norm activation among participants who held this “moral imperative” framing. The following quote illustrates the moral/justice tenets quite vividly:

It should be on—people’s grief, and their misery, and their stress—that should be on the hands of those people making these international trade agreements....Like, people are dying. Like really ... we could be talking about death. Like that death of somebody’s life worth living, that should be on the hands of the family. It should be on the hand of the employer that’s not paying them a fair wage so they can’t support their family. Or the fact that an American or Canadian company came in and wiped out the local agriculture and so then all the dads had to migrate. And it should be on the hands of the non-profit workers who are working hard but not enough, or they’re not doing it right, and they’re not asking the community. It should be on the hands of everybody. (Guatemala participant)

This participant further explained that embedded within this collective responsibility of everyone to address the suffering and injustices that undermine sustainability/SWB is the responsibility to ensure that the needs and values and perspectives of those most impacted on the ground are not only met but are driving the course of solutions pathways to sustainability/SWB. The participant indicated that “...if you’re going in with a mission and you’re not asking the community if that’s appropriate and that’s what they

need, then you're failing them" (Guatemala participant). In this way, the participant was not only enlisting all of us as change agents, but demanding accountability for the decision-making and action we take as change agents.

This notion of accountability to communities surfaced in another recurring potential/intended agency theme—action should be community-driven/community-based. This theme was both a dimension of the perspectives shared by those who felt everyone should take action, as well as a stand-alone theme among a subset of participants, mainly from the Guatemala SEL community, who were more hesitant to enlist just anyone as change agents. For those in the “everyone” camp, a select group of Hong Kong, Spain/Morocco, and Brazil participants qualified their response by stressing the role of community engagement/grassroots level efforts and the need for government support of such efforts. Interestingly, this perspective was framed around the idea of policy change as a mechanism for sustainability/SWB solutions pathways. For example, one Hong Kong participant viewed “community engagement” as “one of the pillars of a successfully implemented sustainable policy...” and indicated that it was the responsibility of government to ensure that “everyone is fully engaged and has access to the right channels to be educated on any and all topics relating to common wellbeing and sustainable development of the place they live in.”

Others who did not fall into the “everyone” camp explicitly felt that local communities were the ones who should be driving action pathways for sustainability/SWB. Though they acknowledged that this might necessitate involvement from external actors as collaborative partners in such efforts, these participants were quite critical of prevailing approaches in sustainability and related work whereby external actors relegated to positions of power or authority (e.g. researchers, non-profits/NGOs, institutional representatives from various public and private sectors)

presume to know how best to solve sustainability problems in communities or contexts different from their own. Participants saw this as resulting in “expert”-derived prescriptive solutions being imposed on communities without bothering to include them in the solutions creation process, let alone doing the necessary work to first develop a deeper level understanding of the situations and the people/cultures living those realities. In these participants’ minds, such approaches were destined to fail. Guatemala and Spain/Morocco participants were especially critical of this phenomenon dominating the international sustainability/sustainable development sphere. Guatemala participants even cited direct examples from Guatemala in how and why such solutions approaches would at best be ineffective, and at worst create more harm for the communities whose sustainability/SWB those solutions were meant to improve. For that reason, participants who held this critical perspective made the case for more of an “inward to outward movement” action approach (Guatemala participant). Additionally, the participants stressed that any external partners engage in collaborative partnerships based on trust relationships and understanding/empathy of the local communities with whom they are working in support of sustainability/SWB.

Finally, there was a subset of participants in each of the SEL communities who felt that action depends heavily on context such as the scale or location of the problem/solution. There were two key dimensions of this theme: localized problems/local scale, and global problems/global scale. Participants felt that local problems, especially those more personal to a culture or community, are best addressed by local communities and people from that local culture who are most impacted, not outsiders. For example, a Hong Kong participant talked about the need for family planning to help address issues stemming from overpopulation in Hong Kong. While personally interested in that area of work, the participant felt that was an area best

addressed by the local community. This participant felt it was not their place, their “sphere of influence”, to be working on something so personal an issue as population control when “not part of this culture that they [Hong Kong people] have.” This resonates with those more critical perspectives expressed in the community-driven/community-based theme. In terms of global problems (e.g. climate change), participants saw them as potentially demanding global action and/or a series of joint local or multi-level actions. On whole, the themes emerging in participants’ perspectives of whose responsibility it is to take action to address sustainability/SWB concerns evidenced a strong favoring of collective action, indicating perceived/intended collective agency among participants in each of the GSS SEL communities.

Unsurprisingly, perceived/intended individual agency was far more prominent in the participants’ considerations of the roles they felt they could play in addressing sustainability/SWB concerns. However, the multitude of roles tended to exemplify elements of working with others in a collective capacity—be they student mentees, fellow team members of an organization or institution of employment, or entire communities. One notable exception was a Hong Kong participant who, speaking from a framing of SWB as personal self-care and happiness, felt her role at that point in time needed to be on prioritizing that in her own life. This stemmed from feelings as though she had neglected self-care due, in part, to personal and external societal pressures such as feeling the need to self-sacrifice and do more as an “advocate for the planet” when there are so many people with far less in this world.

When considering the emergent role categories that represented intended/potential agency themes, several participants saw themselves as “front-lines” actors working on the ground to investigate sustainability/SWB problems and/or seek out and implement solutions. Some intriguing and unique examples included urban

farming (Brazil participant), community engagement in public policy (Hong Kong participant), women's education and empowerment (Spain/Morocco participant), and community development through sustainable landscaping (Guatemala participant). Others saw themselves more in facilitator roles, working to build the capacities of those involved in creating solutions—be they individuals, communities, institutions, and so forth. These facilitator roles included knowledge-resource agents, educators/awareness-raisers, and facilitators of transformation. Oftentimes the facilitator roles participants imagined for themselves blurred the lines between the two categories, especially when it came to facilitating transformations. These facilitator roles also tended to be of greater interest to participants, representing three of the most dominant role themes spanning the GSS SEL communities.

The knowledge-resource agent theme combined those participants who were interested in the kind of knowledge-application roles one might expect sustainability students to consider. For example, some participants saw themselves applying their skills as a researcher—skills harnessed, put to the test, and in most cases enhanced during each of the GSS SEL programs—to investigate problems and gather diverse sustainability knowledges in service of generating sustainability solutions. For example, a Guatemala participant was planning to contribute to an initiative aimed at gathering traditional/indigenous knowledges related to sustainability from around the world as resources for sustainability solutions pathways. Others saw their roles as contributing their own specialized sustainability-related knowledges (e.g. systems thinking, futures thinking, ecology, conservation, etc.) to the service of communities, organizations, or other partners and places of work. On the resource end of this knowledge-resource agent theme were those who considered roles as facilitators of human access to opportunities or resources that would improve sustainability/SWB. For example, a Hong Kong

participant was interested in facilitating access for families and communities to reproductive education and family planning services. On a broader scale, a Brazil participant felt compelled to ensure the equitable “distribution of resources and...access to sustainable development” for all people regardless of factors such as their race, gender, or sexual orientation. “Just ensuring that access is continually thought about, and continually thought about to include everyone” (Brazil participant).

Another dominant role category representing participants from each of the GSS SEL communities was that of educator/awareness-raiser. This role category included a series of dimensions. There were participants who saw themselves as educating/raising awareness of those actors working “on the front-lines” of sustainability/SWB—the people who were open and ready to learn and who sought to be on the ground and directly a part of solutions efforts. Part of this might entail preparing those actors for “what they’re getting into” and helping them “to create strategies that are useful and have positive outcomes....” (Guatemala participant). Another important dimension participants noted in this educator/awareness-raiser role was generating connections and understanding between diverse peoples, communities, and cultures. This was especially important to ensure that those front-line actors who would be engaging with or in communities and cultures different from their own would start from a place of understanding/empathy. But it was also seen as a way to use the “power of narrative” to “bridge” the divides of difference. As a Brazil participant put it, “I try to be a bridge between people that want to tell their story and people that are wanting to listen. Because I think the power of personal narrative is just fantastic.” The last key dimension of this educator/awareness-raiser theme was focused on raising one’s own and others’ awareness of the need for change, as well as possible solutions pathways for facilitating that change. An important aspect of this involved inward reflection. For instance, one Brazil participant saw part of

her role as helping others come to realize our own privileges and how we are personally implicated in both the problems and solutions of sustainability/SWB. As this Brazil participant so eloquently puts it,

I think it's important, even though it may be hard, to acknowledge how we do benefit and we do suffer from the structures currently in place.... I think that's the only way to analyze the true position of where we are—as a community and as individuals. Because I think it's only when we recognize where we currently are, are we able to change our behavior. (Brazil participant)

The educator/awareness-raiser theme, most especially its last dimension focused on the need for change, is closely connected to another dominant role category—facilitator of transformations. Education/awareness-raising in this sense was seen as a foundation of facilitating transformations. Participants who identified with this role category fell into one of three key dimensions. The first dimension was focused on transforming individual norms/values and actions. The second dimension centered on transforming systems of injustice/inequality as justice advocates for people and planet. This was the most prominent dimension with participants expressing such interests as working with and on behalf of more marginalized populations, or targeting institutions and structures perpetuating systems of inequality. The third dimension revolved around transforming institutionally-embedded ideologies, structures and practices. This dimension could be seen as targeting the roots of the problems of sustainability/SWB. While unique, the Brazil participant who identified most vehemently with this role expressed tremendous concern with the institutional structures and ideologies of sustainability as a field. He saw his own role as interrogating the “biases and assumptions of how sustainability came to be” and how it currently “operates”, including the ways in which the discipline and institutions of sustainability and the higher

education system as a whole are complicit in “espousing the ideology of capitalism” and thus fueling the capitalist paradigm (Brazil participant). This internal inquiry into the field would in turn help determine how sustainability as a discipline, an institution, and an ideology should operate and what adjustments are necessary for leading us on the pathway to “applying true sustainability” (Brazil participant). In this way, the Brazil participant saw his role as acting in response to the need for a “deeper paradigm change,” though what that change would entail exactly was far less clear.

Types of roles aside, there appeared to be strong favoring of local or domestic level involvement among participants, many even expressing a newfound or renewed desire to make a difference in their own communities upon their returns home from their GSS SEL programs. The Guatemala SEL community was a prime example of this, including those who demonstrated a strong desire to eventually work internationally. In fact, most of the Guatemala participants ended up continuing their work with their faculty-lead on the SNfH initiative by enrolling in the Fall 2015 course which implemented the same framework in the local Tempe, AZ context. Nonetheless, there was still a sizeable portion of participants across the GSS SEL communities who envisioned international work in their futures, especially those in the Spain/Morocco SEL community. Some participants from each of the GSS SEL communities also showed interest in returning at some point to the host countries where their programs were based in a professional or personal capacity.

The prospects of domestic vs. international agency brings to mind an interesting and unexpected contrast in the reactions of two participants from the same program upon their return home from their time abroad. One participant returned emboldened and empowered to fulfill her role as a change agent by pursuing a career pathway in international sustainable development work. Her commitment to this was evidenced

through her intended and realized agency. She shared her plans to spend a year after graduation traveling across Central/South America to expand her understanding of the needs, interests, and perceptions of local communities throughout this region and to explore whether international work is really the best pathway forward. However, her desire to work internationally actually raised in her some cognitive dissonance as she found herself confronted by loved ones over why she was so concerned with other countries when there are plenty of problems that need addressing right ‘in your own backyard’ (as the saying goes). This internal conflict led the participant to devote more of her energy once returning home from the GSS program to connecting with and building stronger bonds within her local communities.²³

This participant’s program impact on international agency was contrasted by another fellow undergraduate participant who had started off the program with a commitment to and past experience in working with international NGOs in the development sphere. However, her experience in the GSS program/community made this participant more critically conscious of the potential negative impacts such international actors working in developing countries can have on local communities. Furthermore, as with most of her fellow SEL community members, this participant became more convinced of the need for solutions pathways that are driven by and for the local communities from the ground up. As a result, she experienced a transformative shift in her perceived/intended agency, completely changing course on her plans to pursue a career in international sustainable development and instead expressing a desire to apply her knowledge and skills locally in the USA.

²³ It was later discovered that this participant did actualize the goal of continuing engagement abroad, having returned to the same country of the GSS program post-graduation to work with local communities through an international partner based in-country.

Beyond the roles they felt they could play in addressing sustainability/SWB concerns, participants also demonstrated interests in becoming involved in action around sustainability/SWB concerns in the future. For some, this meant continuing efforts that they were previously (pre-program) or were currently (post-program) involved in such as active student organizations or volunteer opportunities on campus like the Sustainability Honors Society, J-Street (a “pro-peace”, “pro-human rights” organization as one participant described it), the U.S. Green Building Council student group, the “Zero Waste” group, and the Global Sustainability Network (GSN). The latter was actually responsible for organizing the first annual Global Sustainability Studies Academic Conference in Fall 2015, which was spearheaded by a GSS Summer 2015 participant and engaged an assortment of members from the different GSS Summer 2015 SEL communities as well as other recent GSS program alumni as conference organizers, presenters, and participants. The GSS Academic Conference was also the main pathway through which the Photovoice participant-photographers were able take action post-program. Several participant-photographers contributed a subset of their photographic submissions in photo narrative form to the conference’s opening night featured photography exhibition. This served as a means for the participant-photographers to share their own perceptions of different barriers and contributions to SWB they observed in their host countries, thus using their photo narratives as mechanisms for educating/awareness-raising within the broader university community.

Other participants saw pathways for action in their current and future education and career opportunities. Concerning education, several undergraduate student participants planned to pursue Masters degrees in related fields and talked about how their SEL program experiences helped reaffirm or even change their decisions on where to focus their attentions in such pursuits. Furthermore, a significant portion of the

Masters students, particularly those in the Masters of Sustainability Solutions program in the School of Sustainability, discussed how they planned to integrate aspects of what they learned while abroad or revamp entirely their capstone projects based on their experiences and the connections they made through their SEL programs/communities. Participants also expressed an interest in participating in future GSS and other related SEL programs. Some were already planning on applying for GSS Summer 2016 programs, which had already commenced outreach and recruitment efforts at the time.

These academic and career opportunities served as present and future pathways for participants to fulfill the roles they envisioned for themselves. For example, a Brazil participant was already getting started on her educator/awareness-raiser role through a fellowship offered by the Wrigley Institute that aimed to build the capacities of teachers and academic institutions to integrate sustainability science into K-12 education. In fact, she was working on a video project based on her experiences that she planned to provide as a resource for educators involved in this program. The various student organization and volunteer opportunities helped to foster and nurture community connections among the different GSS SEL community members and those interested in sustainability from the broader university community. Additionally, the academic and career pursuits represented more formal ways for participants to actively apply what they learned and experienced in support of sustainability/SWB. On whole, these examples served as indicators of participants' individual and collective agency (potential/intended and realized) as facilitated through continued engagement post-program.

Realizing Agency and Confronting its Barriers through Engagement: The Sustainability Learning Community Experience

While the above section highlights the intentions and actions of participants post-program, an important pathway for realizing agency was through the SEL community

experience itself. Additional indicators of realized individual and collective agency, as well as potential barriers to agency, were revealed in participants' reflections on their SEL community experiences, mainly through their internal and external SEL community engagement that functioned as knowledge-making and socialization processes in the SEL programs/communities. Rather than rehash the engagement mechanisms and strategies discussed in the previous chapter, this section highlights some key themes of agency as evidenced through notable examples of the three types of engagement associated with the "Transformative Sustainability Learning" framework applied in this study—"cognitive (head), psychomotor (hands), and affective (heart)" (Sipos et al., 2008, p. 69).²⁴

The most notable theme that emerged in their learning community experiences was uniting together in shared understanding. This theme was evidenced through the ways in which participants in each of the SEL programs engaged with both their internal and external SEL communities in knowledge-and-resource exchange. Knowledge-and-resource exchange was the most prominent representation of cognitive (head) engagement that transpired during each of the GSS SEL programs. This form of cognitive engagement occurred through several different strategies, the more customary being the academic activities such as research (individual, group, and community-based), special group projects, presentations by representatives from the external SEL community partners, organized site visits, and so forth that comprised the structured itineraries of each SEL program. While these academic activities are typical to more traditional campus-based courses, what set them apart was the ways in which participants were able to get on the ground, engage, and learn with and from local actors (i.e. SEL community partners) working on sustainability/SWB problems and solutions.

²⁴For a broader breakdown of different engagement mechanisms and strategies used in each of the SEL programs/communities, see the micro-ecologies section in Chapter 4.

As previously discussed, participants' reflections repeatedly stressed the importance of this real-world learning that enabled them to witness firsthand the realities and complexities of sustainability/SWB, and the impacts that sustainability/SWB problems and solutions had on the people, communities and environments in which they lived.

Aside from these academic activities themselves, the most commonplace strategy for knowledge-and-resource exchange were the formal and informal discussions that facilitated participants' processing what they were learning and experiencing with both their internal and external SEL community members. The opportunity to engage in this kind of processing with people who brought such diverse perspectives, values, and lived experiences was considered by participants to be one of the most important aspects of and greatest benefits to living and learning together as members of SEL communities in countries and cultures different from their own. A Spain/Morocco participant speaks to this in reflections on her SEL community experience:

I think having those discussions and being open and understanding of other people was very, very important to the overall experience 'cause people noticed things that I didn't and viewed things differently....And it's important to kind of realize that what you saw is not necessarily the 'truth', it's just what you saw through your filter and your perspective. (Spain/Morocco participant)

Each of the SEL communities incorporated group discussions into their more formal academic activities whenever possible. While participants reported gaining a wealth of knowledge from these more formal activities, many expressed cherishing even more the opportunities to connect with each other and representatives from the external SEL communities on a more personal level. This typically took the form of informal discussions that evolved organically in those precious spaces of unstructured interaction—in-between presentations and tours, during communal meals, while out

exploring the local communities, or in the course of impromptu gatherings back at participants' lodging, the ideal locations for late-night conversations to decompress from overstimulating days.

Somewhat unexpectedly, the long commutes to and from site visits with external SEL community partners turned out to be some of the most fruitful spaces for processing candidly with fellow SEL community members. For example, Brazil participants often took advantage of the lengthy bus rides as they provided a controlled but more intimate setting with time—a scarce resource on such intensive programs—already set aside during which participants could work through their thoughts and feelings more freely with one another on an interpersonal (one-on-one or small group) level while experiences from that day or week were still fresh in their minds. During my participant observation in Brazil, I personally witnessed and engaged in some truly insightful and powerful discussions with student participants, faculty/staff leads, and even external SEL community partners who joined us for the long commutes. These bus rides at times served as “safe spaces” for the participants to share with me and each other more personal perspectives, feelings, values, histories, and other aspects that made up their “complex personhood” as one Brazil participant put it, aspects of themselves that they may have otherwise felt uncomfortable sharing with the larger group as a whole. Regardless of when or where they took place, the formal and informal discussions were one of the primary engagement strategies revealed that supported participants in digesting and processing their experiences—something several participants expressed wishing there had been more of both during and following their time abroad.

Another related but distinct engagement strategy that demonstrated realized collective agency was the group check-ins facilitated by the faculty/staff leads. The informal group check-ins provided a supportive communal environment for participants

to process and more fully express how what they were witnessing, doing, and learning each day was impacting them not only mentally, but physically and emotionally as well. In this way, the check-ins also represented a strategy for affective (heart) engagement. These tended to take place in more intimate settings with just the internal SEL community, providing participants additional opportunities to come together as a group for more personal reflections. While informal discussions were a typical component of such check-ins, faculty/staff leads at times utilized other strategies for helping participants connect with what they were thinking and feeling. For example, the Brazil SEL community engaged in meditation facilitated by their faculty-lead during one of the check-ins while they were on their boat tour of the Amazon.

Another agency theme related to that of uniting together in shared understanding was communal bonding through connectivity and support. The aforementioned knowledge-and-resource sharing strategies no doubt contributed to communal bonding by virtue of generating that shared understanding, which instilled in participants a greater openness and willingness to embrace diverse communities and cultures and strive to better understand the different perspectives, values/priorities, and pathways for change they bring. This in turn generated a deeper sense of trust—a pillar of communal bonding—within the internal SEL communities and between the internal and external SEL communities. This agency theme is one of the clearest representations of affective (heart) engagement in action. Some engagement strategies integrated into the SEL program/community designs and facilitation styles of their faculty/staff leads directly and indirectly encouraged communal bonding. For example, the non-academic group activities such as hikes along nature pathways interspersed throughout Hong Kong and through the Amazon rainforest of Brazil, a camel trek across the Sahara Desert in Morocco, and the reflective time spent in the tranquil Lake Atitlán in Guatemala were all

planned engagement opportunities that facilitated communal bonding. As one participant described, “There was a lot of love and family, and just taking care of each other that was happening in Lake Atitlán,” which this participant considered to be “the most beautiful place ever.” An important feature that each of those examples have in common is the ways in which they enabled participants to connect with one another and the local communities, while simultaneously connecting participants with the natural world. Additional engagement strategies for communal bonding included sharing communal meals with internal and external SEL community members, visiting the homes and neighborhoods of local residents (e.g. Guatemala home visits during their surveying; Brazil visit to a favela informal community), and participating in cultural or community activities (e.g. going to museums or on city tours, attending community festivals, exploring the marketplaces).

These engagement opportunities appeared to be some of the most impactful experiences that participants reflected on during their interviews, evoking in them both positive and negative affective reactions. The positive affective responses of participants were expressed in participants feeling a sense of love, support, trust, connectivity, reciprocity, and understanding/empathy within and between members of their internal and external SEL communities. The strongest example of this was the incredible communal bonds that formed within the Guatemala SEL community. Every Guatemala participant spoke about their SEL community experience with a great deal of warmth and affection, referring to their SEL community as a family. To the Guatemala participants, this family emerged partially as a result of several orchestrated factors such as the choice of the program’s central theme of happiness and the co-creation of solutions engagement approach utilized in their research. Both of these factors were fully embraced by participants, along with the egalitarian and empathetic facilitation style of

the faculty/staff leads, which included thoughtful planning to foster a community built on trust, shared values, and collaborative teamwork. As a Guatemala participant described it, “You know, everything about Guatemala was just kind of individually picked to promote this family dynamic....By the end of it, even the bus driver was our best friend....It was great. I sat with him every day.” Examples of the strategic planning included having participants take “different personality and ... leadership tests” to help determine such things as room assignments and group partnerships for their research efforts based on how well they would work and support one another (Guatemala participant). Furthermore, the participants felt the biggest turning points in their journey, the moments that really brought them all together so closely, were when they faced and had to overcome adversity and vulnerability together. The most striking of these was when a participant got injured early in the trip, suffering a lot of pain and becoming somewhat incapacitated. Participants shared how everyone came together to help this individual through this and other struggles, bringing them closer as a family.

[Referring to a fellow SEL community member’s injury] ...we came together to help them and make that person feel better, and ... we came together ... as more of a family than anything....the hardships didn’t matter; we were happy. And I think I saw that multiple times throughout. Where despite whatever hardship someone was facing, if they had a social group or people around them that were focused on helping them and each other ... they would be able to weather whatever was thrown at them. (Guatemala participant)

The Guatemala SEL community was not the only one where stories of supporting one another through points of personal and collective adversity emerged. These affective engagement experiences during periods of adversity point to another important agency theme that was interlinked with the engagement mechanisms and strategies already

discussed—facing and embracing vulnerability. The most powerful in terms of evoking affective responses from participants were often engagement wherein participants were confronted with physical, emotional, and even cognitive vulnerabilities. The injury that the Guatemala participant underwent was an example of physical vulnerability. Other examples included less debilitating situations such as having to be cautious of the contaminated water, undergoing digestive distress from consuming food their bodies were not used to handling, feeling tired and drained from the jam-packed schedules, going on intense hikes in challenging environments (e.g. hiking in the humidity of Hong Kong, or through the wilds of the rainforest in Brazil), and so forth. Emotional vulnerability was perhaps the most striking and directly related to affective engagement. Examples of emotional vulnerability ranged from homesickness (common in international programs, especially for those with less travel experience), disconnection from/conflict with fellow SEL community members, being overwhelmed by the sheer intensity of the program itineraries, feeling fearful or constricted in not being able to explore the local communities on their own (larger issue for females, particularly in Spain/Morocco due to cultural norms), to becoming shocked, disturbed, or outraged by the problems and their impacts on the local communities/environments in which they were engaging.

The participants' affective responses to becoming aware of the kinds of problems and impacts facing the local communities and their environments are illustrated in the following examples. Guatemala participants talked about feeling concerned for the health of the young children swimming in contaminated water. One Guatemala participant expressed an intense discomfort when their SEL community visited the home of a more impoverished Guatemalan family with a social worker, only to find a young girl home alone who he described as seeming “abandoned by the greater society—someone

whose been marginalized and doesn't see a way out of that". The favela visit in Brazil, a community where poverty was fierce and residents experienced compromised access to basic human rights, was definitely an emotionally-charged experience for Brazil participants. These affective responses were quite apparent during the participant observation period as well. Similarly, the Spain/Morocco visit to the remote school where participants hauled in water resources on foot for the water insecure community was troubling and eye-opening for participants. Additionally, as previously mentioned, several Hong Kong participants were frustrated by the extreme trash problem and the seeming lack of concern for or action to address it, and others were struck by the living conditions of those Hong Kong residents with multiple families overflowing a single, tiny room of an apartment.

Cognitive vulnerability evidenced among participants in three primary ways. Several participants, especially those at the undergraduate level, shared how they felt intimidated by the knowledge and experience that their fellow SEL community members brought. Others felt cognitively vulnerable in entering their host countries and communities without a solid foundation of knowledge and understanding of the local cultures, communities, and the problems they faced. This was especially a concern for the Hong Kong community, who had to develop and present to the public their urban policy solutions in a very short time-span. In some cases, the Hong Kong participants felt as though they had no business creating these policy solutions as outsiders with incomplete knowledge and understanding. Finally, participants felt cognitively vulnerable in not having the language proficiency to more fully engage and communicate with their external SEL community partners. This was not always an issue with the more formal partnerships where representatives typically had some fluency in English or there was someone who could translate. For example, while the Hong Kong program brought

together the Hong Kong students with the American students as co-learners throughout, the program was still conducted mostly in English. In Brazil where English fluency is actually not as commonplace, there were multiple translators traveling with the Brazil SEL community for the duration of their journey, including the faculty-lead who had a high proficiency in Portuguese. Where it was most problematic was in how it limited participants ability to connect on a more informal level with the local community and gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives.

Finally, the agency theme of applying knowledge was demonstrated in the psychomotor (hands) engagement strategies, which often overlapped with and reinforced the cognitive (head) engagement strategies. The most apparent of the psychomotor engagement strategies was the research and group projects that participants completed while in country. For example, Guatemala participants conducted group-based, collective research and outreach through surveys/interviews to gather info on the current state of Guatemalan communities and consider what changes can be made to improve happiness/SWB within those communities. These research efforts that were carried out over the course of the program were an essential part of the project-based, co-created knowledge/solutions goal of the Guatemala SEL program/community. Though the Guatemala SEL community did collectively translate their research into a final report that they produced at the end of the program, the participants perceived the purpose of their research to be more about understanding the local perspectives and lived experiences of Guatemalans than on knowledge acquisition in the traditional sense. Collective research engagement strategies in the form of group projects were also integrated into the Hong Kong (e.g. the policy proposals that were the focus of their program and co-created with the Hong Kong City U students) and the Brazil SEL programs/communities (e.g. small group projects carried out over brief

periods in collaboration with local Brazilian university students). Each of these represent demonstrations of potential/intended and realized collective agency.

In contrast to the collective research engagement strategies, the Spain/Morocco SEL community placed more importance on individualized research endeavors that integrated a comparative historical lens. The benefit of the latter was that it enabled a more diverse range of topics and sustainable development issues to be explored and discussed within the Spain/Morocco SEL community and imbued in each Spain/Morocco participant a sense of personal ownership and agency over the project. However, the Spain/Morocco SEL program's independent research model seemed to require less intensive engagement and lacked the same emphasis on shared responsibility and complementary skill-sets—important contributors to collective agency—that a co-creative research approach can offer. For example, though Spain/Morocco participants were originally encouraged to utilize time spent on the ground in Spain and Morocco for enhancing their information/data gathering, the extent to which they were able to take advantage of engaging local Spaniards and/or Moroccans directly in their research (e.g. as sources of information and/or formal and informal feedback) were constrained by several factors, including a packed itinerary, language barriers, feelings of personal agency (e.g. limitations for females based on unequal gender cultural norms in Morocco; membership in a large foreign group with “outsider” status), and a shortage of access to those more directly related to their topics. Even the faculty-lead, who has a long history of engagement in Morocco, noted that authentic, interpersonal interaction with local Moroccan communities is more difficult for foreign groups. Viewed by local communities as “outsiders”, some Spain/Morocco participants felt the need to interact and ask questions with caution. As a result, these participants came to rely more heavily on their personal observations, which they shared internally

and through their research and other program work (e.g. sustainability photo project), for formulating their knowledges and understandings of Spain and Morocco. Thus, it appeared as though the independent research model put more onus on individual agency of participants to seek out and generate moments or spaces for collective agency than what might otherwise occur more naturally in a co-creation research engagement model such as that utilized in the explicitly community-based research conducted by the Guatemala SEL community.

Another significant opportunity for psychomotor engagement that facilitated applying knowledge as well as fostering understanding/empathy was the Photovoice project's photo assignment that participant-photographers carried out during their programs, along with smaller-scale photo assignments that GSS faculty/staff leads had already built into their program designs. Both the Spain/Morocco and Guatemala programs had a photo/video-based assignment. The Spain/Morocco program's assignment related closely with the Photovoice project in that it asked participants to capture some representation of sustainability and development in those countries and reflect on how sustainability and development are conceptualized in different "cultural and national contexts" (S/M May-June 2015 Course Syllabus,). Similarly, several Walton Scholars were charged with documentarian roles during their programs. This was in fulfillment of the scholar recipients' "Walton Project" obligations they had to complete "before, during, or after the course, to ensure that they share their research and insights with the ASU community" (GSS Program Initiative, 2015, Official "Global Sustainability Scholars Class of 2015" scholars profile and thank you book). Such roles included serving as designated photographer/videographer for their programs, generating a series of blog posts about their experiences, and

Each of the themes exemplified through the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor engagement mechanisms and strategies that unfolded during the GSS SEL programs serve as key indicators of agency in its various forms. The knowledge-resource sharing engagement mechanism and its multitude of strategies facilitated participants' individual and collective realized agency by fostering shared understanding of one another and of the external communities in which they engaged, while simultaneously contributing to communal building and support. The affective engagement, especially when evoking vulnerability, appeared to have some of the most influential impacts on participants' agency during and post-program. These experiences were deeply revealing of participants' personal and collective strengths and weaknesses—the strengths signifying potential/intended and realized agency, and the weaknesses signifying potential barriers to agency. The physical, emotional, and cognitive vulnerabilities participants disclosed pushed their boundaries in ways that while not always favorable or pleasant in the moment, nonetheless proved to have a positive impact on participants' agency during and post-program. Coming to terms with their own strengths and weaknesses—not to mention their values/priorities and perception—facilitated participants' realized agency through a growth in self-awareness, recognizing aspects of themselves they favored and those that they felt could be changed or improved upon in their own lives. Furthermore, being able to face, cope with and overcome (or at least survive) challenges they never would have thought possible instilled in several participants a sense of empowerment. Participants reported increased self-confidence as they realized their own capabilities and limitations, and this led some to become more open to pushing those boundaries even further in the future. Even those who struggled to embrace and cope with their vulnerability found such experiences to be worthwhile in the end, if for nothing else then preparing them for how better to respond to similar

situations in the future. Finally, these affective engagement experiences revealed to participants just how important community connectivity and support is to their own capacities in times of adversity and vulnerability, once again pointing to potential/intended collective agency.

The vulnerabilities also represented constricted agency when they functioned as barriers instead of contributors to shared understanding/empathy, communal building and support, and applied knowledge. For example, cognitive vulnerability at times constricted participants' agency by causing them to not want to voice their opinions or share their perspectives out of fear that they were inferior to their more knowledgeable and experienced peers, or that lacked sufficient knowledge and understanding of local cultures and communities to contribute anything valuable. This in turn could create barriers for developing personal connections with fellow SEL community members, as well as prevent participants from revealing their own perspectives and values in ways that might have further enhanced shared understanding/empathy within their SEL communities. It became clear that those who had developed strong support networks through connections with members of their SEL communities were better able to embrace and overcome their vulnerable experiences. This applied to those who at least had established a trust relationship with at least one other person in their internal SEL, but the stronger the collective whole (e.g. the Guatemala "family"), the more effective this coping mechanism was at overcoming individual and collective vulnerabilities.

In addition to the barriers to agency that were revealed in the participants' reflections on their engagement experiences and overall SEL program/community experiences, the participants also identified potential barriers to them fulfilling the roles they envisioned for themselves. The barriers to agency themes that emerged as participants considered the roles they could play in addressing sustainability/SWB

concerns further revealed participants personal self-awareness as well as the ways in which their own agencies are shaped by external socioecological forces and vice-versa. Additional personal barriers identified by participants included the following: financial insecurity; feeling a lack of “political efficacy”; a shift in values/priorities due to changes in life circumstances; doubt/uncertainty/fear of the unknown (in self or what the future holds); difficulty finding and obtaining professional development and career opportunities; lacking necessary skills, knowledge, or understanding/empathy; and becoming discouraged to the point of giving up/losing hope (e.g. feeling overwhelmed and “disheartened” by the gravity of the problems, becoming frustrated by a “lack of success”, experiencing burnout from too little attention to “self-care”). Being aware of these potential personal barriers can help participants take active steps to either prevent or overcome them should these turn into constrictions on their agency that would stand in the way of them fulfilling their aspiring roles in service of sustainability/SWB.

Socioecological forces identified as potentially creating barriers to participants’ agency included the following: cultural and societal norms antagonistic to sustainability; complexity of the problems/solutions at stake; pressures from family, friends or society at large (e.g. to push beyond one’s own limits or to choose alternative career pathways); inadequate financial resources; lack of societal education/awareness and/or understanding/empathy (of sustainability/SWB concerns and the need for change); ineffective communication mechanisms; corruption of those in power; resistance to change from individuals, communities, institutions, or the broader socioecological systems and structures; political conflicts, incapacities, or restrictions (e.g. too much “red tape”); and the constraints of limited time. Bringing to the forefront both the personal and socioecological potential barriers to agency can also be informative for working with participants post-program on developing coping mechanisms that would

improve their potential/intended agency and overall long-term capacity. These also guide the development of SEL program engagement strategies that could enable participants to confront potential barriers in the more controlled setting of an SEL program and serve as an additional mechanism for capacity building.

Conclusion: Links to Research Questions and Objectives

Presenting the synthesized values, perceptions, and perceived agency themes and associated engagement strategies in this way illustrates some of the intricacies and interconnectedness of the psychosocial dimensions and knowledge-making and socialization processes that emerged within the Summer 2015 GSS SEL programs/communities (See Figure 4 for a summary of value, perceptions, agency and engagement themes highlighted in this chapter). Bringing these elements to the forefront is an essential first step in responding to the main research questions of this study and beginning to identify factors that may or may not contribute to participants' capacities to serve as global eco-citizens in support of plural transformation pathways for sustainable wellbeing (satisfying research objectives 1 and 2)²⁵. The next culminating chapter brings the findings from this and the previous chapter together in a discussion of key factors indicating potentiality for global eco-citizenship and their implications for devising future related SEL programs and research grounded in a transformative sustainability experiential learning capacity building model.

²⁵ For a full list of this empirical study's research questions and objectives, see Chapter 3.

Figure 4. Highlights of Findings from Thematic Analyses

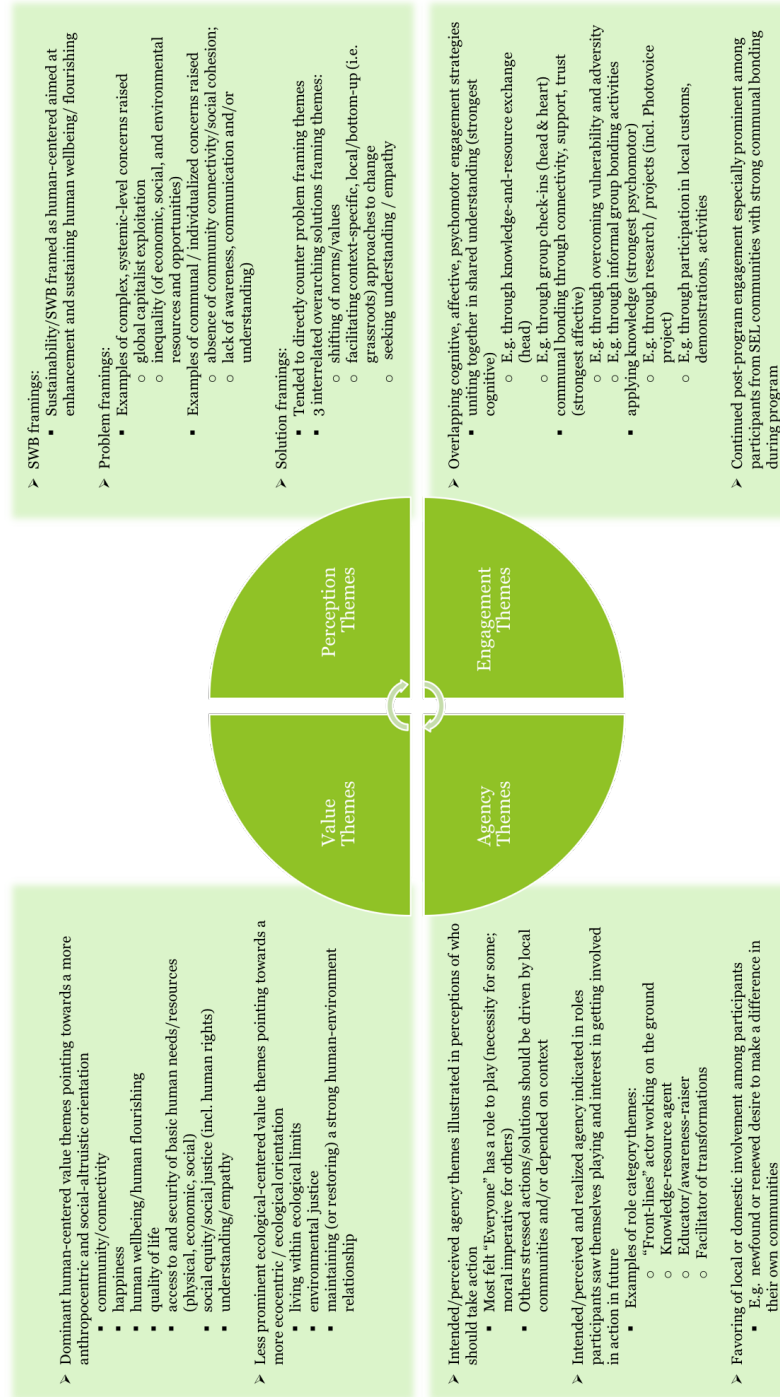


Figure 4 shows highlights from thematic analyses of core thematic categories (values, perceptions, agency, engagement) discussed in this chapter. Note: This compilation of examples is not an exhaustive list of themes or findings.

CHAPTER 6

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: FROM RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES TO IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

This concluding chapter expands upon the previous chapter's findings and discussion in an effort to demonstrate the implications this research has for tackling the “wicked” sustainability challenges that are exacerbated by the dominant sustainable development paradigm. By highlighting connections between participants' values, perceptions, and agency, and the knowledge-making and socialization processes that unfolded in the GSS SEL programs/communities, this chapter is an empirically-grounded response to the first of two framing questions that guided this study: How can capacity for “opening up” (Leach et al., 2010) plural transformation pathways be understood through the examination of participants' values, perceptions, and perceived agency for eco-citizenship? Furthermore, by linking the connections to potentiality for eco-citizenship and concerns for long-term capacity building, this chapter—and the dissertation as a whole—provides some initial understanding of the role that SEL programs like the GSS can potentially play in opening up, (or perhaps obstructing) alternative pathways for social change (responding to the second framing question of this study). This provides a starting point on which to build future research and offers some initial insight on pathways forward for programmatic design that could better catalyze transformative capacity building through transformative sustainability learning. In short, this chapter is about answering the quintessential question in any study, “So what?”

This chapter begins with a summary of the findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5 and discusses what these findings reveal about potentiality for eco-citizenship and transformative sustainability learning as articulated in the Transformation Pathways to Sustainable Wellbeing (T-Pathways to SWB) Framework. This feeds into a reflection on

the implications the Global Sustainability Studies (GSS) case study has for short- and long-term transformative capacity building for global ecological citizenship (eco-citizenship) in support of plural T-pathways to SWB.

The focus then shifts to practical recommendations for SEL programmatic development and implementation that could potentially better facilitate the opening up of pathways for a transformative sustainability learning paradigm shift. At the cornerstone of these recommendations is an evolving vision for a strategic SEL-based transformative capacity building initiative for global eco-citizenship. These proposed recommendations represent the “applied” or “use-inspired” dimension of this research, serving as the culminating contributions of this this dissertation project.

Finally, Chapter 6 concludes with a discussion on implications for future research. This section presents lessons learned from practicing reflexivity throughout this research process by offering suggestions on how to better improve upon and/or adapt this study’s design in future related work.

Summary of Key Findings and their Implications for Capacity Building for Eco-Citizenship: A Response to Main Research Questions (1-3) and Objectives (1-2)

Considerations of Potentiality for Eco-Citizenship

Indicators of Critical ecological consciousness-raising and norm activation. When considering the values/value orientations (principles or priorities), perceptions (problem/solution framings; SWB framings), and perceived agency (potential/intended, realized, or constrained agency), participants of the GSS SEL programs/communities as a whole do appear to evidence signs of critical ecological consciousness-raising (eco-consciousness) and norm activation, albeit to varying degrees. Participants’ critical thinking/questioning expressed through their problem/solution framings most clearly demonstrated eco-consciousness. Those

evidencing eco-consciousness tended to make explicit connections between problems they learned about or witnessed firsthand in their host countries and socioecological injustices stemming from socially-embedded systemic or institutionalized structures, norms, and practices. A prime example of this was the systemic-level problem framings showing participants critical thinking applied to the negative repercussions of the global development and capitalist paradigms.

Eco-consciousness was also demonstrated through participants critical thinking/questioning of how their own values, decision-making and action, as well as those of their wider communities and countries as a whole, can and does impact communities around the world, including those with whom they engaged during their GSS SEL programs. Particularly telling in this regard were participants' critical reflections on the negative repercussions of top-down, prescriptive solutions approaches often employed in government and institutions, or by "experts" from sustainability, development, policy, and related fields. The strongest indicators of this were found in participants' critical reflections on who should take action to address sustainability/SWB concerns, potential barriers to agency, and the associations they made in their problem/solution framings between threats to sustainability/SWB driven by what could be categorized as socioecological injustices to sociocultural factors such as consumption- and competition-driven culture or individualized society (e.g. pervasive inequality, abuse of human rights, resource insecurity due to marginalization and/or poverty, and exploitation of humans and the environment). In short, participants did evidence signs of context-driven critical thinking/questioning of sustainability/SWB problems and solutions, and their underlying causes, as well as local and global critical awareness of consequences to individuals, the broader community/society, and the natural environment.

Norm activation was demonstrated most clearly through participants intended/perceived agency. The most apparent signs of intended/perceived agency were in the participants' articulations of the roles they felt they could play in addressing sustainability/SWB concerns, and ultimately who they felt should take action. Their role themes evidenced a strong sense of personal and collective responsibility and involved a range of direct and indirect involvement in developing and facilitating sustainability/SWB solutions pathways on a local and international level. Norm activation was also evidenced through the ways in which participants actively sought ways post-program to better prepare themselves to fulfill those roles to which they aspired (e.g. academic and/or professional development pursuits), as well as to initiate or continue engagement in their local (and with a few exceptions international) communities. For example, a significant portion of participants reported continuing work or becoming involved anew with the SNfH Project initiative of which the Guatemala SEL program/community was an integral part. For others, this meant joining or taking on leadership roles in student-based organizations related to sustainability/SWB, or integrating aspects of what they learned or experienced during their GSS SEL programs into educational or professional projects.

Intended/perceived agency and realized agency must be considered against participants' identified potential barriers to agency, including their perceptions of internal personal limitations or areas in need of improvement, and external sociocultural, structural, and ideological obstacles. Although their ability to acknowledge such internal and external barriers in itself can be seen as a sign of personal "mindfulness", which as discussed in Chapter 2 is considered an essential component of eco-consciousness-raising (Brown & Kasser, 2005, p. 351).

Furthermore, participants' critical reflections of who should take action and their emphasis on locally-based, bottom-up solutions pathways pointed to deeper level agency questions—when, where, and how can/should agency be enacted, and who should lead the way? These concerns could pose additional potential barriers for participants to move from intended/perceived agency to realized agency by fostering an attitude of detached responsibility (e.g. “not my problem” or “not my place to intervene”) for sustainability/SWB issues impacting communities around the world. In turn, this has important implications for long-term capacity. Participants who did voice those critical reflections also identified with more facilitator and educator/awareness-raiser roles. Or if they saw themselves assuming “front-lines” roles, they stressed collaboration with local community and/or institutional partners. Moreover, there was a prevailing theme among participants across the different GSS SEL programs/communities that whatever role they can/will take, any solutions pathway must be built on the foundations of understanding/empathy and strong trust relationships with local community and/or institutional partners. This points to additional questions for consideration. What constitutes action? And can agency be realized in ways other than action? In this case, I would argue that seeking understanding/empathy—another indicator of both eco-consciousness and norm activation—is in itself an expression of intended/perceived agency and growing in understanding/empathy is a signifier of realized agency.

Taken together, both the participants' eco-consciousness and norm activation appeared to be grounded in participants' stronger leanings toward a more social-altruistic/anthropocentric value-orientation. This was demonstrated through their emphasis on human-centered values and framings of sustainability/SWB, their utilitarian concerns for environmental wellbeing, and their greater focus on human and social impacts of socioecological injustices and related sociocultural norms, values,

perceptions, and practices that they perceived as undermining sustainability/SWB. That said, participants did appear to demonstrate some level of awareness of the interconnectedness between human and environmental wellbeing, but this was expressed most prominently from an environmental resource perspective. Though less pronounced, there were outliers who appeared to imbue values and perceptions more in line with an ecocentric/ecological orientation, but this appeared to be tempered by what they described as increased awareness of and concern for the human and social dimensions of sustainability/SWB through their GSS SEL program/community experiences. This highlights at least one possible area in which eco-consciousness could be strengthened among participants—mainly moving toward a more balanced human-environment relationship through the cultivation of an ecocentric/ecological orientation. (See Table 1 below for a synopsis of the three key categories indicating potentiality for eco-citizenship.)

Connections to eco-citizenship qualities, principles, and action

potential. When considering the Summer 2015 GSS SEL program/community cohort as a whole, the aforementioned eco-consciousness and norm activation indicators evidenced among participants do appear to point towards potentiality for global eco-citizenship. This is best illustrated through signs of connections with eco-citizenship qualities, principles, and action potential considered to be in line with Bendik-Keymer's (2006, p. 134) "Four Habits of Ecological Maturity" (see Chapter 2 for a of more thorough discussion of eco-citizenship as conceptualized within the T-Pathways to SWB Framework). The following highlights some primary ways in which participants appeared to align, again to varying degrees, with these four developmental habits: care and concern for the realization of socioecological justice and/or sustainability/SWB for self, others, and/or the environment as expressed through values/perceptions associated

with social-altruistic, and to a lesser extent, ecocentric/ecological orientations (links to developmental habit of “Moral Perception”); understanding of and appreciation for the interconnectedness of humans and the natural environment (links to developmental habit of “Ecological Literacy”); an openness to change and diversity of cultures, values, perceptions, and pathways for sustainability/SWB (links to developmental habit of “Moral Creativity”); and intended/perceived and realized agency in seeking opportunities to personally and collectively contribute towards plural pathways for change, especially pathways driven by and in collaboration with those most impacted and which target what participants perceived as underlying justice concerns threatening sustainability/SWB (links to developmental habit of “political-economic liberty”). However, as these are developmental habits, there is certainly room for growth, especially when considering them on a more individualized participant basis. This is perhaps where efforts to foster continued capacity building among participants are most important. (See Table 1 below for a synopsis of the three key categories indicating potentiality for eco-citizenship.)

Table 1. *Indicators of Potentiality (i.e. Capacity) for Eco-Citizenship*

<p>Indicators of eco-consciousness present</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ critical thinking/questioning expressed through problem/solution framings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ E.g. systemic-level problem framings showing participants critical thinking applied to the negative repercussions of the global development and capitalist paradigms on local communities and environments ▪ critical thinking/questioning of how their own values, decision-making and action, as well as those of their wider communities and countries as a whole, can and do impact communities around the world, including those with whom they engaged during their GSS SEL programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ E.g. criticisms of prescriptive sustainability approaches that fail to account for local culture, needs, interests, and strengths
<p>Indicators of norm activation present</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ identifying with a personal and collective responsibility to address sustainability/SWB concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ E.g. intended/perceived agency as articulated through desired or intended roles aimed at addressing SWB concerns ▪ actively seeking ways post-program to better prepare themselves to fulfill the roles to which they aspired <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ E.g. academic and/or professional development pursuits such as targeted coursework, research, internships/fellowships, etc. ▪ initiating or continuing engagement in their local (and in some cases international) communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ E.g. local social and ecological justice organizations, international development non-profits, university student sustainability groups
<p>Indicators of connections with eco-citizenship qualities, principles, and action potential considered to be in line with Bendik-Keymer's (2006, p. 134) "Four Habits of Ecological Maturity"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ links to developmental habit of "Moral Perception" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ care and concern for the realization of socioecological justice and/or sustainability/SWB for self, others, and/or the environment as expressed through values/perceptions associated with social-altruistic, and to a lesser extent, ecocentric/ecological orientations ▪ links to developmental habit of "Ecological Literacy" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understanding of and appreciation for the interconnectedness of humans and the natural environment ▪ links to developmental habit of "Moral Creativity") <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ openness to change and diversity of cultures, values, perceptions, and pathways for sustainability/SWB ▪ links to developmental habit of "political-economic liberty" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ intended/perceived and realized agency in seeking opportunities to personally and collectively contribute towards plural pathways for change, especially pathways driven by and in collaboration with those most impacted and which target what participants perceived as underlying justice concerns threatening sustainability/SWB

Considerations of Knowledge-Making and Socialization Factors in Shaping Participants' Values, Perceptions, and Perceived Agency

While direct causation is difficult to ascertain with so many complex and intersecting knowledge-making and socialization processes that unfolded within the SEL programs/communities, it is worth highlighting some possible capacity building influencing factors that came to light in this research. These factors appeared to have played some influential role in the shaping of participants' values, perceptions, and/or agency and ultimately contributing to or undermining eco-consciousness-raising and norm activation—the building blocks of potentiality (i.e. capacity) for eco-citizenship. Three key factors influencing capacity building among participants included, but were not limited to, the following: diversity of participants' personal experiences and

dispositions (pre-, during, and post-program), the SEL community dynamics during and following the programs, and the SEL program's structure and implementation.

Perhaps the most obvious was the diversity of participants' personal dispositions and experiences (pre-, during, and post-program). Disposition factors that appeared to have significant influence on participants' values, perceptions, and agency stemmed from participants' individual personalities/identities (e.g. gender, age, faith or spirituality, disciplines, levels of education, nationalities, community origin, etc.). For example, faith affiliations appeared to influence the values participants associated with sustainability/SWB, most notably the participants who expressed a spiritual connection with nature and/or other people. And while all of them had an affiliation with sustainability as either a major or minor, they each became involved in sustainability and those particular GSS SEL programs for different reasons and interests or goals for what they hoped to get out of their experiences. A clear example of this were the topics chosen by participants who conducted individual research during the Spain/Morocco and Hong Kong SEL programs. Level of education also appeared to be especially important in terms of the expectations that participants brought to the programs and the extent to which they felt they had something to contribute. For instance, the presence of graduate students proved to be intimidating for some undergraduate participants who perceived the graduate students as more knowledgeable and experienced than they. However, this was often counteracted by the nurturing of shared understanding and respect within the SEL community. Each of these examples point to ways in which participants' dispositions acted as unique lenses through which they individually and collectively came to see and engage with their internal and external SEL communities. The more this diversity was embraced on an individual and communal level, the more agency participants and the communities appeared to evidence.

Influential personal experiences pre-program that surfaced during the interviews included factors such as how or where participants were raised; their home communities (past and current); their previous knowledge and training; their previous travel experiences; and what drove them to pursue a career/education in sustainability (i.e. priorities/values). These pre-program experiences participants brought to their SEL programs/communities had direct and indirect impacts in terms of how SEL community members personally experienced their time abroad as members of the SEL communities. For example, those members who had traveled significantly before their SEL programs reported being better prepared with how best to cope with vulnerability, such as feeling homesick or experiencing culture shock. However, participants who had really strong communal bonds or support networks back home discussed how they at times struggled a great deal with being away from their loved ones.

Personal experiences during the SEL programs that emerged as important influential factors in contributing to eco-consciousness-raising, norm activation, and overall capacity for eco-citizenship included the following: development of bonds and/or connections with fellow internal SEL and/or external community members; forming place-connections within the host countries/communities; being faced with and embracing or overcoming adversity, including vulnerability on a cognitive, physical, and/or emotional level; actively engaging (cognitive, psychomotor, and/or affective) with their internal and external SEL communities; and having opportunities to process what they were learning and experiencing both individually and collectively. Finally, the three most significant post-program experiences that appeared to positively influence participants' capacities for eco-citizenship included having opportunities for continued engagement with their SEL communities, or local (home and university) communities; opportunities for reflecting on and processing their knowledges and experiences; and

opportunities to share and/or apply their knowledges and experiences they gained from their SEL programs/communities. Not surprisingly, those SEL communities who evidenced the strongest communal cohesion and support based on trust relationships during their SEL programs were also the ones who demonstrated the most active continued engagement with one another post-program. This continued internal SEL community engagement in turn opened up more pathways for participants to individually and collectively process, share, and apply their knowledges and experiences post-program pointing. All of this points to the important influential role that community dynamics may have played in facilitating individual and collective capacity building during and post-program.

Influencing factors that appeared to contribute positively to capacity building relating to SEL community dynamics and socialization could be characterized as established communal norms/values, and practices. Examples of these included the following: collective communal cohesion, connectivity and trust; openness to diversity (in cultures, perspectives, values, and pathways to sustainability/SWB); overall openness to acknowledging and coping with vulnerability and working collectively to overcome adversity; embracing uncertainty, lack of control, and being pushed beyond one's comfort zone that often come with living and learning in a different culture or country. While fostering communal cohesion, connectivity and trust appears to have been one of the strongest themes in this capacity building factors category, as is the case with the categories already discussed, the different communal and socialization dynamics can be seen as complementary and reinforcing one another. These socialization processes facilitated and enhanced their collective capacity within the knowledge-making processes during their programs (e.g. research, community outreach, development of policy proposals, reports, or presentations, etc.) The extent to which these positive

communal dynamics and socialization factors emerged appeared to be directly and indirectly connected to the program structure and implementation of the SEL programs. The most notable relationship was between communal cohesion, connectivity and trust, and the engagement types and approaches integrated into the SEL programs/communities. On whole, SEL programs that placed greater emphasis on forming strong SEL communities, and which offered more diverse and meaningful opportunities for humble and authentic engagement with the internal and external SEL communities appeared to contribute most significantly to facilitating capacity building.

Opportunities for humble and authentic engagement within the internal SEL communities centered around collective reflection and exchange of ideas, perspectives, values and experiences. Particularly important in this regard were informal engagement that facilitated collective dialogue and open communication of the ways in which participants felt cognitively, physically, or emotionally impacted by what they were learning and experiencing. This often took the form of group check-ins or emerged more organically in the midst of communal activities like sharing in meals together or going on cultural and nature-based excursions together. Additionally, beyond facilitating collaboration, collective projects also contributed to individual and collective agency in pushing participants to confront in-group conflicts, which in turn contributed to their personal growth and development. The extent to which humble and authentic engagement with the external SEL communities was realized appeared to be closely connected with the strength of those communal norms/values and practices identified above, and their degree of cultural immersion in the local communities. One possible reason for the latter was that a deeper level of cultural immersion created more opportunities for *informal* personal engagement with external SEL community members whereby personal connections to the people, culture, or environment were more likely to

grow. While informal engagement tapped into all types (i.e. cognitive, affective, psychomotor), it appeared to be one of the most effective pathways for catalyzing affective engagement. This in turn opened pathways for fostering shared understanding and empathy between the internal and external SEL community members.

Beyond the engagement types, other key factors connected with communal and socialization dynamics and humble and authentic engagement that appeared to have significant influence on participants' capacity building were the faculty/staff leadership team's implementation styles and their personal and/or professional connections with the host countries. There appeared to be a relationship between faculty/staff leads who embodied a facilitator teaching and leadership style and the nurturing of cohesive communities built on trust relationships and shared understanding/empathy. These in turn appeared to create conditions favorable to the realization of agency (individual and collective) during the programs. The embodiment of a facilitator style aimed at co-creation and collective "cooperative learning" and action (associated with the "new paradigm" of teaching/learning), as opposed to a more traditional "empty vessel" teacher-student dynamic (associated with the "old paradigm" of teaching/learning), appeared to contribute to the creation of a communal environment based more on equity, empowerment, and collective responsibility and less on control and individual competition (Smith & Waller, 1997, "Afterword", pp. 269-281). Power dynamics such as are more conducive to fostering a sense of trust, understanding/empathy, and agency among participants. Furthermore, adopting a facilitator leadership style could be considered more conducive to encouraging humble and authentic engagement within and between the internal and external SEL communities. This, of course, would be based largely on the extent to which faculty/staff leads were willing to relinquish their "expert" status and model for their students respect for diverse knowledges that stem from the

values, perspectives, and lived experiences of one another and the communities in which they engaged. In other words, the facilitator style could be connected to the faculty/staff leads' own openness to and valuing of diversity and change, which can weigh heavily on the overall program tone and shape the establishment of similar norms/values within their SEL communities as a whole.

Finally, related to and perhaps more influential in terms of facilitating humble and authentic engagement was the establishment and strength of pre-existing relationships between the faculty/staff leads and the local host country communities. This was revealed through the personal and professional engagement experiences (e.g. previous research, service work, or personal travels) of some of the faculty/staff leads within their host countries prior to their GSS SEL programs. The personal and professional relationships that faculty/staff leads developed through these experiences not only increased their own knowledge and understanding of the local countries and cultures, but also appeared to imbue in them a sense of personal respect, concern for and responsibility to the people and places within their host countries. These personal ties can better enable faculty/staff leads to facilitate more opportunities for humble and authentic engagement within and between their internal and external SEL communities during their programs.

It should be also noted that some of the participants' responses were likely influenced to some degree by their current (as of the interview in Fall 2015) and previous classes, as well as other pre- and-post-program experiences unrelated to their GSS SEL programs/communities. However, this does not mean that their SEL experiences had not contributed to their current perspectives, values, and agency. Rather, in such cases, the capacity building evidenced in the form of experiential narratives (i.e. knowledge gained from lived experiences during the programs) as fodder for knowledge-making

that is ripe for unfolding in their post-program engagement and their formal and informal learning opportunities.

Links between the Main Takeaways Reported by Participants and Transformative Sustainability Learning

When considering as a whole participants' reflections on how they personally felt their SEL program/community experiences impacted them, some key outcomes themes came to the forefront. Most prominent was the affirmation and reinforcement of perceptions and values participants had held and the agency they had demonstrated prior to their programs. Participants largely attributed this to the knowledge-and-resource sharing that took place within and between their internal and external SEL communities. They particularly stressed the importance of being able to get on the ground, engage, and learn with/from local communities and partners about the realities of the sustainability problems/solutions they faced.

While many participants felt their values and/or perceptions were more so reinforced than changed drastically, they did experience change (i.e. transformative learning) in certain respects. One way in which transformative learning was noted by participants was in how their experiences had expanded their understanding of and openness to diversity, learning, and alternative pathways for change (e.g. grassroots level/bottom-up approaches). This translated into expanded worldviews, or put another way, greater global consciousness. Participants described having gained new lenses through which to view and see the world, and to think about and engage with sustainability/SWB problems and solutions. For some participants, this engendered in them a desire to continue seeking out new perspectives and deepening their awareness of diverse cultures post-program. Areas in which participants felt this influenced their decision-making and action included the type of courses they selected (e.g. advanced

language courses, international development), as well as the organizations and people with whom they engaged in their university, work and home communities (e.g. becoming involved with cultural student organizations, contributing to sustainability initiatives in the local AZ region, redirecting their graduate applied projects to prioritize community engagement, etc.). Participants attributed this change to having been exposed to diverse perspectives, values/priorities, and solutions efforts that stemmed from the lived experiences of their fellow internal and external SEL community members. Most important to this was being able to hear the perspectives of those most impacted by sustainability/SWB problems and solutions in their host countries.

Another prominent form of transformative learning came in terms of personal growth. This was linked, in part, to participants having been pushed outside their comfort zones (such as through the vulnerability and adversity they faced). For some participants, finding ways to cope with and overcome the vulnerability or challenges they underwent increased feelings of self-confidence. Additionally, while participants may have experienced discomfort and even constrained agency in the process itself, they felt that being forced to confront their own biases, priorities, and personal weaknesses or limitations led to a growth in self-awareness. This personal growth was associated, in part, with participants having opportunities to personally (e.g. through journaling) and collectively (e.g. through group discussions or check-ins) reflect on how they felt about and perceived their experiences during their programs. Equally important was finding opportunities for continued reflection post-program (e.g. through informal engagement with SEL communities, ongoing journaling or blogging, or sharing their experiences with others in an informal or formal context). Those who appeared to become the most disengaged and felt least impacted by their experiences also seemed to have lacked adequate opportunities for or support in processing their time abroad. Interestingly,

these participants were also the ones who expressed a sense of disconnect from their SEL communities during the programs.

Transformative learning was also expressed through participants reprioritization of values and priorities. Most evident across each of the SEL programs/communities was a greater emphasis on the human dimensions of sustainability/SWB. For example, Spain/Morocco participants remarked coming away with a deeper appreciation for the importance of human and social development to sustainability/SWB. Similarly, Guatemala participants came away stressing greater importance on happiness and human flourishing to sustainability/SWB, which they associated, in part, to having or feeling that social connection/community cohesion in one's own life. This translated into a newfound or renewed desire to redirect their efforts to ways they can contribute to their own communities, or at least prioritize in whatever roles they take the needs and interests of the local communities—be that in a domestic or international context. On another front, participants who vocalized the strongest critical thinking and questioning, also reported having channeled that post-program into small but noteworthy behavior changes. For example, Brazil and Guatemala participants who were the most critical of the negative impacts of the interrelated global development and capitalist paradigms that they viewed as perpetuating problems of overconsumption and exploitation of people and the environment reported having taken steps to reduce overall consumption in their personal lives. Several of these participants took this even further by striving for ways to become more self-sufficient in satisfying their essential needs and resources so as to lessen their dependency on capitalist systems they perceived as exploitative of the most vulnerable local Guatemalan and Brazilian communities. However, these same participants simultaneously appeared overwhelmed and skeptical of the difference these

small changes would make as they came to realize the pervasiveness of an unsustainable capitalist ideology throughout the global community.

Finally, and perhaps the most striking of transformative learning that occurred was a transformation of the heart through communal connectivity and support. More than any other GSS SEL community in the Summer 2015 cohort, the Guatemala SEL community members appeared to experience this form of transformation in that they developed a greater sense of connection to one another as a learning community turned family, and through this connectivity felt their collective capacity for understanding and taking agency was enhanced. Guatemala participants attributed this transformative socialization process to overcoming vulnerability and adversity together, which contributed to their building a strong community based on foundations of trust, shared values (e.g. community, happiness and human flourishing, sustainability) and shared purpose (e.g. seeking understanding of one another and the communities in which they engaged so as to find ways to enhance their happiness/SWB). The strength of the familial bonds that formed within the Guatemala SEL community during the program carried forth post-program as the participants reported the most continued internal SEL community engagement in both informal and formal capacities. Continued informal engagement examples included regular (weekly/bi-weekly) social gatherings, active virtual (e.g. social media) interactions where they shared resources such as opportunities for continued learning, professional development, and messages of positive reinforcement. Continued formal engagement focused most significantly on contributing to the Sustainable Neighborhoods for Happiness (SNfH) domestic projects and/or integrating the SNfH framework into research and applied projects they were completing for their respective degrees.

The examples above demonstrate the multifaceted ways in which the changes participants reported post-program intersected the three “domains” of the “Transformative Sustainability Learning Framework”—“cognitive (head), psychomotor (hands), and affective (heart)” (Sipos et al., 2008, p. 69). This transformative learning, along with the discussions on evidence of potentiality for eco-citizenship in the form of eco-consciousness and norm activation, point to an overall outcome of empowerment (linked with predicted outcome A of this study’s hypothesis²⁶). However, a closer look gives rise to some revealing outliers whereby participants appeared to have undergone a degree of disaffection or incapacity stemming from their deepened critical awareness of the complexities and grave consequences of sustainability/SWB problems and solutions to people and planet (linked with predicted outcome B of this study). This disaffection appeared to be linked to the ways in which participants’ feelings of hope they gained from seeing alternative solutions pathways (e.g. those utilized in the Brazil MST and Amazonian communities, or the Guatemala Mayan communities) or in the roles they personally could play in positively contributing to sustainability/SWB transformations, were undermined by their simultaneous feelings of the chokehold capitalism has on global and local systems and norms. Additionally, others expressed feeling “lost” or conflicted from what they learned and experienced, not knowing what direction to take moving forward. Part of this could be attributed to their struggles to fully process their experiences or feeling a lack of support upon their return home. But it also appeared to be linked to their critical questioning of dominant top-town/prescriptive solutions approaches commonly employed in sustainability/sustainable development. A prime example of the latter were select participants who found themselves questioning post-program the international sustainable development career pathways they envisioned

²⁶ See Chapter 3 for this study’s underlying hypothesis and a full list of its predictive sub-questions.

embarking on prior to going on the program. All of this raises important implications for short- and long-term capacity building for global eco-citizenship. I take up this discussion in the following section.

**Implications for Continued Capacity Building for Global Eco-Citizenship:
A Response to Framing Research Question (2) and Objectives (3-4)
Potential Internal and External Barriers and Contributions to
Transformative Capacity Building**

While capacity in the form of potentiality for eco-citizenship does appear to exist among participants post-program, the question remains to what extent can that eco-citizenship be more fully enacted by participants as short- and long-term capacity for facilitating plural T-pathways to SWB? This question raises important considerations regarding the level of continued support offered participants post-program, both within the university as well as in their personal and professional communities and relationships. This is linked to broader considerations for how SEL programs themselves are designed and integrated within the university structure and culture, and the wider sustainability education and training arena.

An SEL program's efficacy for capacity building, especially in the long-term, can be greatly undermined if it operates as a stand-alone mechanism. The GSS SEL programs have been by design faculty-led, short-term, and typically stand-alone opportunities meant to enable students linked in some way to the field of sustainability an opportunity to have a global engagement experience. At least until 2015, the GSS programs had predominantly been relegated to the summer semester months²⁷, making them more feasible for institutional planning and giving participants more flexibility as

²⁷ As discussed in Chapter 4, shorter SEL programs during semester break have since been added to the GSS Program Initiative repertoire under the title of "Global Intensive Experiences."

opposed to trying to fit such intense travel periods into a typical Fall or Spring academic schedule. This more often than not meant that the GSS programs operated distinctly from other curricular and non-curricular opportunities at ASU, creating a gap in continued engagement for alumni of the GSS programs. Such a gap can create a barrier for SEL community members' agency and long-term capacity to serve as eco-citizens. It does this by disconnecting the SEL members from not only the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor stimuli that they may have been exposed to as participants of these SEL programs abroad, but also the relationships and connectivity they may have formed as SEL community members between one another, their external SEL community partners, and/or the rich socioecological environments in which they were embedded. Even the strongest of intentions can be diminished if opportunities for participants to stay engaged post-program do not exist or are not within reach.

This is not to say that SEL programs necessarily have to be longer in duration themselves to achieve ongoing engagement for short- or long-term capacity building to be possible (although that could certainly be of benefit). Rather, the continuity could stem from a more holistic approach to SEL whereby opportunities such as the GSS SEL programs become embedded within a strategic model for transformative capacity building. There is immense potential for SEL programs like the GSS to be strategically integrated into the total social learning landscape of sustainability scholars. I have already discussed ways in which participants have personally sought out their own continuity of engagement post-program. The GSS participants involvement in the SNfH Project initiative (especially the Guatemala participants) is a prime example of this and offers insight into possible pathways for developing a more integrated SEL design. Furthermore, this study has pointed to areas in which pre-program efforts could be

strengthened or implemented to better prepare SEL program participants and faculty/staff leads alike.

Potential Pathways Forward for Future SEL Design and Implementation

Taking into account the factors and findings from this study as a whole, along with additional efforts related to this research in which I have personally been involved (at ASU and beyond), I offer the following recommendations for possible pathways forward for SEL design and implementation.

Recommendations for integrating transformative capacity building through SEL into university culture:

- 1) Nurture an evolving SEL community focused on engagement
 - a. Rather than limit the SEL community to participants of SEL programs like the GSS, the goal here would be the gradual and organic growing of a global learning community of practice that links the field of higher education with local and international community-driven sustainability and socioecological justice initiatives. This global learning community would be aimed at generating and strengthening ongoing SEL knowledge-making and action partnerships. Students and faculty/staff leads involved in SEL efforts would become part of an interactive global network that bridges the gap between scholars, those working on the ground in communities around the world, and representatives from local communities. In this way, this global “ecology of actors” could provide gateways for students to further their consciousness-raising and apply their norm activation by engaging and learning with and from diverse groups and communities before and after their program experiences have concluded.

- 2) Expose students to SEL early on in their higher education experiences by integrating it into the culture and curriculum requirements of the university
 - a. This could be done through a mixture of smaller-scale SEL projects and trainings on community engagement and collective action. Each of these has potential for integration into traditional campus-based courses as well as university organizations and co-curricular opportunities. The goal here would be to better prepare students for more intensive programs like the GSS. Early exposure in smaller ways can better enable students to enter their intensive programs with greater openness to understanding diverse cultures, perspectives, values, and action pathways. Such pre-program opportunities could also instill foster ongoing personal growth and awareness of participants strengths and weaknesses that could pose as barriers to their capacities and in recognizing how their perspectives and values shape their decision-making and action.
- 3) Offer faculty/staff leads interested in SEL opportunities for ongoing training focused on facilitating SEL
 - a. A core focus of this training would be to build the capacities of faculty/staff leads to facilitate humble and authentic engagement and generate strong SEL communities. There is a course I personally have been co-developing with SOS faculty that focuses on philosophies and praxis of engagement in sustainability. While this course is currently designed as a pilot for students, I would argue there is great value in creating a similar professional development educational series for faculty/staff.
 - b. Additionally, these trainings could open up pathways for faculty/staff leads to share lessons learned from their previous experiences, exchange resources,

and collaborate across programs. For instance, each of the GSS Summer 2015 programs had very distinct foci and employed unique mechanisms, some of which included producing deliverables for the local communities and others which did not. While it would be impossible to incorporate all of this into a single program, collaboration across programs could perhaps create pathways for complementing one another's skills, knowledge, and approaches and meet specific needs of not only their students but their host countries/communities as well—contributions that may be out of the scope of a single program.

- c. These trainings could also offer guidance for faculty in forming ongoing partnerships with communities and institutions in their host countries and generating pathways to keep their students engaged post-program.

Recommendations for SEL program design:

- 1) Design SEL programs based on a multi-stage model
 - a. Stage 1 would be pre-departure engagement that revolves around formal coursework and training aimed at expanding student participants' knowledge and understanding of the sustainability/SWB concerns facing their host countries, of cultural norms and practices in their host countries, and most importantly of the institutional and communal partners with whom they will be engaging while abroad. Additionally, stage 1 would focus on informal engagement aimed at cultivating the program's internal SEL community while also creating opportunities for pre-program engagement with the local host country partners. These efforts would take place over the two semesters prior to the SEL programs regardless of when those programs are run (e.g. if a Fall-semester program, it would be the full academic year beforehand). Finally, stage 1 would require a course or training series for ALL SEL

participants focused on engagement approaches, philosophies, and ethical considerations in sustainability. As stated above, I have been involved in co-developing a course on this very topic for students which represents one way I have sought to translate this research into a broader impact. If continued, this course could be one potential pathway for building participants' capacities for humble and authentic engagement focused on collective action, collaboration, and shared understanding/empathy with the local host country communities.

- b. Stage 2 would be the deployment of a wide range of SEL programs offering different lengths (e.g. 2-3 weeks to several months), approaches (e.g. study abroad, service learning, research practicum, internships), and foci (e.g. topics, regions). These programs ideally could complement one another by giving students the opportunities to participate in multiple programs over several years, and by finding ways to share resources, experiences, and ideas on how better to contribute back to their host countries in an ongoing way. The programs would emphasize opportunities for both formal and informal (especially the latter) engagement with the local communities and provide more ways for participants to engage with the natural environment throughout their journeys. Such engagement would involve strategies such as critical dialogue and reflection, and collective action projects driven by the local communities, and strive for integration of all forms of “transformative sustainability learning” (i.e. “head, hands, and heart”) (Sipos et al. 2008). Furthermore, programs would strive for carving out time dedicated for individual and collective reflection to enable participants to better process their experiences and work through their struggles during the programs. Finally, all faculty/staff leads would have fostered some form of pre-existing

relationship with the local host country and have been supported (as part of their training) to travel to their host countries for a pre-departure immersion experience.

- c. Stage 3 would center around post-program engagement and continued opportunities for knowledge-resource exchange and processing of participants experiences. These would include a mixture of individual and collective efforts across the program-based SEL communities and be integrated into the broader global SEL community of practice. Such engagement would involve both formal (e.g. coursework, collective projects, professional development) and informal (e.g. social gatherings for continued community building) opportunities. Ideally faculty/staff leads would seek out ways in which their student participants can continue to contribute back to their host countries as well as their local communities. However, this would require programs be based on long-term in-country partnerships.
- 2) Ensure that host country partners are not only consulted in program development, but are at the forefront of its development and implementation
 - a. This means engaging host country partners as co-creators and co-leaders. Moreover, the host country partners should be the main impetus for decision-making around program foci and mechanisms employed based on the needs and interests of the local host country communities rather than the needs and interests of the university community.
 - 3) Consider employing a multi-national and multi-institutional peer-to-peer model
 - a. The Hong Kong program and Brazil program (to a lesser extent) did this through engaging university students in their host countries in their programs. However, this should not be limited to university students. There

is immense value in terms of having representatives from diverse groups within the host countries living and learning with the university SEL community members throughout the duration of the program. This would also help to facilitate a more mutually-beneficial, as opposed to extractive engagement model.

These recommendations are by no means comprehensive. But they at least provide a starting point from which to apply the insight gained from this research into more practical pathways aimed at realizing a broader vision for a strategic university initiative on transformative capacity building through SEL. The following concluding section builds on this “lessons learned” concept by discussing implications of this study for future research.

Lessons Learned from Reflexive Research Practice: Suggestions on Ways to Improve and/or Adapt Study Design for Future Research

Incorporating a Comparative Design Across SEL Program Approaches

A worthwhile venture for future research would be to further develop a comparative research design that compares across different SEL program approaches. This could involve comparing the international study/study abroad model employed in the GSS SEL programs with a service-learning model, an international volunteer model, a gap-year model, or an international internship model, for example. Factors that could be considered include such distinctions as group-based vs. individual-based, university/academic institution-based vs. non-profit/NGO vs. corporation-based, and a focus on teaching and learning vs. research vs. service project vs. professional experience. Such comparative research designs could enable better understanding of factors unique to higher education SEL models like that used in the GSS that may prove more or less influential as a transformative capacity building mechanism than other SEL models.

Given the unexpected linkages discovered between the GSS SEL Program Initiative and the Sustainable Neighborhoods for Happiness (SNfH) Project, a logical next step for the GSS case study in particular would be to build upon the exploratory work conducted during the supplemental phase of this research with the SNfH Fall 2015 Tempe-based course cohort. As indicated in Chapter 4, the SNfH project includes domestic (e.g. locally based in the greater Phoenix, AZ region) and international (e.g. globally based in Guatemala and Denmark) initiatives. A key part of the SNfH Project involves an applied, participatory research component that enlists the support of ASU students as active research team members. For the domestic initiatives, this is carried out largely through ASU semester-based applied research courses run through the School of Sustainability at ASU in Tempe, AZ. For the international initiatives, student research teams have primarily been formed within the GSS programs. The 2015 Guatemala GSS program included in the GSS Summer 2015 programs/communities cohort in Phase 1 represents the first international initiative to evolve from the SNfH Project.

One possible way for designing this comparative study would be to carry out the full spectrum of data collection methods utilized in this dissertation research's case study of the GSS SEL programs/communities and apply it to different domestic and international SNfH project/community cohorts. The exploratory work I had completed indicated notable differences in the domestic vs. the international SNfH SEL programs that are worth probing into further. For example, beyond the obvious spatial and temporal differences (i.e. pathways), there were also differences in how the course-based programs were structured and implemented (i.e. mechanisms), and the formation and cohesion of the SEL communities (i.e. actors). There also appeared to be important distinctions in the type of engagement and degree of engagement involved, which

appeared to stem, in part, from barriers presented within a traditional campus-based course, as well as resistance from the local Tempe community linked with previous university-community engagement in the surrounding greater Phoenix Metropolitan area. Comparing internally between the different SNfH project/community cohorts would thus mirror the internal comparisons between the GSS SEL program/community cohorts and provide insight into these key dimensions. As such, this proposed research design would facilitate a more robust case comparison between the GSS Program Initiative, representing a short-term international study SEL model/approach, and the SNfH Project initiative, representing a mixed international study and domestic workshop-based semester course SEL model/approach.

Alternative future research designs that could build upon this dissertation work include applying the same mixed-methods approach utilized in the GSS case study to a case control group. This could facilitate comparison between SEL programs/communities and traditional non-SEL university sustainability courses/students (i.e. typical lecture-based format). This would help better illuminate explicit causal relationships between, for example, the mechanisms, actors, and pathways involved in SEL program models vs. those involved in non-SEL sustainability education. Additionally, a longitudinal study design that follows up with GSS SEL community members could shed light on the long-term capacity building potential of SEL, a factor that this GSS case study was unable to adequately address due to its focus on a single year's summer cohort of GSS SEL programs/communities.

Revamping and Launching Survey for ALL SEL Participants

While traditional program evaluation was not the purpose of this study, one of the more commonplace approaches to program evaluation research is to utilize a pre-/post-test research design. For example, a survey-based pre-/post-test research design

has been utilized in related studies that have explored the impacts of experiential learning programs on fostering global citizenship and/or environmental attitudes and behaviors, such as those applying as measurement tools the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) Scale or scales based on VBN theory (for example, see Tarrant & Lyons, 2012). One of the main benefits used as justification for administering a traditional pre-/post-test survey design is that doing so can capture data evidencing program impacts as indicated by changes in participant responses between the two survey measures (Pratt et al., 2000). The programs and their activities are viewed in this sense as interventions and the survey instruments serve as evaluative measures on how well those programs performed in terms of impacting participant outcomes.

There is, however, an alternative evaluative research design which combines a retrospective pre-test with a post-test instrument that scholars argue can be more effective at accurately capturing self-reported program impacts (Howard, Schmeck, & Bray, 1979; Pratt et al., 2000; Moore & Tananis, 2009). The main argument for using this alternative approach is to avoid what is referred to as “response-shift bias” (Howard, Schmeck, & Bray, 1979; Howard, 1980). Response-shift bias refers to when a “participant uses a different internal understanding of the construct being measured to complete the pretest and the posttest”, thus compromising the accuracy of program impacts (Moore & Tananis, 2009, p. 190). By having participants complete both instruments / activities in the same post-program time-scale, they are better able to respond to questions from the same internal understandings and frames of reference. As such, this alternative design is said to more accurately assess “changes in self-reported knowledge and behavior” following program intervention (e.g. participation in the program and all its associated activities) (Pratt et al., 2000, p. 343).

As mentioned in Chapter 3, this study originally had planned to incorporate a version of a pre-/post-program survey strategy as a complement to its more robust mixed-methods ethnographic approach. While I was led to move in a different direction as the research progressed, I nonetheless devoted significant time and effort to developing and piloting what I considered to be more comprehensive pre- and post-program survey instruments that could prove useful for future research. A core contribution of the developed pre- and post-program survey instruments is that they integrated in a complementary way components of tested and validated survey measures (e.g. the NEP) with newer experimental survey measures (e.g. Kopnina's, 2013, "Ecocentric and Anthropocentric Attitudes Toward Sustainable Development (EEATSD)" instrument). The latter represent work from scholars who have recently attempted to address criticisms and shortcomings of those more well-established and widely used instruments such as the NEP. The resulting pre- and post-program surveys included adapted multiple-choice response questions from the following existing instruments: "Ecocentric and Anthropocentric Attitudes Toward Sustainable Development (EEATSD)" (adapted from Kopnina, 2013); "Broad Value Orientation" (adapted from Van Der Linden 2015 and Schwartz's original SVS 1992); and "Perceptions of Climate Change Problems/Solutions" (adapted from Wolf et al., 2009). Beyond the multiple-choice sections derived from pre-existing instruments, this study's adapted surveys also featured two original short-answer response sections aimed at gaining additional insight into respondents' perceptions of and values associated with sustainable wellbeing and the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The surveys concluded with a more robust demographics section meant to better understand the backgrounds of SEL program participants that made up the different GSS SEL

communities, including their previous experiential learning involvement (See appendix for examples of the pre- and post- survey drafts).

For future research interested in taking the more traditional program evaluation route, the pre- and post-program surveys developed for this study could certainly be adapted to other programs. I personally feel it would be valuable to pilot these survey instruments with future Global Sustainability Studies (GSS) and related sustainability experiential learning (SEL) programs at ASU and beyond. With some further piloting for validation purposes, as well as more favorable research conditions such as resources for recruitment to provide incentives for completion (or perhaps require the surveys as part of the expectations for participating in the SEL programs), these pre- and post-program surveys could offer substantial insight into participants' changes in values, perceptions, and perceived agency as a result of their experiences in the SEL programs/communities. Though the surveys are more extensive than most and get at some complex factors that are usually difficult to measure in survey form, I still would recommend that these surveys be a part of a more robust mixed-methods approach, or alternatively that they be administered orally and include an additional open-response essay section for participants to reflecting on their overall program experiences and what it was like for them to be a part of an SEL community in another country or context (components that were featured heavily in the semi-structured interviews of this dissertation research).

However, researchers like myself who are more constricted on time and resources might consider following the alternative approach of administering the pre- and post-program surveys developed for this study using the combined retrospective pre-test / post-test design. The main difference in the traditional vs the alternative survey research designs is when the surveys are administered. The retrospective pre-test / post-test design has participants complete BOTH surveys post-program and typically in the same

session. They would first be asked to think back before the program and use that frame of reference to respond to the full retrospective pre-test survey. Then they would be asked to adjust their frame of reference to their current state of thinking/being post-program and respond to the second post-test survey. A potential downside to this approach is that participants will become exhausted by having to complete both in-depth surveys (such as the instruments I developed) in one sitting. Additionally, recall bias is of concern for the retrospective pre-test survey, though Moore & Tananis (2009, p. 200) argue that studies where the “response-shift bias is greater than any bias introduced in using the retrospective pretest, the retrospective pre-post test score becomes a less-biased measure of program effectiveness” and better captures “a more accurate measure of preintervention function than a pretest given before the program begins.” Nonetheless, they still urge researchers to proceed with caution and be cognizant of the risks for simply “trading one type of bias for another” (Moore & Tananis 2009, p. 200). Whether using the traditional pre-/post-program survey design or the alternative pre-test/post-test survey design, the inclusion of these surveys developed for this dissertation study could offer a more efficient and quantifiable way to measure such difficult to identify outcomes as the shaping of values, perceptions and agency due to participation in SEL programs/communities.

Working with Faculty on Integrating the Photovoice Project into SEL Programs

In reflecting on the Photovoice (PV) component of this research, it became clear that incorporating such a project enabled deeper insights into the participants’ values, perceptions, and perceived agency, and their overall SEL program/community experiences during the post-program interviews compared to many of the non-PV participants. This is likely due to the combination of factors including having the PV participant-photographers create Photo logs that featured a brief narrative explaining

the context of each photo and how it fit with the PV project's prompt, along with incorporating their PV photo submissions into the post-program participant interviews. Both of these activities gave them the opportunity to reflect back on their journeys in new ways and better process what they had experienced, learned, and grappled with during their SEL programs. For example, during the post-program interviews the PV participant-photographers were required to review their photos and categorize them by themes in a photo sort exercise. Then we discussed selections of the photos from each of their self-generated themes and how these were linked as contributions and/or barriers to sustainable wellbeing. This photo sort activity that took place at the start of the post-program interviews really seemed to elicit more thoughtful, specific, and detailed responses from the PV participant-photographers throughout the entirety of the interviews, not just the supplemental photovoice component. In this way, the photos supported memory recall and processing of experiences, and acted as a storytelling tool for the PV participant-photographers to better understand and share their journeys from their own perspectives.

As community-based participatory research method, the PV project also had the added benefit of encouraging the PV participant-photographers to engage in ways that they may not have otherwise with the people and environments of the different host countries during their time abroad. For instance, several PV participant-photographers indicated how taking on the gaze of the photographer with the task of capturing examples of contributions and barriers to sustainable wellbeing challenged them to be more exploratory and/or mindful of what they were seeing, feeling, and doing throughout their journeys. In other words, taking on this additional role appeared to empower the PV participant-photographers to be more cognitively present and attentive to their surroundings, seeking out opportunities to interact more with the socioecological

environments they came across during their time in the different host countries. This benefit was not experienced by all PV participant-photographers. One in particular from the Brazil GSS program expressed having trouble remembering to take photos, finding herself drawn to the freedom of detaching from all technology (including a camera) throughout those three weeks in country. Others also remarked feeling uneasy about the appropriateness of taking photos in certain circumstances. However, being confronted with having to make those determinations while abroad actually caused the PV participant-photographers to think more critically about how their very presence as outsiders impacted or was perceived by the local communities with whom they engaged. In short, the role of PV participant-photographer pushed them to be more critically conscious travelers and SEL community members, both during their GSS SEL programs and during their participation in the post-program research activities.

As discussed in Chapter 4, implementing the PV project was certainly not without obstacles and setbacks. Nonetheless, considering the benefits to the research (e.g. improved quality and robustness of data) and the PV participant-photographers themselves (e.g. capacity-building through empowered and critically conscious engagement, and facilitated opportunities for post-program processing and sharing of experiences through verbal, written, and visual outlets), I would strongly encourage the use of the photovoice methodology in future related studies with some suggested alterations. For one, this PV project I developed would be even more effective if it were directly integrated into the GSS or other similar SEL programs. Embedding the PV project in the program activities or assignments would guarantee higher participation rates, addressing the issue of asking PV participant-photographers to take on an extra responsibility that might seem like too much time commitment or work on top of their already intensive program itineraries and course expectations. Doing this would mean

gaining the approval of faculty/staff program leads and collaborating with them on program development.

Prospects for the integration of the PV project into the GSS programs seemed very promising when considering this study's Summer 2015 GSS program cohort. Most of those GSS program faculty/staff leads were not only very interested, welcoming, and encouraging of their students participating in the PV project for this study while on their programs, but already had some version of a less involved photo assignment built into their programs' requirements (e.g. Spain & Morocco GSS program's photo-based "Sustainability Project"). Beyond the individual GSS programs' faculty/staff leads, the GSS Program Manager in 2015 was in full support of the PV project and saw it as a great complement to the "Walton Scholars Projects", two of which the GSS Walton Scholars were expected to complete in exchange for their scholarship funding support. The following are related examples from the 11 options for Walton Scholars projects that could be supported or even enhanced by mainstreaming the PV project into program development and implementation: "a video-diary documenting experiences on your program"; "blog posts for the Global Sustainability Studies blog website"; "news article for a campus or other newspaper discussing your experience abroad"; "presentation to a club or organization"; "own activity/project" (preapproved) (Walton Sustainability Solutions Initiatives, 2015, "Walton Global Studies Scholar Forms"). Lastly, Walton Sustainability Solutions Initiatives (WSSI) and GSS administrators/staff showed great interest in the PV project, including the WSSI Executive Director. All of this demonstrates that leadership at various levels might be open to more formally introducing this community-based, participatory research method into the GSS Program Initiative.

The other major revision I would suggest with the PV project is to structure it so that members from the host communities (i.e. the SEL communities' local partners) are also actively engaged in the project as participant-photographers. This could be done in one of two ways. First would be to have them partner with the student participant-photographers as part of a team charged with responding to the prompt. The major drawbacks to this approach would be that the project would have to be carefully planned to enable ample time for the student and local community participant-photographers to work together on completing the photo assignment component. Considering the limited time-frame of past GSS programs, this could be extremely challenging or require too much coordination for the faculty/staff leads and community partners to justify it. To enable the same kind of flexibility that the participant-photographers had during this study's version of the project, an alternative design would be to administer the same photo assignment to both the student and host community participant-photographers simultaneously with proper adjustments made to account for cultural (e.g. language, exposure to photography, etc.) and resource (e.g. access to equipment, transferability of photos, etc.) differences. This approach would enable the different participant-photographer groups greater freedom to capture their own perceptions and express their creativity through their photo narratives. If time did not permit for them to share their work during the program itself, this could be done virtually post-program, which would have the added benefit of continued post-program engagement between the SEL community members and the local community partners. The onus of coordination would fall on the researcher(s) who would ideally have for each program a designated local PV project manager to oversee administration of the different project stages among the host community participant-photographers, since that would likely demand a greater degree

of ongoing support that is difficult to provide from afar. The PV project managers would of course be trained by the lead research team to ensure synchronization of process.

Broadening the reach of the PV project to include both the GSS SEL programs/communities and the local host-country community partners as members of the participant-photographer teams no doubt would demand a great deal of planning, but the potential mutual benefits are noteworthy. Official involvement of the local community members as participant-photographers would provide a purposeful means for direct engagement both during and, depending on the design chosen, following the GSS programs. This particular engagement strategy empowers participant-photographers by arming them with a mechanism for capturing their perspectives on sustainable wellbeing and providing them with an outlet for reflecting on and sharing their stories with others. As was evidenced among this study's participant-photographers, the PV project itself encompassed all three forms of engagement—cognitive, affective, and psychomotor engagement—thus providing a pathway to forming an overall deeper connection with the different socioecological environments in which they engaged. Imagine the possibilities if a similar local community participant-photographer team could share in this process with the GSS SEL community participant-photographers. In the least, the locally-based participant-photographers could provide greater understanding of the contributions and barriers to sustainable wellbeing as documented through their own lived experiences, highlighting how different (or similar) their perceptions of and values associated with sustainable wellbeing are from their U.S.-based counterparts.

Furthermore, having this cross-national participant-photographer team could serve as a pathway to post-program action and/or continued engagement inspired by the ideas and concerns raised by the participant-photographers through their photo

narratives. This study's PV project had aspired to catalyze a series of action projects among the participant-photographers, particularly through its "Stage 5: Focus Group and Visioning Exercise". While this study's GSS participant-photographer team exhibited enthusiasm for potential action pathways, the overwhelming consensus among them was that it was not their place to determine what actions or solutions should be employed to bring about sustainable wellbeing in these host countries/communities. Rather, they felt it was more appropriate for them to focus on using their photo narratives as a mechanism for raising awareness and engaging their own *home* communities in dialogue around the issues they identified and lessons learned through their experiences on these international SEL programs. If they have the opportunity to work with the host communities as members—as opposed to only subjects—of the PV project's participant-photographer team, this would greatly enhance the collective capacity of the PV participant-photographers to co-create and implement shared action projects that could have a more direct impact on the local host countries/communities. In other words, diversifying the PV project's participant-photographer team would simultaneously open up new transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing that could help to also bridge the geographic and cultural divides between them.

Designing the PV project in this way would also address a regrettable shortcoming of this study—absence of a more comprehensive comparison between the values, perceptions, and agency of the ASU GSS SEL community members with the values, perceptions, and agency present among their local community partners. Though such an important comparison was not in the scope of this study, it is something I would have liked to include had time and resources permitted. With that in mind, a natural next phase of this original research would be to adapt this entire study's design to focus on the host communities of the different GSS SEL programs as a main target population.

Furthermore, I highly recommend future related studies aim to prioritize this more comprehensive comparison between the SEL communities and the host communities with whom they engage during their programs. This expanded PV project approach is one important example for how to model this comparative design in future research while simultaneously engaging both study populations more fully in the research and program experience as a whole. In this way, the PV project could be considered an intervention which opens the door to even more robust analytical inquiry.

Potential for Linking with “Key Competencies in Sustainability”

Beyond the recommendations for adapting and integrating the Photovoice project and emphasizing a comparative group design that includes the host countries/communities as a core study group, one potential avenue for building upon this work would be to link it more directly with future studies focused on applying the concepts of “Key Competencies in Sustainability” (Wiek et al., 2011; Wiek et al., 2015). Pursuing this line of inquiry was outside the scope of this present dissertation study. However, there are definitely important synergies between the capacity building for eco-citizenship focus and aims of this research and the key competencies approach that are worth exploring. Future research could utilize a similar design as this study but instead of focusing on eco-citizenship, turn its attention to assessing the efficacy of SEL programs like the GSS in building the capacity of participants in terms of key competencies in sustainability. Wiek et al. (2015, p. 257) have already established the need for a more expansive research agenda that assesses “competence acquisition”, offering suggestions on possible directions such research could take. Given this concept of “key competencies” is being integrated into SOS curriculum, linking more directly with this line of inquiry could prove most valuable to not only the university community but the broader sustainability science field.

Conclusion: Summary of Key Contributions of Dissertation Research

By placing greater focus on questioning and transforming not only what, but how, why and with whom we learn this research has begun to highlight potential transformative sustainability experiential learning pathways for sustainable wellbeing. Though much work needs to be done, this research can be seen as contributing to transdisciplinary scholarship in three important ways: 1) contributions to theory; 2) contributions to research design; 3) contributions to research/practice. Examples of each are summarized below.

1) Contributions to theory:

- a. Proposed the integrative Transformation Pathways to Sustainable Wellbeing Framework and Transformative Capacity Building Model
- b. Illustrated the utility of the proposed framework and model by applying them to an empirical case study in the context of sustainability experiential learning (See Figure 5 for an adapted depiction of the Transformative Capacity Building Model as applied to the GSS case study context).

2) Contributions to Research Design:

- a. Brought a critical ethnographic lens to what has traditionally been approached as program evaluation research
- b. Piloted an alternative communal framing and approach to delve deeper into the relationships between engagement approaches and three factors often neglected in programmatic and systems-level sustainability research—values, perceptions, and agency
- c. Employed the Photovoice methodology as one mechanism for simultaneously studying and contributing to capacity building while countering extractive research designs

3) Contributions to Research/Practice:

- a. Began to shed light on sustainability experiential learning in the form of short-term sustainability education abroad as one possible mechanism for building transformative capacity for eco-citizenship
- b. Proposed and have sought ways to realize practical recommendations for program development and implementation that could further advance transformative capacity building (e.g. ongoing collaborations with Brazil program community partners; development of new partnerships with organizations and institutions involved in sustainability experiential learning at ASU and beyond; leadership involvement in a new university sustainability engagement initiative)

In short, this dissertation represents one scholar-activist's humble approach to responding to the call for seeking alternative, plural transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing.

Final Author's Note

I thank you for embarking on this journey with me and embracing the ambiguities within. My hope is that along the way you too have come to see the interconnections interwoven within this dissertation's overarching narrative of transformative capacity building and recognize the importance of opening ourselves up to the kind of critical dialogic necessary for fulfilling our own roles—whatever they may be—in a collective pursuit of plural transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing.

Figure 5. Transformative Capacity Building Model within a T-Pathways to SWB Framework (Applied)

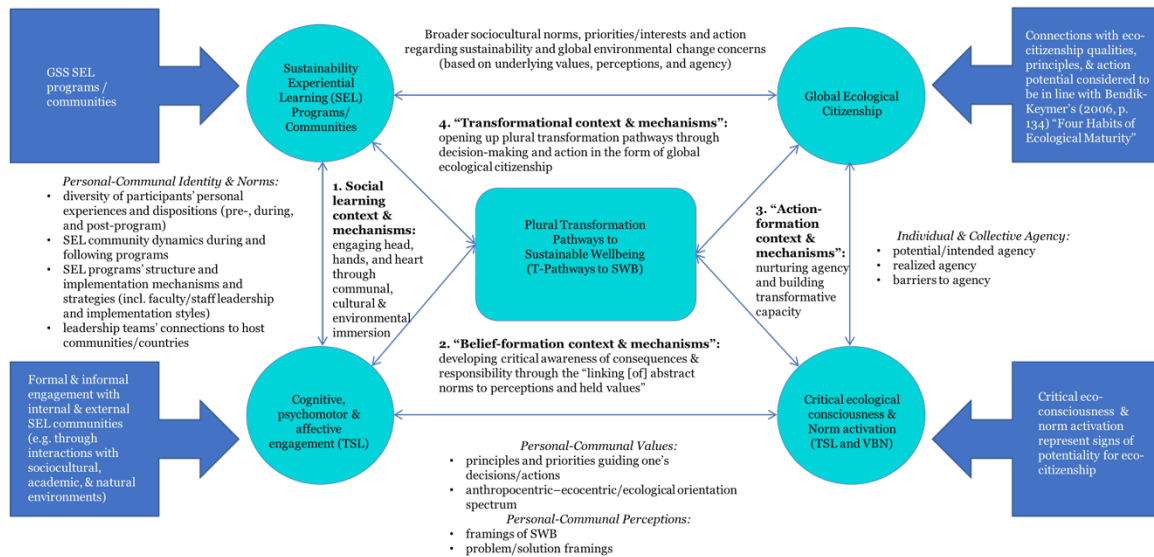


Figure 5 shows an adapted version of the conceptual model for transformative capacity building through sustainability experiential learning within a T-Pathways to SWB Framework. Note: This version of the model depicts its application to the empirical case study of the GSS SEL programs/communities in this dissertation research.

Description from original model:

This model demonstrates the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the T-Pathways to SWB framework and its application as a proposed theory of change. This framework integrates the pathways approach (Leach et al., 2010) with tenets of transformative sustainability learning (TSL) (Sipos et al., 2008), norm activation and Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) (Schwartz, 1977; Stern & Dietz, 1994; Stern et al., 1999; Stern, 2000), global ecological citizenship (Dobson, 2003; Bendik-Keymer, 2006; Tarrant, 2010), and the Mechanisms, Actors, and Pathways (MAPs) framework (Haglund & Stryker, 2015; Haglund & Aggarwal, 2011). The structure of this proposed model is based on an adapted version of the MAPs "“Moments” of social transformation” model (Haglund & Stryker, 2015; quotations from original; see Figure 2 above). Similar to the MAPs model, this *transformative capacity building model* illustrates the intersecting and iterative socialization, knowledge-making and mobilization processes that may unfold in sustainability experiential learning programs/communities. It simultaneously serves as an analytical tool for identifying and understanding the potential for SEL to function as a transformative capacity building mechanism for plural transformation pathways to sustainable wellbeing (SWB).

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APPENDIX I
PERMISSION TO REPRINT FIGURE 1

Request for permission to include past work in dissertation

(Initial email requests sent separately to Dr. Battisti and Dr. Sipos on February 17, 2018 as represented in the message below to Dr. Sipos)

From: Julianna Gwiszcz
To: Yona Sipos

Dear Dr. Sipos

I am a Ph.D. Candidate (Sociocultural Anthropology) at Arizona State University. I am writing to request your permission to include in my Ph.D. dissertation the Venn diagram in your article, "Achieving transformative sustainability learning: engaging head, hands and heart," *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 2008.

With deepest gratitude,
Julie

(Email Reply Sent February 17, 2018)
From: Bryce Battisti
To: Julianna Gwiszcz

Julianna,

Yes, of course. I trust you'll cite us. Feel free to adapt as you see fit.

- Bryce
Bryce Battisti, PhD

(Email Reply Sent February 20, 2018)
From: Yona Sipos
To: Julianna Gwiszcz

Hi Juliana,

Thank you for your email and your diligence. You have my full permission to not only use the diagram, but also to innovate and improve upon it.

Best,
Yona
Yona Sipos, PhD

APPENDIX II
PERMISSION TO REPRINT FIGURE 2

Request for permission to include MAPs model in dissertation

(Initial Email Request Sent March 20, 2018)

From: Julianna Gwyszcz

To: LaDawn Haglund

Hello Dr. Haglund.

I am writing to request your permission to include in my Ph.D. dissertation the MAPs model from your book's intro chapter that you co-authored with Stryker entitled "Introduction: Making Sense of the Multiple and Complex Pathways by which Human Rights Are Realized."

If you are willing, please send an email indicating your permission.

With deepest gratitude,

Julie

(Email Reply Sent Mar 24, 2018)

From: LaDawn Haglund

To: Julianna Gwyszcz

I give you permission to use the MAPs model in your dissertation.

All the best,

LaDawn

APPENDIX III
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD HUMAN SUBJECTS EXEMPTION



EXEMPTION GRANTED

James Eder
Human Evolution and Social Change, School of (SHESC)
480/965-5530
JAMES.EDER@asu.edu

Dear James Eder:

On 4/24/2015 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Opening Up Transformation Pathways for Sustainable Wellbeing: Experiential Learning Communities as Sites for Youth Capacity Building?
Investigator:	James Eder
IRB ID:	STUDY00002599

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 4/24/2015.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc:

Julianna Gwiszcz