LEADING CHANGE FROM THE INSIDE-OUT: NEGOTIATING THE PSYCHO-SOCIAL IN SUSTAINABILITY ENGAGEMENT

By

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Abstract

This study explores how sustainability practitioners understand and engage with the subjective psychological dimensions of ‘social mobilization’. At this particular moment, there exists scant research into precisely how these dimensions are being theorized and incorporated into the practice of social mobilization, despite a growing recognition that environmental engagement necessarily involves the ‘inner life’ of people—the complex and interconnected psycho-social influences on who we are and how we understand our world. Using a narrative methodology, I interviewed seven sustainability facilitators about how they are currently making meaning of social change and how subjectivity is represented within this. The analysis presents four distinct ways that psycho-social dimensions are being negotiated and related to in engagement work. This research indicates that being able to engage with subjectivity is not so much a technical skill that can be learned, but rather a new way of making meaning of the world, others, and oneself.
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“What I am about to say may sound provocative, but I feel more and more strongly that even these ideas are not enough, that we must go farther and deeper.” (Vaclav Havel)

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Chapter 1. Introduction

As an engagement practitioner, I often find myself in meetings with sustainability professionals, discussing ways to ‘scale-up’ efforts to motivate and inspire people to take action on environmental issues. A typical agenda focuses on who we want to engage (e.g. beyond the ‘usual subjects’), what outcomes we want to achieve (e.g. behaviour change, policy change, or social action) and what tools and methods should be used (e.g. social media, deliberative forums, or dialogue). However, as one of the engagement practitioners in this study stated, it is rare that we have space to pause and explore “what are we actually assuming here about people”? (Caroline, interview 1). All too often, the ‘inner’ more subjective aspects of how people think, feel, and make meaning are not discussed explicitly, if at all (Moser, 2012). Despite the notion that the roots of the ecological crisis lies in our consciousness and culture (O’Sullivan, 1999; Riddell, 2005) sustainability leaders commonly focus on the structural complexity of eco-social issues and the tactical aspects of engagement, but ‘tip-toe’ around the subjective and cultural dimensions of these issues and processes (Riddell, 2005).

However, I have started to notice a different kind of conversation emerging about the ‘people change’ side of social change. These conversations are taking place in conferences\(^1\), in research\(^2\), and in online spaces\(^3\) amongst inquiring minds and committed change-makers. Many are now acknowledging that sustainability leadership has tended to focus on the rational and structural influences of social change, but that these approaches—on their own—have been

\(^1\) The “Mobilizing for Climate Action” conference was held in Vancouver, BC on March 16, 2012 and highlighted psychological aspects of climate change as well as values and identity in environmental engagement processes.

\(^2\) British Columbia’s “Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions” has ‘social mobilization as one of its five main research themes.

\(^3\) Climate Access is one example of an online ‘hub’ that hosts discussions amongst researchers, practitioners and decision-makers regarding social mobilization, including psychological and social aspects of engagement.
insufficient to reverse troubling environmental trends (Boiral, Cayer, & Baron, 2009; O’Brien, 2009). Sustainability leaders, environmental educators, and engagement practitioners are starting to openly explore the fact that the sustainability field has under-attended to the psychological and social dimensions of how and why people become concerned, engaged, and motivated to take action on environmental issues (Leiserowitz, 2007; Moser & Dilling, 2007; O’Brien, 2009).

The sustainability field as a whole is in a reflexive moment of re-examining the assumptions of conventional approaches to social change (Burke, 2007; Ferdig, 2007; Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2005). While new spaces have emerged to inquire about subjective aspects of sustainability—such as emotions, worldview, identity, values, and consciousness—many practitioners’ struggle to coherently accommodate the subtlety and complexity of the subjective realm into current theories of change and traditional environmental leadership approaches (Boiral et al., 2009; Brown, 2012; Ferdig, 2007). While the psychologically-oriented aspects of environmental engagement are increasingly recognized as important (Fisher, 2002; Lertzman, 2008; Lertzman, 2012; Norgaard, 2006; Norgaard, 2011), how these subjective dimensions influence practitioners’ leadership approaches and understanding of sustainability remains fuzzy and poorly understood. In many ways, for the practice of sustainability engagement to more fully include psychological and social considerations, practitioners themselves must examine deeply held assumptions about how they conceptualize subjectivity in environmental issues, and ultimately, how their practice supports healthy human and social development (Hochachka, 2005). Moreover, these considerations are as much about leadership development as they are about discourse development.

As more practitioners begin to navigate the human complexity of sustainability issues, I was curious how their thinking was being challenged, what tensions were coming up, and how
these tensions were being negotiated. In this thesis, I suggest that if we can better understand how subjectivity is being engaged, understood, and conceptualized by sustainability practitioners, we can more effectively: 1) identify how emerging psychological research is being interpreted in the practice of environmental engagement; 2) appreciate how practitioners are grappling with subjectivity and what new leadership capacities may be required; and 3) create more effective approaches for supporting sustainability leadership development.

This chapter details the purpose and rationale of my research, the questions I explored, and the overall significance of this study.

**Purpose of this Study**

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how those designing and leading engagement initiatives on sustainability ‘make sense of’ and negotiate subjective psychological and social dimensions within their approach to social change. Scholars and sustainability leaders increasingly recognize that subjectivity plays a critical role in social mobilization (Crompton, 2010; Moser & Dilling, 2007; Norgaard, 2011), but questions remain about how to authentically work with subjectivity in practice. While there are several studies that explore the subjective aspects of those we wish to engage on environmental issues (Lertzman, 2008; Lertzman, 2012; Mnguni, 2010; Norgaard, 2011; Randall, 2009), this study inquiries into the subjectivity of those that are leading the engagement efforts—that is, how practitioners themselves think and feel about the ‘inner’ dimensions of personal and social change.

The objectives of this study are three-fold: First, I wanted to explore how those leading social mobilization initiatives on sustainability conceive the change challenge before them and how subjective dimensions are represented within this. Are they intentionally acknowledging and including subjective aspects such as values, emotions, affect, and worldview in those they are
trying to engage and mobilize? If so, how does this make sense in their approach to change? Second, I am interested in how their approaches to change are evolving (or not) given the reality that conventional engagement and communication strategies have failed to achieve desired outcomes. How are practitioners negotiating the increasing complexity of engaging others around environmental issue at this time? And third, given the fact that engaging fully with others requires ongoing development of ourselves (Boiral et al., 2009; Hochachka, 2003; Takahashi, 2004), I am interested in understanding the ways that practitioners engage with their own subjectivity—their own identity, feelings, and anxieties—related to their role in leading social change.

**Research Question**

Engagement practitioners now find themselves in a dance between conventional and emerging approaches to social change. On the one hand, conventional change models that assume people think, act, and make decisions rationally in response to environmental information have largely been debunked (Leiserowitz, 2007; Moser & Dilling, 2007; Shome & Marx, 2009; Whitmarsh & Nye, 2010) and decades of environmental engagement around ‘the scientific facts’ have proven ineffective to mobilize broad action towards sustainability. Moreover, commentators suggest that people may be experiencing a case of ‘apocalypse fatigue’ in relation to continual calls to action on eco-social crises (Nordhaus & Shellenberger, 2009). Simply put, doing more of the same, communicating ‘more bad news’ (Moser, 2008; O’Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009) without regard for the psychological reception of this information, is unlikely to all of a sudden ‘jolt’ a critical mass into action.

On the other hand, many researchers and practitioners are not willing to accept the superficial diagnosis that the public just do not ‘get it’ or simply do not care (Lertzman, 2008;
Moser & Dilling, 2011; Norgaard, 2011). As a result there is now a growing field of research from the social sciences that explores how and why people are responding to environmental issues, including subjective psychodynamic, cultural, socio-political influences on environmental engagement and behaviour change. In this study, I have a particular interest in the emergent interdisciplinary field of psycho-social studies that explores social phenomena by recognizing the irreducible connections between structural, social, and psychological influences (Clarke, 2006). Psycho-social studies, “examine the complex relationship between inner and outer worlds, historical, political and social factors, and the role of affect and emotion in the generation and regeneration of our social world” (The Centre for Psycho-Social Studies, 2001, para 6). The interdisciplinary lens of a psycho-social approach is particularly fitting for the topic of subjectivity in environmental engagement. As Lertzman (2010) states,

> It is in psychosocial studies that dimensions of the social and political contexts can be joined up (in some capacity) with the largely unconscious processes that play such powerful roles in how we manage and respond to very serious environmental threats. (p. 41)

While research about psychological and social influences on sustainability holds much promise for deepening the practice of environmental engagement, it is also complex, not always straightforward, and often presented in language and concepts unfamiliar to those in the sustainability field (Shove, 2010; Thøgersen & Crompton, 2009). Knowing that it is not an option to put engagement efforts on pause until we have these psycho-social influences ‘figured out’, practitioners are forced to ‘build the stairs as they climb them’, so to speak. They must continue to navigate an increasingly complex territory of collaboration and engagement, while negotiating tensions, questions, and dilemmas (paradigmatic and otherwise) as they arise. It is in
this space of transition between conventional and emerging approaches to social change that this
thesis research asks:

How do those leading social mobilization on sustainability understand and negotiate
psycho-social dimensions in their theory of change?
How has their theory of change shifted or evolved as a result of their experiences leading
social mobilization?

This research topic is salient and timely. Given the urgency and scope of environmental
and climate crisis, there is a growing recognition that we must go beyond a superficial integration
of new disciplines, skills, or areas of expertise into conventional paradigms for social mobilization
(Shove, 2010). Instead, what is needed is a type of paradigmatic shift that is capable of grasping a
more endogenous and emergent dynamic of systemic and social change (Shove, 2010). In other
words, what is needed is a new way of approaching and understanding change itself. Thus, the
purpose of my research is not to examine what practitioners know about psychological theories
of change. Rather, I am interested in how leaders make meaning of the human complexity of
social mobilization, including underlying motivations and assumptions about change itself, and
their own experience of leading social change at this point in time. How one makes meaning, or
one’s epistemic orientation, is important because it gives a sense of what is within one’s
awareness—including one’s thoughts, feelings and worldview—and thus what one is able to
reflect on, examine, and act on.

Need for the Study

Mobilizing for what? We face a critical time in history where solutions for a sustainable
future have never been more urgent, yet the nature of the environmental and social problems we
face has never been more complex. Recent reports from the International Energy Agency (IEA)
(2011) confirm that we are on a trajectory towards dangerous climate change with a long-term average temperature increase of more than 3.5°C. The magnitude of change required across economic, social, and political systems is absolutely staggering. The complexity and scale of this reality challenges our core assumptions about quality of life, economic development, consumption, and identity, making it as much a psychological and cultural issue as it is an environmental or scientific one (Lorenzoni, Nicholson-Cole, & Whitmarsh, 2007).

It is clear that continuing on ‘business as usual’ simply is not an option (L. Brown, 2008). Given current trends and predictions, Moser (2012) suggests that inaction on climate change will lead to dramatic disruptions and a possible collapse of the ecological systems on which society depends. Of course, the other scenario is that over the next few decades we collectively catalyze transformative changes across energy, food, transportation, and economic systems, impacting every aspect of how we live. I do not present these scenarios as hyperbole, but rather to expose a core assumption in this research project: no matter how we decide to proceed, tremendous amounts of change are inevitable. A critical question for social mobilization is: how are we preparing for and responding to change—within ourselves and in society?

**The ‘inner’ aspects of social mobilization.** Currently, there is a groundswell of research from the psychological and social sciences regarding the human dimensions of environmental change, including theory and practice for social mobilization, public engagement, communications, social learning, psychoanalysis, and environmental education (Crompton & Kasser, 2009; Flores, 2005; Hochachka, 2003; Moser & Dilling, 2007; Norgaard, 2011; Shome & Marx, 2009; Whitmarsh, Seyfang, & O’Neill, 2011). While the focus of this research is varied, it looks beyond the logical outcomes of engagement to more deeply understand what underlies and influences our sense of self, our perception of the world around us, and the ‘tangle’ of
subjective factors (Lertzman, 2008) that affect how we manage and cope with problems and threats (environmental, existential, and otherwise). For example, there are now numerous studies exploring how to support those who experience loss, despair, denial, and anxiety in the face of ecological crises (Feinberg & Willer, 2011; Lertzman, 2008; Norgaard, 2006; Randall, 2009) as well as how to facilitate transformative approaches—where one’s way of understanding the world, oneself, and the relationship between the two, shifts profoundly (O’Sullivan, Morrell, & O’Connor, 2002; Schugurensky, 2002; Takahashi, 2004).

In short, there now appears to be a growing interest and authentic curiosity in the subjective aspects of change. But, why does subjectivity matter? Why is it important for practitioners to bring an awareness and understanding of subjectivity to sustainability work? To start, environmental engagement often has explicit goals of citizenship development, awareness raising, enhancement of critical thinking, and personal empowerment for behaviour change and decision-making. Put simply, these goals necessarily involve the inner life of people, how our understanding of the world is constructed, and how we understand ourselves. Subjectivity—the modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, and hope—is a major dimension of human existence and to ignore it greatly impoverishes the role of the person (the ‘subject’) as a social being that can shape society (Ortner, 2005). Equally as important, subjectivity is the basis of agency. Ortner (2005, p. 34) describes agency as:

A necessary part of understanding how people (try to) act on the world even as they are acted upon. Agency is not some natural or originary will; it takes shape as specific desires and intentions within a matrix of subjectivity – of (culturally constituted) feelings, thoughts, and meanings.
In this sense, subjectivity cannot be isolated or removed from what Luhrmann (2006) calls the ‘knotty problem’ of domination and freedom, between subjection of the subject and the subject’s agency. In relation to the task of citizen engagement and mobilization for the purpose of political, structural, and social change, subjectivity and agency are of central importance.

As subjectivity is a main focus of this research, it is useful to be clear about how I have conceptualized and used this term. I find Ortner's (2005) definition of subjectivity as both psychological and social particularly helpful. She says:

By subjectivity I will mean the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, fear, and so forth that animate acting subjects. But I always mean as well the cultural and social formations that shape, organize and provoke these modes of affect, thought and so on. (p. 31)

I also want to be clear about the assumptions I have made regarding subjectivity and how it relates to sustainability. First, I have conceptualized the subjective ways one engages with sustainability issues as psycho-social. A psycho-social approach acknowledges that there is a dynamic interplay between the psyche and the social world. Clarke (2006) suggests:

There is a psychological relatedness of the individual, society, and social phenomena...The way in which we relate to others as both individuals and groups is driven by both conscious (some might say rational) perceptions and ideas, but also by unconscious perceptions, desires and wishes (p. 10).

Second, in this research, I understand environmental awareness as being shaped within social and political contexts and thus is best understood within those contexts, not just as individual characteristics (Flores, 2005). A psycho-social approach acknowledges that personal and social transformation are interconnected, however transformation in one realm does not
automatically lead to change in the other—intentional strategies are required to support and work with both psychological and social dimensions (Brookfield, 2000; Schugurensky, 2002; Takahashi, 2004).

Third, psycho-social is a broad term that encompasses many distinct topics. Moreover, different disciplines approach subjectivity in different ways. For example, much of the popular communications and resources about subjectivity in environmental issues and climate change has tended to focus on knowledge, attitudes, emotions, values, and identity (Crompton & Kasser, 2009; Leiserowitz, Maibach, & Roser-Renouf, 2010; Shome & Marx, 2009). However, emerging psychoanalytic approaches to environmental issues explore the deeper unconscious dimensions of engagement such as denial, ambivalence, and anxiety (Lertzman, 2012; Mnguni, 2010; Randall, 2009) as well as affective dimensions such as “felt experience, unconscious emotional responses, and feeling-states” (Lertzman, 2008, p.28). In this study, I am interested in investigating beyond the discursive aspects of environmental engagement to research what lies ‘beneath the surface’ (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009) in the way sustainability leaders approach the psycho-social aspects of change. In this sense, this study frames subjectivity as more of a ‘constellation’ or an ‘ensemble’ of psycho-social influences, rather than a collection of ‘topics’ or ‘objects’ to be engaged.

And fourth, I have also assumed that how information about subjectivity is interpreted will depend on the mindset and assumptions of the practitioners themselves. That is, while sustainability leaders often share ecological values, there are different change paradigms and capacities that may favour or limit practitioners’ ability to coherently make sense of subjectivity as an integral part of social change (Boiral et al., 2009).
Leading change from the inside-out. While it is becoming increasingly evident that we must better understand subjectivity in sustainability engagement, in practice, this often requires a dramatic shift in how leaders approach change. Unfortunately, there is a seductive pull to seek the ‘quick fix’—the new skills-building workshop, model, or tool-kit—that will alleviate the ‘messiness’ inherent in working with groups of people. Furthermore, engagement is often ‘added on’ to sustainability projects and treated as a technical challenge whereby leaders receive training on communications and social marketing, but underlying assumptions about how to support deeper individual and cultural change are left unexamined. While technical approaches (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009) are useful, there is a danger that, on their own, this type of leadership will result in superficial tactics that fail to support the public to meaningfully and effectively engage with the complexity of the situation at hand.

A major focus of my own work has been designing, facilitating, and building capacity for meaningful public engagement on sustainability. When I began this work some ten years ago I worked as a project manager for a large national environmental organization. At that time, our assumption around social change was ‘if people only knew…’ and our focus was on communicating information about the environment in evermore creative and direct ways. Eventually, I came to realize that while we were all knowledgeable and passionate about environmental issues, we had a very superficial understanding of what was (actually) going on with how people related to the issues we were engaging them on. Since that time I have been on my own learning journey about the multi-faceted aspects concerning how people construct meaning and develop capacities to engage in pressing eco-social issues.

I sense there is now an openness and eagerness to talk about ‘theories of change’ in relation the complex questions of environmental awareness, engagement, and action. Perhaps
given the scale of change required and the somber recognition of inertia in the face of urgency, many see this as a time to reconsider traditional approaches to social change. At the same time, it can be difficult and (at times) uncomfortable to challenge dominant ways of thinking and acting in the somewhat technical culture that surrounds the sustainability field. It seems that regardless of the sector around the table, conversations consistently remain focused on the tangible outcomes of what we would like to see (e.g. changed behaviours or support for policy) and methods for achieving these outcomes (e.g. online techniques, group dialogue, etc.) without any invitation to discuss the deeper influences on how personal and social change might happen. Indeed, this research was sparked by a question that frequently preoccupies me in the work I do: why is it so hard to change the way we approach change?

**Significance of This Study**

At a time when the field of sustainability leadership is flooded with information about models, techniques, and tool-kits, this research takes a step back to deeply examine the change paradigm of those leading engagement efforts and how they are negotiating the psycho-social complexity of ecological issues. While some research is addressing subjectivity in sustainability, to date there has been limited discussion on the implications of this research for sustainability leadership. Much of the current research on social mobilization focuses on examining what leaders *do* in campaigns, communications, or behaviour change interventions, but not *how* leaders know, their motivations, assumptions, or experience of leading change.

In order for social mobilization as a discourse to evolve and develop, we must first become conscious of our ways of knowing as leaders and practitioners. Once we can recognize our underlying beliefs, assumptions, and motivations, we are more able to re-examine them to see if they must be revised in order to serve us better (Flores, 2005). For those leading change,
this process is not a cognitive matter alone, but also involves how one feels— anxietys and defenses, as well as hopes and dreams. My hope is that this study can help us to understand how leaders are currently making meaning of social change, where leadership development requires more attention, and as a result, how we can support and nurture practitioners in their efforts to effectively engage the public towards a more sustainable future.

**Study Limitations or Delimitations**

As part of the delimitations of the study, I will not explicitly inquire into technical and management skills, personality type, nor organizational resources required for social mobilization, although this data will be included if it arises in the interview process. While these are critical areas of inquiry, they are beyond the scope of this study. The focus of this study is to understand the ways leaders are making meaning of social mobilization and their understanding of the psycho-social dimensions of sustainability engagement.

I am not a psychoanalytic practitioner, but an interdisciplinary researcher whose perspectives are drawing on psychoanalytic concepts (among others) for this research. Thus, I will be cautious about making claims to interpret the psychodynamics of the participants.

Limitations of the study are that I do not have an equal number of participants across public, private, and civil society sectors. Hence, it is difficult to make sectoral comparisons from the data. Finally, this field is still nascent. One of the most valuable contributions of this study is to locate the growing area of psycho-social research on environmental issues in the context of the sustainability leadership. Moreover, I expect this study to surface valuable questions to be explored in future research.
Chapter 2. Literature Review

Introduction

Contemporary environmentalism faces a troubling irony: despite an increasing amount of well-intentioned efforts in raising environmental awareness, most of the public appear oblivious to the scope, scale, and severity of ecological problems (Brulle, 2000; Orr, 2009). Moreover, environmental destruction prevails to the point of dangerous collapse and there is a growing recognition that a significant gap exists between what environmental engagement has intended to do and what it has been able to do (Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2005). This state of affairs has led to the proclamation that environmentalism has ‘failed’ (Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2005).

But, what exactly has failed? David Suzuki’s (2012) recent reflection on environmentalism is that:

We were so focused on battling opponents and seeking public support that we failed to realize these battles reflect fundamentally different ways of seeing our place in the world.

And it is our deep underlying worldview that determines the way we treat our surroundings (para.1).

In other words, it might not be that environmentalism has failed, but that it is has failed to consciously reflect upon the diverse and complex ways that people construct meaning about their world. What this thesis explores is: what might it mean for environmental leaders to be more aware of the worldviews, values, and perspectives of the people they are engaging? How would this inform their understanding of the problems we face, their identity as change-makers, and their theory of change? What capacities and paradigm would be required to work more intentionally with deeper, more subjective dimensions of change?
In this chapter I explore these questions by situating the broad topic of leadership for social change in sustainability through four main bodies of literature: (a) social mobilization for sustainability (b) subjectivity in environmental issues; (c) learning and social mobilization; and (c) leadership for social change.

**Social Mobilization on Sustainability**

In the context of sustainability, social mobilization can be described as a comprehensive and decentralized response that emphasizes outreach to and engagement of the public and multiple stakeholders for behaviour change (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Stern, 2000); social learning (Pahl-Wostl & Hare, 2004; Wals, 2010); social movements (Brulle, 2000; Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2005); community-led action and empowerment (Hochachka, 2003; Pruitt & Thomas, 2007); and policy change (Burch, 2011; Burch & Robinson, 2007). The common threads running through the social mobilization literature coalesce around questions of how we should go about supporting personal and social change. However, by no means is social mobilization a homogenous field. While there is general acceptance that engagement on environmental issues, and climate change in particular, involves cognitive, affective, and behavioural components (Lorenzoni et al., 2007), various disciplines and approaches place more or less emphasis on the locus of responsibility for change (e.g. individual versus systemic), the role of ideology critique, the role of governance (e.g. ‘forcing people to be green’ through regulation versus ‘bottom up’ grassroots approaches) (Lorraine Whitmarsh, Ockwell, & O’Neill, 2009), and a focus on practical tangible actions versus deeper psychological and cultural shifts that address unconscious aspects of change.

Over time, the way practitioners have conceptualized and approached social mobilization for environmental sustainability has been influenced by a few dominant paradigms for social
change. Below I discuss these paradigms as well as emerging opportunities and limitations for paradigmatic transitions to occur within the field of social change for sustainability.

**Paradigms for social change.**

“It's almost a cliché to refer to a "paradigm shift," but that is what we need to meet the challenge of the environmental crisis our species has created.” (Suzuki, 2012)

According to Kuhn (1970) a paradigm is not only a set ideas. A paradigm defines a set of practices, problems, and approaches for a field of practitioners and researchers in a given period of time. While there may be many theories of social change, there are relatively few paradigms that define the field. Below, I explore social mobilization for sustainability through the lens of two distinct paradigms.

**Conventional change paradigm.** The discussion about how a more sustainable society will emerge has historically been dominated by a conventional techno-scientific paradigm that sees the primary goal of sustainability as the management of complex social and biophysical systems (Burke, 2007). From this perspective, environmental issues have been presented in a technical and piece-meal framing, focused almost exclusively on the truth ‘out there’ in the world, with little attention to the subjective world ‘in here’ or the intersubjective relational world among us (Brulle, 2000; Doppelt, 2010; Reason & Torbert, 2001; Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2005). As a result, public engagement on environmental issues has traditionally been dominated by assumptions that citizens’ decisions and behaviours must be managed, that the role of engagement is to obtain support for ‘expert’ developed policy proposals, and that shifts in public opinion will result from communication of the scientific facts (Brulle, 2000; Burke, 2007; Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2005). Furthermore, from this perspective, change processes are often understood to be “planned, rational, efficient, and aimed toward pre-defined outcomes”
(Ferdig, 2007, p. 31) and subjectivity is interpreted as simply another variable to manage for in the development of more tangible environmental solutions.

Across the social sciences the empirical positivist assumptions of the conventional change paradigm have increasingly been challenged (Ferdig, 2007; K. O’Brien, 2009; Reason & Torbert, 2001; Shove, 2010). While technical solutions and policy proposals are critical, on their own, they have proven insufficient to mobilize broad societal engagement towards a vision of more resilient, adaptable, and viable future (Whitmarsh & Lorenzoni, 2010). There is now mounting evidence that we need more complex ways of knowing that go beyond the technical aspects of environmental management and an understanding of people as ‘objects’ to be managed and mobilized (Funtowicz & Ravetz, 2008; O’Brien & Wolf, 2010; Whitmarsh et al., 2011).

*Alternative change paradigm.* As the limitations of positivist approaches have become more acknowledged and accepted (Brulle, 2000) practitioners have grappled with how to develop their thinking and practice to more adequately meet the multi-faceted challenge of environmental engagement. In the field of social mobilization, there has been a noticeable shift away from a mechanistic change paradigm to one that invites more full participation, increased inclusivity, and attention to equity (Wals, Geerling-Eijff, Hubeek, Van der Kroon, & Vader, 2008). This alternative paradigm, sometimes referred to as a ‘participatory’ or ‘civic’ model, represents a transition away from highly controlled deterministic processes where participants are passive recipients of technical knowledge and prescribed solutions. Instead, processes are designed with participation in mind, where people come together across differences to build mutual understanding, relationships, and collaborative responses (Burke, 2007; Ferdig, 2007; Pruitt & Thomas, 2007). Rather than providing all the answers, sustainability practitioners
convene spaces for people to discover their own answers, often recognizing that the process of collective discovery, and the dissonance it can create, brings innovation and new thinking (Ferdig, 2007).

A great strength of the shift towards an alternative paradigm has been increasing attention to the deconstruction of dominant ideologies and the role of citizen and community empowerment in participatory democracy, social action, and structural change (O’Sullivan, 1999; Schugurensky, 2002). This has manifest through more participatory methods and techniques that involve the public in decision-making, planning, and policy deliberation on sustainability issues. Dialogic and deliberative approaches, social learning, and design charrettes are just a few of the ways that engagement practitioners have been attempting to build more personal capacity, local ownership, and shared responsibility over solutions (Holman, Devane, & Cady, 2007; Pruitt & Thomas, 2007).

**Transitioning to a new paradigm of social mobilization.** Takahashi (2004) suggests that practitioners must continue to critically reflect on the assumptions that underlie current discourse to ensure that we do not replicate the very paradigm and systems that we are challenging. Because practitioners are immersed in the systems they are trying to change, many struggle to shift away from a positivist approach to leadership (Reason & Torbert, 2001). For example, Doppelt's (2010) research with sustainability leaders found that in public dialogue on sustainability, discussions are dominated by what to do—for example, what technologies and policy instruments to apply—compared with little emphasis on how thought and feeling processes, underlying assumptions, and ingrained behaviours influence solutions. Moreover, he found there was an underlying assumption amongst practitioners that the publics’ desire for change will emerge automatically from merely engaging in a process (Doppelt, 2010).
Clearly, the alternative change paradigm has broadened the scope of engagement to more intentionally consider ways to bring people together, invite dialogue, and encourage participation. But, what is less clearly exposed and articulated is how this participatory approach acknowledges and intentionally supports psychological aspects of change. Thus, as the field of sustainability leadership transitions towards more participatory engagement, practitioners must be cautious to not merely trade in old methods for new ones, utilizing participatory techniques, without necessarily building the leadership capacity to authentically support the ‘whole person’ they are inviting into a process, including their anxieties, emotions, values, and beliefs (Hochachka, 2005).

**Summary.** From time to time new lines of thinking illuminate the limitations of a paradigm, opening fertile ground for inquiry and opportunities for growth and development within a field. Today, there is a small but growing acceptance that there is no linear escalator towards deeper shades of green. Rather, sustainability itself is a search for psychological and social maturity—it is linked to our very development, personally and socially (Mnguni, 2010). Beyond a dialectic of conventional and alternative paradigms, we are beginning to see that more participatory techniques are not a panacea for the development of an ecological consciousness. A new type of social change leadership is called for that involves perhaps a different way of viewing oneself and others, including a deeper awareness of one’s own subjectivity and that of the people we are engaging (Hochachka, 2003).

The next section will briefly discuss how subjectivity has been understood in relation to sustainability, exploring areas of tension and opportunity as psychological, social, and cultural aspects of change have been introduced to the field of environmental engagement.
Subjectivity in Environmental Issues

For decades the general public has been saturated with information about the environmental crisis ‘out there’, with little recognition that this crisis is deeply rooted in cultural worldviews and located in a particular history, social context, and psychological construct (Esbjorn-Hargens & Zimmerman, 2009). Over the last twenty years, the broad field of ecopsychology has been attempting to dispel the myth that we are somehow separate from the natural world, advocating that environmental problems demand a psychological exploration (Fisher, 2002; Roszak, 2001). Fisher (2002) describes the vast terrain of ecopsychology as a ‘project’ that is generally concerned with a better understanding of the human-nature relationship, the emotional and affective dimensions of environmental issues, and an attempt to understand the role humans can play in responding to the ecological crisis. While ecopsychology is difficult to define as a single field, there is a common understanding amongst ecofeminism, deep ecology, social ecology, and transpersonal ecologies that a new paradigm must be developed to replace the current dominant social paradigm (Esbjorn-Hargens & Zimmerman, 2009). In other words, a shift in consciousness, or a new way of perceiving and relating to nature, must occur (Robbins & Greenwald, 1994).

While one would expect the field of psychology to have a strong voice on how to support a ‘shift in consciousness’, the integration of psychological discourse within the practice of environmental engagement has not been straightforward or without tension. Early on Kidner (1994) examined why the field of psychology has been silent when it comes to the understanding of environmental problems and solutions. He suggests that, “psychology, by focusing its gaze on the decontextualized individual, perpetuates and legitimates a worldview in which the individual is seen as separate from the environment” (Kidner, 1994, p. 362). Fisher (2002) goes further to
suggest there is a conspicuous lack of attention within ecopsychology, and deep ecology in particular, to understand how the psychological self is located within a cultural and social context. For example, Fisher (2002) challenges the notion that shifts in worldview occur through mere changes in how an individual thinks, and suggests that equal attention must be paid to how worldviews are anchored within particular social structures.

Equally as important, Eric Fromm (1976) reminds us that the revolution that aims to change the political and economic structures while neglecting the psyche will inevitably recreate the conditions of the old society in the new one. Thus, social mobilization for sustainability is best understood as a *psycho-social* process for promoting a healthy, democratic, and just society, but also about developing autonomous, critical, integrated, and caring individuals (Schugurensky, 2002). In short, a psycho-social approach acknowledges that one’s response to environmental issues is shaped simultaneously by one’s own psyche (conscious and unconscious influences), the cultural context in which one is embedded, and the systems and structures that enable or constrain the choices available to us both individually and collectively.

Below I explore several psycho-social dimensions of sustainability engagement that have emerged in the literature: denial, grief and loss; values; ideology, and transformation.

**Denial, grief, and loss in sustainability engagement.** Coming to grips with the reality of the environmental crisis—the scale of current and predicted loss and suffering—requires the capacity to acknowledge and accept inevitable emotions of anger, fear, helplessness, sadness, and loss (Moser, 2012; Randall, 2009). In particular, O’Sullivan et al. (2002) suggest those facilitating sustainability engagement become skilled at recognizing and supporting the dynamics of denial, grief, and loss.
Denial is a defense mechanism that protects us from experiencing the pain and overwhelming emotion that accompanies an honest look at the reality of the ecological situation (Norgaard, 2011). While much of the environmental and scientific community has assumed that a lack of public response to environmental problems is due to lack of information or concern, Norgaard (2011; 2011b; 2006) and Lertzman (2008) explain that the desire to avoid unpleasant emotions may be an important factor in preventing social movement participation. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Randall (2005, p. 167) also has explored how denial leads to ‘splitting off’ of undesirable emotions where the “individual’s own powers and abilities are projected into others who, it is hoped, will take care of the problem and can be criticized and attacked if they do not.” In short, when we deny and repress painful emotions, we also deprive ourselves of the possibility for development and the emotional energy required to engage in social action (Fisher, 2002).

Engagement and mobilization processes must not only support people to become aware of painful emotions, but also to work through loss, grief, and despair. Randall (2009) has written extensively on loss and the environmental crisis, distinguishing between voluntary loss, where one might voluntarily give up something desirable (such as air travel), transitional loss (where there may also be something gained) as well as anticipatory loss (the idea that mourning can begin now in preparation for inevitable loss in the future). From a psychological perspective loss is not only understood as the loss of an objective ‘thing’, but also can (and usually is) experienced as loss of personal identity and familiarity in ways of making meaning as one develops (Taylor, 2007). Moreover, O’Sullivan et al. (2002), Brookfield (2000) and Schugurensky (2002) have looked at how, somewhat paradoxically, the development of an awareness of oppressive structures in society can lead to a sense of loss, despair, and
disempowerment unless one is supported appropriately. Brookfield (2000, p. 145) states that “the ravages of radical pessimism are felt most destructively by those who perceive themselves as the only sane one in the madhouse, struggling without help, to transform their lives, institutions and communities.”

**Values in sustainability engagement.** Another salient area of research is around the relationship of values and worldview to environmental issues. O’Brien and Wolf (2010) suggest that the way values are currently reflected in the climate change discourse in particular is still very narrow, focusing on material impacts and monetary worth. They call for a more meaningful values-based approach, recognizing values as “integrated, coherent structures or systems that are linked to one’s motivations…worldview, and philosophy of the future,” (O’Brien & Wolf, 2010, p. 234). Similarly, Crompton (2010) argues that there is an “ethical imperative” (p. 9) for intentionally conveying some values over others when dealing with ‘bigger-than-self-problems’ such as climate change and biodiversity, for example. His work with WWF-UK suggests that social mobilization should focus on drawing out intrinsic or self-transcendent values as opposed to appealing to extrinsic or self-enhancing values. In practice, working with values-based approaches requires more than communications strategies on how to align messaging with social values, but also a willingness to surface and expose the values systems and worldviews of those leading and researching sustainability efforts (O’Brien & Wolf, 2010).

**Ideological dimensions of social change.** While we must become more adept at confronting the environmental crisis in more emotionally aware and mature ways (Moser, 2012), equally as important is building the capacity for critical reflection on the cause of environmental degradation and supporting psychological and social development towards alternatives. We must become aware of what Friere (1972) calls a ‘submerged state of consciousness’—the underlying
cultural assumptions and beliefs in which we are embedded. Flores (2005, p. 2) describes this submersion as an ‘eco-tragedy’, “a psychological and cultural undertow that, unbeknownst to the people involved, moves them away from self-consciously expressed concern for the environment.” The process of becoming aware of uncritically, socially accepted assumptions and beliefs—the capacity to critique—is explored here as a function of both ideology and epistemology.

Ideologies are the sets of values, beliefs, myths, and explanations that appear self-evidently true and are embedded in everyday situations and practices (Schugurensky, 2002). Ideology critique originates from the Frankfurt School of Critical Social Theory and describes the “process by which people learn to recognize how uncritically accepted and unjust dominant ideologies are embedded in everyday situations and practices” (Brookfield, 2000, p. 128). Particularly relevant to environmental sustainability is becoming aware of what Gramsci (1978) calls hegemonic assumptions, the ways in which we become convinced that dominant ideologies are in our best interest (for example, the notion that economic development is needed at any cost, regardless of ecological degradation). More than only a cognitive exercise, ideology critique explores how ideology “lives within us” (Brookfield, 2000, p. 130) and how the emotional responses in certain aspects of our lives are also socially learned (Schugurensky, 2002). From this perspective, ideology is not only about reflection on social, economic, and political systems, but also pertains to the subjective aspects of how one knows what is real and true and how one makes meaning—that is, one’s epistemology.

Much of the practice of environmental engagement has assumed that sharing ideologically critical information alone is sufficient to foster greater ecological and cultural consciousness amongst the public (Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2005). However, the type of
environmental engagement called for today requires more than a simple re-examination of ideas or new knowledge and attitudes. It also requires a capacity to become more critically aware of underlying assumptions, which, for many, is a qualitatively different way of making meaning (Flores, 2005; Kegan, 1994). For example, Robbins & Greenwald's (1994) research found that all participants in their study possessed environmental concern, however the complexity of their concern was related to their capacity to be aware of the underlying logic shaping the discourse—that is, the extent to which the ‘cultural logic’ surrounding the causes and interconnections of environmental issues was in their realm of consciousness. Thus, connecting personal and social transformation for sustainability requires ideological criticality, but also an exploration and inclusion of how one epistemologically forms their beliefs, values, and assumptions.

**Transformative dimensions of social change.** Given the current trajectory of environmental degradation and the fact that public support for action on issues such as climate change appears to be waning (Leiserowitz et al., 2010), it is no surprise that task of social mobilization is often framed as one of transformation. I draw on Mezirow (1991) to understand ‘transformation’ to mean a profound shift in one’s worldview towards a more inclusive, differentiating, and critically reflective frame of reference. While it is impossible to prescribe how transformation happens, research and practice suggests that facilitating transformative change is time-intensive, unpredictable, and often provoked by a “disorienting dilemma” (Cranton, 2006, p. 36) that comes along with confronting one’s fundamental assumptions about the world (Taylor, 2007). Furthermore, Mnguni (2010) suggests that confronting the limitations of our current ways of understanding can potentially be anxiety-inducing, possibly resulting in feelings of guilt and helplessness as we become more aware of dominant structural and cultural influences (Schugurensky, 2002). Thus, while calls for transformation are common, how to
support personal transformation and the connection between personal and social transformation is less clearly explored in the literature (Brookfield, 2000).

**Summary.** There is growing recognition that environmental engagement necessarily involves the ‘inner subjective life’ of people—the complex and interconnected influences of our emotions, values, ideology and unconscious dimensions of who we are and how we understand our world (Crompton & Kasser, 2009; Kidner, 1994; Lertzman, 2012; Randall, 2005). In the social mobilization literature, the mechanisms for engaging with the subjective dimensions of environmental issues are often discussed as a process of acquiring knowledge, thinking critically, changing worldviews and questioning dominant assumptions—or, simply put, they are presented as a function of how people develop and learn. The next section will provide an overview of how learning is an integral part of social mobilization and the predominant ways that subjectivity is understood within this.

**Learning and Social Mobilization**

The world in which sustainability leaders and engagement practitioners are mobilizing change is “a world marinated in uncertainty and complexity” (Wals, 2010, p. 145). In this time of discovery and ambiguity, even the brightest and best ideas will not be sustainable unless there is opportunity for thoughtful learning and development. However, the vast majority of citizens are adults who are not enrolled in any formal environmental education program, but are learning in the day-to-day context of their workplace, communities, institutions, and in their homes, often through media (Clover, 1995). It is in these non-formal contexts that policymakers and practitioners are designing and facilitating opportunities for environmental engagement.

In this sense, I understand social mobilization for sustainability as embedded within democratic structures and taking place (at least partially) in civil society. Habermas (1984)
suggests that the public sphere serves as the centre for the renewal, transformation, and
generation of social change. I also understand this public sphere involving an interaction between
the psyche and the social, a space for social learning and development that can engage both
hearts and minds in the service of action. In the social mobilization, environmental education,
and adult learning literature there is a distinction between instrumental and transformative
learning approaches which I find particularly useful in an exploration of the subjective
dimensions of environmental engagement.

**Instrumental learning in social mobilization.** Finger (1989, p. 30) describes an
instrumental approach to environmental learning as one that is based on “communication of
basic information (facts, data, and theories) about environmental issues… presenting arguments
for/against specific environmental initiatives, and providing an overview on how one can prepare
oneself for environmental concerns.” Bush-Gibson & Rinfret (2011) and Clover (1995) also
describe this as ‘assimilative learning’ because the primary goal is to accumulate content (such
as information, facts, and concepts) and assimilate this content into existing knowledge
structures or frames of reference. Often the goal of instrumental learning is to support task-
oriented problem solving or learning ‘to do’ based on analysis (Taylor, 2007).

Wals et al. (2008) suggest that instrumental environmental education positions learners
mainly as passive receivers of information and this information is often attempting to change
their behaviour or thinking in a pre-determined way. In Canada, Clover (1995) quotes M. Burch
(1994) who found that much conventional environmental engagement resembles
‘instrumentalism’ and is based on the erroneous assumption that environmental learning happens
in short, specialized informational and training programs, rather than through a period of life-
long learning and development. While instrumental learning likely plays a role in mobilization
efforts, it has failed to provide a deeper understanding of the depth of transformation involved in personal and social change.

**Transformative learning in social mobilization.** Over the last two decades a number of scholars (Brookfield, 2000; Bush-Gibson & Rinfret, 2011; Clover, 1995; O’Sullivan, 2004; Schugurensky, 2002; Takahashi, 2004; Wals, 2010) have explored the potential of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow & Associates, 2000) to provide a deeper understanding of the psychological change processes involved in developing a more sustainable society. Transformative learning is based on the work of Mezirow (1991; 2000) and attempts to explain “the process by which people examine problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change” (Cranton, 2006, p. 36). Emerging from Habermas’ (1984) Theory of Communicative Action, transformative learning is based on the assumption that one’s meaning structure is acquired uncritically as we grow up, reflecting unconscious psychological and cultural assumptions (Taylor, 2007). Transformative learning explores how facilitated critical reflection can support one to expose deeply engrained paradigmatic assumptions and ultimately develop new ways of understanding oneself and the relationship of self to others and the world.

Clearly, pursuing transformative approaches in sustainability engagement will require leadership capacities that can support a facilitated ‘working through’ of the unconscious and often anxiety-provoking aspects of psychological maturation and integration (Mnguni, 2010; Riedy, 2010). Transformative approaches provide less of a clear roadmap for change-making and require an ability to trust the process and your own ability for discernment in each unique circumstance. In this sense, working towards sustainability can, accordingly, be thought of as
“representing a search for individual and collective maturity – a search for both mature human relatedness and mature human-nature relatedness” (Mnguni, 2010, p. 117).

**Summary.** While a growing body of literature explores why subjectivity is critical for environmental engagement, somewhat paradoxically, there are few studies that attempt to understand how environmental leaders actually make sense of subjectivity within social change and how they can be supported to integrate subjectivity into their practice. How practitioners understand and influence change involves the realm of leadership. What leadership capacities may be required for sustainability leaders to more intentionally engage the subtle, but powerful subjective aspects of change? How can practitioners be supported to develop these capacities? The next section presents how the field of sustainability leadership and leadership development overall is important for the field social mobilization.

**Leading Edges in Sustainability Leadership: Developmental Perspectives**

“The level and depth of change we seek to bring about in the world is directly related to the scale of change we are willing to undergo ourselves”. Charlotte Millar, WWF (UK)

The dominant thinking about sustainability leadership has developed in parallel with thinking about sustainability itself, reflecting a call for leaders to balance social, ecological, and economic concerns (Brown, 2011). In this study, I have found the field of developmental leadership particularly useful to explore how leaders make meaning of subjectivity, including how they know, feel, and think in relation to facilitating engagement.

**Developmental approaches to leadership.** Developmental approaches to leadership (Cook-Greuter, 2004; Cook-Greuter & Rooke, 1999; Kegan, 1994; Torbert & Associates, 2004) are based on a branch of psychology, constructive-developmental theory, which is concerned with the growth of meaning-making processes and human development. Developmental
psychologists see human development as a sequence of integrated and increasingly complex meaning-making stages in which more mature stages signify greater effectiveness in dealing with complexities in life (Cook-Greuter, 2004).

Kegan (1994) emphasizes the interconnection of both psychological and social factors in leadership development and, like Erikson’s developmental theory (Koch, Bendicsen, & Palombo, 2009), Kegan’s approach is considered a psycho-social theory of development (Snook, 2007). For Kegan (1994) adult (and leadership) development influence how one interprets experience, not just cognitively, but also how one “constructs experience more generally including one’s thinking, feeling and social relating” (p. 32).

Developmental psychology also distinguishes between ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ development, which are both critical to human growth and more specifically to growth of leaders. ‘Horizontal’ development refers to the gradual accumulation of new knowledge and skills, but does not involve a fundamental change in worldview or how one makes meaning. Vertical development is rarer and involves the transformation of a person’s view of reality, an increase in what one can be aware of and, therefore, in that which one can reflect on, influence and change (Brown, 2012). Constructive development theorists suggest that leaders that are more developed psychologically can more effectively understand and work with diverse perspectives and worldviews (Brown, 2012). For example, in recent research that used a developmental approach to understand sustainability leadership, Boiral et al. (2009) and Brown (2012) found that how a leader knows is at least, if not more important as what a leader knows. Leaders with a more complex, systemic, and inclusive worldview are better equipped to lead transformational change, integrate seemingly contradictory outlooks, act collaboratively for solutions, and manage paradoxes and conflicts (Boiral et al., 2009; Brown, 2012).
‘Immunity to change’ in leadership development. For many, sustainability leadership is not just a career choice, it is a whole-self whole-life commitment (Moser, 2012). Therefore, as one might expect, leadership development involves both the head and the heart—our mindsets and the ways it feels when our mindsets are challenged or stretched. Kegan & Lahey (2009) call the way that leaders manage their anxieties in the face of increasingly complex situations an ‘immunity to change’—the anxiety management systems that we develop as defenses to protect our self-identities, minimize risk, and remain in control. Furthermore, these anxieties are often not expressed consciously because, over time, we have developed very effective and robust ways of managing anxiety to avoid discomfort.

So, why does one’s ‘immunity to change’ matter for social change leadership? There is a danger that if leaders only import the added complexity of working with subjectivity without tending to underlying anxieties around it, change efforts will be less than successful. Chances are, anxieties that exist are also preventing new learning and creating a blind spot in how leaders understand the challenges before them (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Further, Kegan & Lahey (2009) found that most leaders are at a loss for how to engage with the anxious and emotional parts of their work in a constructive way. The result is “either to ignore it and hope it takes care of itself, or relegate it to a cornered off space” (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p.318).

Summary. Moser (2012) suggests that ‘getting real’ about environmental leadership today requires that leaders be able to not only face “new, more difficult, and more pervasive environmental challenges” (p.7), but also “be adept in a range of psychological, social and political skills” (p.7) that can hold and navigate what is happening to the world, ourselves, and the people we engage with. Boiral et al. (2009), Doppelt (2010), Moser (2012) and Brown (2012) all suggest that the field of sustainability leadership is becoming increasingly complex. Beyond
technical training and skills building, practitioners must also be willing to expose and explore underlying assumptions and develop new ways of understanding social change that includes the subjective complexity of these problems and solutions.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed a contemporary paradigmatic shift taking place towards a more participatory approach to leading social change. I have explored how this shift has resulted in an increased awareness and inclusion of the ‘inner’ aspects of change such as emotions, psychological defenses, values, ideological dimensions and worldview transformation. I have reviewed literature from the sustainability leadership field and explored how leadership development relates to changes in how one understands the complexity of a situation. Finally, while the desired outcomes of social mobilization are largely agreed upon (e.g. specific behaviour changes, support for climate change policies, etc.) what remains largely unexplored is the ways that leaders themselves understand the psychological and social influences on how we will achieve these outcomes.
Chapter 3. Methodology

Research Design and Rationale

Based on the nature of this investigation, I chose to utilize Lertzman's (2010) psycho-social methodology which draws on the ‘Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method’ (BNIM) (Wengraf, 2001), the ‘Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI)’ (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000), as well as other psychoanalytically informed narrative interview methods that are used to explore psycho-social phenomena (Cartwright, 2004; Clarke, 2002). Psycho-social approaches have supported researchers and practitioners to more deeply understand the complex relationship between inner and outer worlds, powerful affective and emotional forces, as well as socio-structural influences on complex social issues (Centre for Psycho-Social Studies, 2001). There is an emphasis on exploring what lies ‘beneath the surface’ (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009) including unconscious influences, interpretations, and motivations through narratives and free association (Cartwright, 2004). Furthermore, Hollway & Jefferson's (2000) psycho-social methodology is based on the epistemic assumption that the researcher and the researched are “co-producers of meaning” (Clarke, 2006, p. 11). The researcher is, in a sense, facilitating the production of the interviewee’s meaning frame (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) through active listening, the encouragement of free association, and inviting participants into a joint process of sense-making (Hoggett, Beedell, Jimenez, Mayo, & Miller, 2010).

A dialogic relational narrative interview method (Lertzman, 2010) was used in this research for a number of reasons. While many interview methods expect the participant to ‘tell it like it is’ (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000), narrative methods recognize that people often present information in a coherently rationalized way that is socially acceptable, while trying to project a particular self-perception (Clarke, 2006; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). The process of telling a
narrative shifts the emphasis away from the ‘factual’ meaning to how the ‘self’ reconstructs a particular experience, memory, or interpretation (Cartwright, 2004). As Hollway & Jefferson (2000) suggest, “the particular story told, the manner and detail of its telling, the points emphasised, the morals drawn, all represent choices made by the story-teller. Such choices are revealing, often more so than the teller suspects” (p. 35). In this sense, it is not so much the coherence or even the content of the narrative I am interested in, but the way in which the story is told, and the affective ‘container’ that is created when narratives are expressed, thereby facilitating the exploration of unconscious dynamics.

Central to this methodology is the concept of free association within the narrative interview. Using free association, a method used primarily in clinical psychological contexts, the interviewee is free to say whatever comes to mind, thus “allowing unconscious ideas and motivations to come to the fore, rather than following a pre-determined interview schedule” (Clarke, 2002, p. 174). In other words, I am eliciting a story that is not structured according to conscious logic and rational intentions, but through pathways defined by emotional motivations (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). In this research, the participants freely associated between topics, thereby (to some extent) guiding the structure of the interview and allowing me to gain insight into their tacit assumptions, motivations, and anxieties behind social mobilization for sustainability.

Data Collection

Throughout this research I interviewed seven sustainability engagement practitioners two times each, with the interviews being designed and conducted based on guidelines from FANI (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) and BNIM (Lertzman, 2010; Wengraf, 2001). Both interviews were designed and conducted using four principles of psycho-social approaches, with each principle
designed to “facilitate the production of the participant’s meaning frame” (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, p. 34). First, open-ended questions were used in interviews, avoiding ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions. Second, questions were designed to elicit a story or narrative, inviting sharing of experiences (e.g. “can you describe a time when…”). Third, interviews tried to avoid using ‘why’ questions so as to avoid intellectualized or clichéd answers. And fourth, I carefully listened during the first interview so as to be able to ask follow-up questions using the respondents’ own ordering and phrasing, thereby following the flow of how they originally freely associated. This prevented me from imposing my own structure on their narrative.

All interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants and transcribed in detail. The first interview was semi-structured and used a Single Question Aimed at Inducing Narrative (SQUIN) (Wengraf, 2001) to elicit biographical narratives about his/her personal experience and history in leading environmental and sustainability processes. The SQUIN was:

*Can you please share your personal story of how you came to do work on sustainability or environmental issues? Please start wherever you like and say whatever comes to mind. Take the time you need, I’ll listen first and won’t interrupt you.* Following the participants’ initial narrative response, I would use their own language to invite further narrative or elaboration on particular aspects of the story (Wengraf, 2001).

This first interview aimed to situate the participants’ identification as a social change practitioner within the ways they make meaning of the world and their own experiences. It also served to surface how their assumptions about social change and subjectivity may have changed over time as well as their own reflective capacity and areas of anxiety, contradiction, or avoidances (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000).
The second interview was semi-structured and took place approximately two weeks later. It focused on more deeply exploring the perception of subjectivity in relation to sustainability (e.g. mention of personal change, worldviews, emotions, etc.), his/her theory of change, and reflections on his/her own experiences and assumptions in relation to social mobilization for sustainability. The second interview also served the purpose of following up on ‘emergent hunches’ (Boydell, 2009) I had from the first interview and allowed the participants and myself a chance to reflect.

Central to psycho-social methods is the reflexivity of the researcher and the co-production of meaning between the participant and the researcher in the interview process (Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). After each interview, I took time to reflect on my own emotions and impressions, making note of my own fluctuating thoughts and feelings, initial hypotheses, and nonverbal material associated with particular aspects of each interview (i.e. body language, tone, emotional states).

**Participant Selection**

I used purposive sampling to recruit seven engagement practitioners that currently design and lead social mobilization efforts on sustainability and who live in the Vancouver BC area. Based on the literature review, I developed a set of attributes to act as criteria for the participant recruitment. The criteria were that participants:

- Are in senior positions of designing, managing, and/or facilitating engagement initiatives on sustainability;
- Have been engaging with some subjective aspects of environmental issues (for example, through a practitioner / scholar research network, conferences, or workshops); and,
- Have at least 5 years of experience in the field.
Participants were recruited from my own practitioner networks as well as by word of mouth from leaders in the field. In total, four women and three men participated in the study. One participant worked in the private sector, three worked for non-profit organizations, two worked for public sector organizations (including government), and two worked primarily as engagement consultants (a few participants worked in multiple sectors).

Data Analysis

The approach I took to data analysis is consistent with the psycho-social methodology I have chosen, namely drawing on Hollway & Jefferson (2000), Clarke (2002; 2006) and Lertzman (2010). Beyond my own reading in this methodology, I also participated in a three-day psycho-social data analysis workshop given by my supervisor, Dr. Lertzman, in Portland, Oregon in March 2012.

Psycho-social methodologies encourage the researcher to resist the urge to immediately begin coding and theming data—fragmenting it into parts—before it can first be appreciated as a whole. The Gestalt principle (in German meaning form) is used to take the ‘whole’ of everything that has been accumulated about a participant over two interviews (e.g. transcriptions, thorough notes, etc.) and consider a holistic interpretation first (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). The BNIM method refers to following the gestalt as ‘tracing footsteps in the snow’ thereby bringing awareness to the flow and sequence of narratives as they arise in the interview (Lertzman, 2010).

The first level of analysis involved listening to each participant’s set of taped interviews, as well as reading the transcriptions and making notes of the overall narrative, themes, and issues that emerged. I looked and listened for reoccurring words, discourses, metaphors, and themes in the stories. Next, I created a two-page ‘pen portrait’ (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) for each participant. This is a descriptive document that attempts to make the participant ‘come alive’ and
captures the essence of the ‘whole’ person. Finally, I re-read the interviews looking for themes in the narratives concerning the participants’ understandings of psycho-social aspects of change and assumptions about how to influence change. These themes were captured into a thematic table for each participant (see the Appendix for an example). At this stage, I also began comparing interview transcriptions and notes, beginning to make links and looking for similar occurrences of experiences or ways of making meaning between participants.

Ultimately, analysis of the psycho-social interview begins with a reflection of my own motivations for conducting this research as well as reflections during the interview as I pay attention to feeling states and corresponding thoughts or perceptions (Cartwright, 2004). In this sense ‘analysis in action’ is an ongoing part of this methodology.

**Study Conduct**

In total, I interviewed seven participants two times each, for a total of fourteen interviews. All interviews took place in person (except for one participant, for which both interviews took place on the phone), lasted about one hour, and were recorded and transcribed in detail. Eight of the interviews took place in private meeting rooms or offices, three interviews took place in cafes, and two took place on the phone. I conducted one set of pilot interviews and in the end I included this individual as one of my seven participants due to the richness of the data.

The first interview began with a preamble and an opportunity for questions about the process. After the first few interviews I noticed that the unstructured nature of this methodology often left participants wondering where the interview was going. I found it useful to adjust my preamble to let participants know that the first interview may feel more ‘open’ than they were accustomed and not to worry if they felt like they were going ‘off track’. After the first few
interviews, I also began to slightly depart from the FANI and BNIM method. While the method asks the researcher to limit interviewer interventions to “facilitative noises and non-verbal support” (Wengraf, 2001, p.125) I found this created an awkward tone that did not put the participant at ease. Moreover, in this context I was a researcher, but also a fellow engagement practitioner. Thus, I found myself adopting what Hoggett et al. (2010) refer to as a more ‘dialogic stance’ to interviews which still adheres to the psycho-social principles outlined above, but also facilitates a more relaxed atmosphere where my own openness invited more trust and, ultimately, increased willingness to share.

**Trustworthiness and Credibility**

I aimed to ensure credibility of this research by being rigorous in my attention to detail in recording and presenting a true picture of the data and the themes that emerged from it. I have provided a description of all the participants and direct quotes from the interviews so that readers can track all data back to its source. (I will maintain a complete set of the interview transcripts for up to five years.) The context of this study and my methodology are explained in detail, allowing other researchers to decide if the findings can be applied to similar contexts. Finally, I strove to strengthen the integrity of the study by being transparent about my own assumptions, questions, and observations in the analysis of this study.

All measures have been taken to ensure this study abides by ethical standards of Royal Roads University. First, all participants received an introduction letter and invitation describing the study, its purpose, their role, and what will happen with the data. Second, participants were made aware that they can withdraw from the study at any point if they so choose and all tapes and notes would be returned to the participant if they had wished. And, third, in the presentation of the data, pseudonyms were used for all research participants to protect their identity.
Chapter 4. Data Analysis

Introduction

Originally, I had conceptualized this study as an exploration of how psycho-social dimensions were represented in the ‘theories of change’ of sustainability practitioners. I began my analysis by looking at what participants explicitly shared about how they understood and work with psycho-social influences (e.g. values, emotions, worldview, and anxieties). However, I soon realized that a mere analysis of what participants said about subjectivity was not particularly meaningful. All of the participants, in one way or another used psychological terms such as ‘values’, ‘agency’, or ‘emotions’ in their narratives about engagement. What appears much more significant, however, was the way in which the participants were engaging with and negotiating the terrain of subjectivity itself. In other words, how the participants understood the role of subjectivity in engagement, their own awareness of the subjective parts of themselves and others, and their level of comfort with varying degrees of ambiguity, control, and complexity appears significant in how they engage with the psycho-social dimensions of change.

In this chapter I discuss three key findings resulting from my analysis. First, I suggest that the way in which psycho-social aspects of change manifest in environmental engagement is strongly influenced by how practitioners relate to subjectivity overall—in themselves, in others, and in the world. Emerging from this study, I have conceptualized four distinct ways or ‘modes’ that represent how sustainability practitioners engage with subjectivity—the coercive, managerial, pluralistic and innovator ‘modes’. I argue that these modes represent an overall strategy for how the practitioners in this study approach subjectivity in social change. Second, while no one ‘mode’ is better than another in any relative way, I argue that some modes seem better-suited to work with psychological and social complexity in sustainability. And, third, I
address how transitions between one’s ‘mode’ is a holistic undertaking that does not happen in any linear way and can often feel disorienting and uncomfortable as one seeks to make meaning of new levels of complexity.

The Participants

The participants in this study come from diverse backgrounds—culturally, disciplinary, and professionally—and often assume multiple roles in the organizations and companies they work in. What all these participants have in common, and which I am most interested in, is their leadership role in designing, managing, and/or facilitating processes that engage others around the broad theme of sustainability.

In total, there were seven participants in this study—four women and three men.4

Suki works for a number of non-profit, governmental, and private companies as a public engagement specialist and project manager for issues surrounding sustainability. She has 15 years of experience working in the public engagement field and is in her mid-thirties.

Juan works on sustainability projects from regional to international contexts, primarily with non-governmental organizations and large-scale collaborations. He brings 12 years of experience in the field of engagement and is in his early fifties.

Rita has been working in the field of sustainability and environmental engagement for 18 years and is in her mid-forties. She works primarily as a private engagement consultant to government, environmental organizations, and businesses around the world.

4 To protect the confidentiality of the participants names and some details have been modified.
Luis holds a senior management position around multiple sustainability projects, both within a large institution and also within a national sustainability engagement collaboration. He has been working on sustainability engagement for 16 years and is in his early forties.

Maria is both a senior manager for a large national multi-sector collaboration on sustainability engagement and a private engagement consultant. She has been doing engagement work for 12 years and is in her mid-thirties.

Caroline works as an engagement consultant on sustainability to government and non-profit organizations, primarily at a regional and provincial scale. She has been an engagement specialist for 10 years and is in her mid-thirties.

Henry is a senior manager and director in a sustainability firm that works on projects internationally and at a community level. He brings 11 years of engagement experience and is in his late thirties.

A Discourse in Flux: Emerging Paradigms for Sustainability Engagement

A strong theme that emerged from across the narratives of all the participants was the recognition that how engagement and social mobilization is conceptualized in the sustainability field is rapidly shifting. Several participants characterised this as a “paradigm shift” away from an “expert-driven” prescriptive process to one that is more ‘participatory’ and emergent. For example, Suki (interview1) describes this as “an emerging area, a new paradigm, a new way of thinking about change.” Generally, the participants characterised this new participatory paradigm as attempting to invite deeper forms of participation that may result in personal and community empowerment, collaboration between people who hold different perspectives, and the co-creation and co-ownership of solutions (rather than ‘buying-in’ to pre-determined solutions). There also is an underlying assumption that the purpose of engagement in this emerging
paradigm is to support people to learn about themselves (their own values, motivations, and beliefs), learn about others (commonalities and differences) and also develop an internal motivation to ‘work towards the common good’.

As the field of sustainability engagement is in a state of flux towards this “new paradigm,” the psycho-social dimensions of change are becoming more illuminated, often explicitly. For example, some participants talked about creating the conditions for “transformation” or “self-actualization” in their engagement processes while others described the importance of creating spaces where difficult emotions surrounding the ecological crisis—such as despair, loss, and lack of hope—can be “processed” and “worked through”. In short, this participatory paradigm not only implies new ways of working, but also requires new ways of thinking about social change, the purpose of engagement, the role of the facilitator, and the development of new capacities for working with the ‘inner life’ of participants. For this paradigm shift to authentically take hold in the sustainability field, the practitioners themselves (arguably) must possess a new way of making meaning of sustainability, otherwise this paradigm will remain conceptual—a new toolbox of participatory methods applied through a conventional approach to change (Hochachka, 2003). Indeed, in many ways, all the participants in this study are in a process of navigating this paradigmatic transition towards a more participatory approach to engagement, including all the psycho-social complexity this entails.

Negotiating the Psycho-Social in Mobilization: Modes of Making Meaning

My research suggests that beyond looking at whether the ‘inner’ aspects of change are being addressed by sustainability practitioners, we should also be exploring how these subjective aspects of change are being understood. This study illustrates that there tends to be distinct ways that subjectivity is being interpreted, both between participants, but also throughout the lifetime...
and careers of many participants. Within each participant’s narrative there are patterns (and tensions) in how he or she ‘make sense’ of the psychological and social aspects of sustainability at different times in their lives—from cognitive, affective, and behavioural perspectives (Lorenzoni et al., 2007). Cognitively, the participants alluded to what they saw as the purpose of engagement and how engagement made sense in the broader context of sustainability.

Affectively, they described their emotions and experiences in leading engagement (awareness and feelings) and how they felt about others and themselves, including defenses and anxieties in leading change at different points in their lives. And, there was also a behavioural or operative component to their narratives as they described what actions or strategies make sense given their assumptions about social change.

I have conceptualized the different ways that the participants approach subjectivity as a ‘mode’ of making meaning (rather than as a theory of change) for a number of reasons. In this study I was hoping to ‘get beneath the surface’ (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009) of what was being communicated and avoid overly-intellectualized responses where the participant might simply repeat what they may have read or heard about psychological theories, for example. In other words, I was interested in looking beyond cognitive and conscious influences to more fully explore the ‘inner world’ of practitioners and how they relate to the more subtle subjective aspects of sustainability engagement. Beyond a theoretical description of social change, these ‘modes’ represent a more fulsome account of how the participants make sense of subjectivity in themselves and in the world. Each mode illustrates a set of assumptions about social change and a way of relating to subjectivity, which consequently influences the participants’ capacity to engage with the psycho-social dimensions of others. These ‘modes’ have conceptual similarities
to other ‘meaning-making systems’ that are used in the leadership field such as ‘action logics’\(^5\) (Rooke & Torbert, 2005) or personal epistemologies (Cook-Greuter, 2004). I will discuss each of these ‘modes’—coercive, managerial, pluralistic, and innovator—in detail below.

It is important to note that no one participant fits neatly into any one of these modes and, in fact, participants described inhabiting several of the ‘modes’ throughout his or her life and often more than one mode at the same time. In this sense, these ways of making meaning do not represent static ‘types’ of people; however, it is interesting to note that one ‘mode’ did seem to dominate in the complete set of interviews for each participant. Furthermore, participants’ narratives also included descriptions of ‘modes’ that they have observed in the culture of organizations and others they have worked with.

Within the interviews three broad characteristics also emerged from the participants’ narratives and hold relevance for sustainability engagement: control, certainty, and self-reflexivity. The participants often described what they saw as important to ‘manage’, change, or exert influence on, both in oneself, in others, and in the system in which they are intervening—that is, what they attempt to control. Narratives also suggested how s/he made sense of circumstances or experiences when there is varying degrees of certainty, ambiguity, pluralism, or paradox. And finally, the theme of self-reflexivity was apparent in how s/he reflected upon his or her own subjectivity (e.g. assumptions, emotions, and experiences). For example, in the telling of their stories, participants were able to reflect on their own subjectivity to varying degrees. For some, narratives resembled a recounting of ‘objective’ events that had happened in ones’ life.

\(^5\) While these ‘modes’ emerged from the data of this study, there are some resemblance to what Torbert (2004) describes as an ‘action logic’—a way of making meaning that informs a leaders reasoning and behaviour. Since I did not use an assessment profiling method such as the Leadership Development Profile (Cook Greuter, 2004) I cannot claim that the ‘modes’ in my study correlate to Torbert’s action logics.
However, for others, participants were able to embody their former self in the story as it unfolded, often articulating what it felt like, what assumptions were apparent, and what tensions existed and different times in their life.

**The Coercive Mode**

“They are not going to change unless we push them.” (Caroline, interview 1)

Many participants began their stories by reflecting on a younger time in their lives, often when they first became engaged in environmental issues. It was not uncommon for participants to laugh or shake their head at how their assumptions about social change were dramatically different as a young adult from what they are now. What I have called the ‘coercive mode’ illustrates how many participants described a time in their life where they had a “young way of viewing the world” that Caroline (interview 1) characterized as “lacking a lot of complexity”. From this way of constructing meaning, at this time in their lives, the participants were heavily identified with their own perspectives. In this sense, it was almost as if they were their perspective, rather than having a perspective. Caroline (interview 1) describes, “feeling a sense of having all the answers…a sense of righteous indignation and a sense that these people [people in power] must be bad people.”

**You either ‘get it’ or you don’t.** Participants recalled feeling like there was one ‘right’ perspective (theirs and that of people like them) and engaging others around sustainability issues was described almost as a ‘game’ where the role of engagement was to ‘win’ support to move their agenda forward. Moreover, other people (e.g. citizens) appeared to be related to as ‘objects’ that could either support or constrain them in reaching their sustainability goal. There was also a lack of capacity to hold ambiguity and ambivalence, so perspectives and feelings were polarized to create dichotomies—you either win or lose the ‘environmental battle’ and people are
either with you or against you. As a defense\textsuperscript{6}, these polarizations allow one to avoid personal anxieties associated with looking within. Rather, everyone else is ‘wrong’ because you are right. Two participants articulate what their assumptions about change were like at this time in their lives:

If you don’t care about the environment, then you're just into suicide…you either ‘get it’ or you don't, stupid…. God, this is so important to me. I see this issue for what it is; I've dedicated my life to it, and why doesn't everyone else get it? (Rita, interview 2)

[There are] good ways and bad ways to do things: And the people that are doing things the bad way, we have to push them out of power or we have to rise up against them. (Caroline, interview 1)

Because there is a tendency to avoid ambiguity in terms of what is wrong and right, the use of persuasion, coercion (or sometimes manipulation) seems appropriate to achieve sustainability goals:

At that time, engagement to me meant ‘information out’… And changing people… by force in some ways! Like the force of your information is going to push them into some new belief… I really thought in terms of forces. Exerting forces, exerting pressure on structures, and almost that the ‘people part’ wasn’t even really part of it. (Caroline, interview 1)

One of the things about [this] paradigm is that ‘we know what the right answer is and we just need to get you on board’. We just need to persuade you and/or co-opt you. (Maria, interview 2)

\textsuperscript{6} Hollway & Jefferson (2000) draw on the psychoanalytical theories of Freud and Klein to describe how we unconsciously attempt to protect ourselves against anxiety and painful emotions by creating ‘defenses’ such as denial or projection.
Lack of reflexivity. Within the coercive mode participants reflected on having a lack of awareness of their own subjectivity (e.g. assumptions, interpretations, anxieties). They reported feeling emotions of anger, frustration, and even rage, but these feelings appeared externalized onto others and projected outward towards the world. Caroline and Rita describe what this felt like and also how difficult it became to continue to operate from this mode:

Those [environmental] issues or the feelings about that, kind of entered at the surface level…and then you deal with them by just sending them back out in the form of like, you know, anger and like we’re gonna get petitions and do this, and this and this. And um, at some point that little flow, shallow flow, it just kind of, it wasn’t sustainable. It was almost as if it eroded something in me. (Caroline, interview 2)

I had started being like angry with the way things were and how people didn't seem to care about the environment and I was sort of raging, you know, and young. And if I wanted people to change things it was about ranting and raving...” (Rita, interview 1)

Caroline also describes how (at this time in her life) she may have denied inner aspects of change all together:

[Internal change] felt like an excuse to not have to do the hard work… I’ll just change myself and I won’t have to look at the bigger world and look at power structures… I felt like I had to fight that. Who cares what’s happening internally! You have to, you know, push back. (Caroline, interview 2)

Ultimately, participants described this way of understanding change as limited in its complexity, but also ineffective, unsatisfying, and emotionally taxing. Blame was externalized to others (e.g. government, corporations, people who are ‘apathetic’), often resulting in feelings of
isolation—me or ‘us’ against the rest of the world. Caroline (interview 1) described how “there’s a sadness in looking around and feeling like...the rest of you are wrong. It’s lonely.” When sustainability is understood as ‘winning or losing’, participants often felt like they “just kept losing the battle” (Juan, interview 1).

The Managerial Mode

“Sustainability is a very technical problem to solve.” Henry (interview 2)

What I term the ‘managerial mode’ emerges from the way several participants described sustainability and social mobilization as primarily a technical challenge. While subjectivity was acknowledged (for example, values or worldview were named), it seemed to be understood as a piece of the whole that can be isolated, analyzed, and used as a ‘tool’ to influence change. In this sense, engaging psycho-social dimensions was seen as valuable insofar as it is instrumental to achieving structural, policy, or behavioural changes. There was also a strong focus on the rational mind and gaining engagement expertise by seeking out tested tools, methods, and approaches that can deliver efficacious outcomes. Four participants clearly demonstrated embodying this mode in current or past approaches to social change. One participant in particular (Henry) clearly articulated underlying assumptions, thoughts, and feelings associated with the time in his life when he operated from this ‘managerial mode’:

Ten years ago I thought things were much simpler and I thought of the world as a system in its purest sense where it's a matter of optimizing variables. And if you can just understand the system, you can just tweak a variable here, tweak a variable there, tweak a variable there, and just get an efficient system... So I saw it [sustainability] as a very technical problem to solve... [I was] expecting people to be always rational and starting to see that that was not the case. (Henry, interview 1)
Objectivity and rationality. I was struck by how, from the ‘managerial’ approach to engagement, the perfection of knowledge and expertise while ‘managing the process’ to achieve tangible outcomes seemed paramount. Cognitive ways of knowing and objectivity were highly regarded and engagement seems to be understood as a process to strategically bring people together to solve problems and take action. Juan (interview 2) describes how he conceptualizes engagement:

It [engagement] means for us, people taking tangible action. We’ve decided it's not about thinking about something or talking to their friends about it, that could be one of the actions I presume, but it's about, as much as possible, getting people to act.

With a focus on finding ‘the’ right answer, some participants expressed a lack of awareness that their own perspective was in fact constructed and also subjective. Henry (interview 2) recalls:

I was not aware that I held a perspective within the problem. I would say, I thought that my perspective—which was scientific, more objective—was the right perspective. I wouldn’t even say that I was aware of that; I just felt, I was just trained that that's how you see the world and I didn't really know that I was trained to see the world that way.

The people who reflected on this way of approaching change also seem to take on a lot of personal responsibility for achieving outcomes and seem convinced that more knowledge and expertise are critical to “make progress” on tough sustainability challenges. However, when outcomes are not achieved, personal shame or overwhelm can be experienced (e.g. ‘I’m failing’, not ‘the system is failing’). For example, Maria (interview 1) shares her feelings associated with
the personal responsibility she has experienced at times in her life around facilitating social change:

I feel like I can I have the capacity and knowledge um and commitment to make like small changes. But they feel totally insufficient…. And I feel like there’s some shame about that. That I don’t carry the sense of like I see the vision… I describe this sort of, this tension I have between I know I can chip away at the edges and then some shame about not really believing that I can actually meet the scale of the challenge.

‘Not knowing’ is risky. Knowledge and being seen ‘to know’ was important to the identity of those who exhibited a managerial mode at some point in their life. There also seemed to be a certain level of anxiety from ‘not knowing’—it seemed ‘risky’, especially when much sustainability work takes place in a culture where the managerial mode is dominant. Maria (interview 2) explains:

The [engagement] work itself is situated in an overall culture where knowing is valued and not knowing is unvalued or is actually seen as a weakness. And so when I get together with people, it’s rare that there's an opportunity for me to say, ‘it looks really complicated and I'm not sure this is going to work.’ People aren't paying me to do that!

Luis (interview 2) shares a similar sentiment: “I certainly struggle with ‘I don't have all the answers’, sometimes I simply just don't know….I certainly struggle with, ‘I need the answer to this’”.

There also appears to be a strong focus on minimizing ambiguity and attempting to analyze the sustainability problem so as to be able to ‘solve it’. The parts of the problem that cannot be easily analyzed or rationally considered (such as emotions, affect, or identity for
example) has a less clear role in the process. Henry (interview 2) recalls his assumptions about subjectivity at a time in his life when he identified with the managerial mode:

This is a problem; it's clear what the problem is… let's just make progress on it. And some things are hard, they're technically complex, but the human mind can solve these; let's just put a few minds together, we'll figure it out. So in a sense, I would see people as capital to help us solve the problem and that through discussion we could come to terms on the disagreements that would come up…. For me, the role that people played, at that time, was just stripped away of values and perspectives.

**Subjectivity and discomfort.** While there appears to be a cognitive capacity to reflect on ways of thinking about sustainability and social change, there also seems to be a tendency to avoid the discomfort or murkiness inherent in fully reflecting on one’s own subjectivity such as conflicting emotions or values. That is, there is a tendency to ‘smooth things out’ to be ultra-rational and perhaps even deny or dissociate from one’s own subjectivity or emotions:

I think there's so many distractions, like preparing the process and bringing decision-makers on, and all of that kind of stuff, that I find it easy to disassociate from the feelings of it. I think it often expresses itself to me at the start as a feeling of kind of like exhaustion or just disinterest… my actual work of engagement has been so, like full. Maybe there's not as much time around the experiences to make meaning of them… I think the moments of being, like really sitting with it, are rare… Partially because it's a very uncomfortable feeling. (Maria, interview 2)

**A culture of positivism.** Many participants expressed concern that the approach to change manifested by the managerial mode is not able to adequately handle the complexity of the sustainability challenge, nor does it allow space for inner aspects of change— such as values,
emotions, and identity, to be fully engaged and explored. Luis’ narrative (interview 2) describes a tension in how a client conceptualizes social change from a managerial mode:

The clear objectives, the laid out steps, the targets—these kinds of things…unfortunately their view of sustainability is that which will save them money—that is successful sustainability. That which will reduce energy…. sure that that’s an aspect of it, but it’s pretty mechanistic and that's not actually how social change happens.

The shadow side of the managerial mode is that it engages subjectivity (as all engagement does), but it does so unconsciously, thereby utilizing ‘whatever works’ strategies to achieve the desired sustainability outcome. Caroline (interview 1) shared similar reflections to Luis regarding the tension of working within an environment where the managerial mode dominates. Here, her reflections parallel that of Crompton (2010) whose work advocates that practitioners become more intentional in which values their communication and engagement appeal to:

We may think we are appealing to selfishness to get people to do this one action, but we’re kind of ignoring the impact it has more broadly and we’re ignoring the fact that really we want people to take many actions… at a deeper level, we’re talking about transformation. (Caroline, interview 1)

The transition away from the managerial mode was a major theme in this research and is discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections.

The Pluralistic Mode

“[There is] an openness to accept the unknown and trust the process will create new outcomes.” (Suki, interview 2)
I was struck by how many of the participants described a time in their life when a profound transition occurred in how they understood subjectivity in themselves and others. Ultimately, this was illustrated as a move away from a primarily objective, empirical understanding of social change—for example, only focusing on external systems and ‘the facts’—towards a realization that all perspectives are constructed, including one’s own. That is, the practitioner began to see his or her perspective as one of many valid perspectives. I called this the ‘pluralistic mode’ because there seems to be an increased comfort with the relativism and pluralism of diverse beliefs, identities, and values that exist in any sustainability issue. Several participants described this as a realization that where someone is ‘at’ makes sense for them. Rita (interview 2) recounts this shift for her:

It really actually means meeting people where they are…versus, I think it's a lot less about bringing people over to a very particular ecological mindset and more about actually respecting the differences in the values…just seeing everyone has a valid perspective, it's just perhaps different.

In the practitioners who illustrated this mode (which is most of the participants in this study) there also seems to be more awareness of social and psychological complexity, both within the people they are engaging and also within themselves. Participants spoke about designing processes to invite deeper forms of participation where they trust the public to actively co-develop solutions and find common ground, rather than assuming to know how people ought to think or change; Caroline (interview 1) explains, “where you are makes sense and by asking questions we can get to a different place together.” Similarly, Suki (interview 2) suggested that, “It’s just openness to accepting other people’s values and their expertise, openness to saying ‘I
don't know’. [The] old paradigm was competitive, about power and control, non-transparent. This paradigm is about trust and transparency.”

This ‘trust’ Suki talks about also showed up with other participants as a belief that something more innovative, creative, and valuable can emerge from bringing diverse perspectives and values into the process. There is a trust that people have the capacity to engage emotionally and cognitively around sustainability issues. This belief seemed critical in order for practitioners to let go of control and embrace uncertainty. Rita (interview 2) explained that, “I really do think that most people actually have it in their being and heart to truly care about these issues,” and Caroline (interview 2) suggested, “I think that we’re trusting the public to be able to think about a bigger picture, to be able to be motivated by um by something other than self-interest.”

**Comfort with ambiguity and emergence.** What characterizes the pluralistic mode is that practitioners have more comfort with the ambiguity and ‘not knowing’ that is inherent when engaging people in a participatory process. Maria (interview 2) shared that “there are many ways of knowing and such a complexity of influences on the choices we’re making that [it’s] constantly going through a process of redefinition…. What we know is emerging. What we know we don't know is emerging.” There also appears to be a greater capacity to empathize with others and to tolerate different ideas, behaviors, and reactions. Rita (interview 1) describes how her experiences as a facilitator increased her empathetic capacity:

> What that experience allowed me to learn was how to begin to try and step into the understanding of other people's worldviews and why they may care, but not act—to move beyond your own assumptions, and in many ways arrogance, to really come to a place of more compassion.
Whereas the coercive mode is focused on advocating for one’s own perspective and the managerial mode is focused on seeking ‘the right’ perspective, the pluralistic mode is oriented towards inviting the perspectives of others, in order to tap into the “creative intelligence” (Juan, interview 2) of the group. These practitioners intentionally try to suspend their own judgements and beliefs in order to create conditions that invite others to contribute more fully. Luis (interview 1) shares how,

It's really useful to be able to find ways to hear what people are saying and see if you can figure out a way to, in essence, let them know that you get it. Even if I disagree, and even if I'm not going to do what you're saying, I hear you.

**Knowing the self to know others.** Participants that demonstrated a pluralistic ‘mode’ exhibited a high level of awareness of their own assumptions and feelings, including an ability to articulate conflicting emotions and hypocrisies. However, somewhat paradoxically, this increase in self-awareness also created an openness to experience anxiety as practitioners became more attuned to their own personal values and desires, how they might be contradicting them, and how their vision of change related to the scale of the problems they were trying to address. Maria (interview 2) shares,

I think it's true for all of us that there’s just so much tension. Like, I may say in a meeting about how the airline industry really needs to be regulated, and I still fly; you know, I flew to Europe 4 times in 2011!

Moreover, at times, the realization of the psychological, social, and systemic complexity of the sustainability problems, along with awareness of one’s own limitations, resulted in ambivalence (or perhaps guilt) around the loss of belief that one can actually accomplish their goals. As Maria put it, “On one hand there's a desire for me to continue to sustain my
commitment… And on the other hand part of me doesn't feel like it's going to make a difference” (Maria, interview 2).

My immense frustration at what I feel like is, you know, talking about what type of wallpaper we should have in the front cabin of the Titanic… I haven't believed in the program the whole time I've been working on it. And I struggle with figuring out why exactly that is. (Luis, interview 1)

Relativism and discernment. In this mode, practitioners seem able to empathize with many different voices, often being able to understand (and perhaps adopt) multiple perspectives, depending on what is required in the situation. However, sometimes these perspectives are not easily coherent and confusion or a feeling of being ‘split’ may arise as one tries to integrate different parts of oneself. For example, anxieties emerged as Caroline (interview 1) described how she tried to be authentic as she bridges her own way of understanding with those in the context of her workplace where a managerial mode dominates:

Now, I feel like I’m the person who talks about the like ‘touchy feely woo woo’ stuff… It’s a challenge for me to figure out how to talk about it in ways that seem accessible, and um, and how to deal with the feelings of being fraudulent in those moments… And feeling like I can’t have the kinds of conversations I want to have while still being comfortable in those places.

While openness to multiple perspectives is a distinguishing characteristic of this mode, extreme relativism can leave practitioners feeling confused and sometimes paralyzed. For example, if every perspective is equally valid, then how do you move a process ahead when there are conflicts? How does one discern how to proceed? Maria (interview 1) explains: “I started to
see how we are so often sure of our perspective, but yet there are a number of people that are sure of varying perspectives and see how confusing that is?”

Finally, while many participants described the importance of inviting diversity of perspectives, there was less articulation of how to work with the psychological depth that is being brought into the process, such as potentially conflicting perspectives or difficult emotions and anxieties. In this sense, psycho-social dimensions such as affect or emotions were engaged, but in a way that primarily focused on the ‘positive’ or ‘feel good’ aspects of personal and social change such as hope, community values, or increased empowerment. For example, Suki (interview 2) describes how she dealt with the range of emotions and capacities of the people she was engaging in a project; for her it’s about “getting those people from anger and apathy to the place of empowerment where they can sort of dig their heels in at the local level.” However, it is precisely the process of ‘getting to a place of empowerment’ that lies at the heart of sustainability engagement. I found that empowerment and capacity building was described much like an ideal or a vision, however the nuances of how to support these types of processes remained underexplored in the narratives of several participants.

The Innovator Mode

“Leaders must cultivate their own inner landscape as a tool for massive change.” (Rita, interview 2)

For most of the participants in this study, their current way of interpreting sustainability engagement (as a whole) reflected the pluralistic mode. However, there were a few participants that demonstrated a way of making meaning that resembled the pluralistic mode, yet stood out as distinct. I have characterized this as the ‘innovator mode’ and below explain why this it is unique and may have the highest capacity for engaging with psycho-social aspects of engagement.
**Capacity for self-reflexivity.** First, beyond what was said in the interviews, there were a few participants that stood out in how they reflected on and shared their stories. I got the sense that they could ‘see their own seeing’, reflecting on and clearly articulating different assumptions, emotions, and perspectives at different points in their life. In other words, their own subjectivity was very much part of the narratives they shared, almost as if they could reflect on their own psychological development. *It is important to note that this was relatively rare amongst the study participants.* For example, some people’s narratives represented more of a resume of events in one’s life, but rarely shared the underlying assumptions or motivations behind these experiences, what it felt like, or what personal tensions arose.

**Personal change as part of social change.** Second, what distinguishes the innovator mode is that practitioners see an explicit interconnection between their own personal transformation and the development of others. They seem to have a self-awareness that allows them to notice conflicting desires, needs, and emotions within themselves, but rather than feeling confused, ‘split’ or threatened by this, they were capable of ‘owning’ and integrating these parts of themselves and using this tension for personal and social development. Rita (interview 2) shares,

> Those contradictions in myself are actually hugely interesting and powerful for my own learning as well as for ways to connect to other people… recognizing where your own weak spots and biases and your limitations are trapping you, meaning that you're not engaging with people where you could be.

I also noticed that these participants felt comfortable with the vulnerability that comes with putting their own development into the engagement process, including exposing and working through their own inner conflicts, rather than being threatened by them. Rita (interview
2) describes how currently, for her, “it's as much about being willing to change *yourself* as it is to think that you're going to change other people's values.” And, Luis (interview 2) describes how this vulnerability is reflected in engagement processes designed to include emotions, …if I feel some of that vulnerability then I think that helps foster that within the [engagement] work… it feels really grounded when I'm doing that work and there is vulnerability in there as well. I actually feel at times, the better person when I'm doing some of that work because of how I feel like I can respond to people.

Often personal growth and development can be accompanied by distressing emotions and anxiety. Within the innovator mode, practitioners appeared more able to tolerate difficult emotions in themselves, and thus described being more comfortable sharing their full selves, often as a way to invite deeper engagement with others. Rita (interview 1) explains,

When we’re willing to reveal ourselves as leaders in this space and our moments of fear and inadequacy and passion and excitement and inspiration and all of it…those moments of AH HA. Those moments of convergence when you go from seeing the world one way to seeing the world another way. The best way to have anyone experience that is to be willing to do it right in front of someone in a really raw and vulnerable way.

Luis (interview 2) also shares why he has started to create space to surface and discuss emotions in his sustainability work:

I really think it's important for us to actually talk about our emotions within this context because we're in this period of great transformation and if we don't talk about them then something happens to that. They get suppressed or isolate us…And I think it's important to think about where we draw strength from and hope and that connection to possibility. And how do we actually process despair?
Engaging the ‘messy’ parts of subjectivity. Third, participants that exhibited the innovator mode saw dilemma, conflict, and tension within people and groups as not only inevitable, but also as a necessary source for growth and change. These practitioners seem to possess a capacity to see and engage the tension in group processes and use it as a productive source of growth and development rather than ‘smoothing it out’ or avoiding uncomfortable moments. Whereas the pluralistic mode is very focused on creating conditions for collaborative solutions and shared decision-making, the innovator mode seems to conceptualize engagement within a more expansive frame that intentionally builds capacity to become aware of the full complexity of who we are and the issues we are facing—even the uncomfortable parts.

Luis (interview 1) describes how he designs processes for participants to “step into moments of both opportunity and of discomfort…to be able to sit in discomfort, an uncomfortable situation.” He goes further to explain how he has been designing a national process on environmental issues to include space to address potentially difficult emotions:

We actually talk about ‘how do people feel’, about that at a personal level in terms of hope versus despair. How do they navigate that? And these aren't easy questions. We talk about what people think the role of social change leadership is in moments like this…[it] can get pretty raw and people can often feel really emotional in these conversations, which makes sense to me. I do too. (Luis, interview 2)

Henry (interview 2) also describes how he engages tension and discomfort to evoke innovation and creativity in engagement processes:

Well, how I understand creativity is that you need edges to rub. You need dissonance for creativity… And I think that's where it becomes messy and swampy, edges rub… it's almost trying to create an invitation to stay in that very uncomfortable place… So in a
sense, I think we’re working towards making this more explicit in the work that we do and maybe even training people to be able to hold spaces where it's more like a pressure cooker. It can bubble up and we can get a much nicer stew, then if the temperature is low.

**Navigating new territory.** Fourth, the metaphor of ‘exploring new territory’ was frequently referred to by those who illustrated the innovator mode. There seems to be a genuine comfort (and even excitement) about the risk and lack of control involved in thinking about sustainability engagement when the context is always changing and we can’t possibly ‘know’ what is coming next. Henry (interview 2) describes his experience of working with the human dimensions of sustainability:

> It seems like this [sustainability] is an exploration of what it means to be human a lot of times… It's just such a complexity and a mix of—it’s like a territory that is so hidden. I feel like I'm constantly on that exploration. And in a sense the map does not exist and I'm trying piece it together... I see new pieces of the map and I come back to it and its contours, its contents have changed. I thought I had understood that part of the map, and now I don't.

Rita (interview 2) has a similar way of describing her understanding of what sustainability engagement has become for her:

> [I’m] looking at getting underneath the layers, to the root cause, that there is just this like murkiness and need to explore that is very uncomfortable. But it's really important because most of the change is the part of the iceberg that is beneath the water that you can’t see…I want to be okay with the complexity of it.

**Holding personal assumptions ‘lightly’**. And, last, rather than feeling confused or overwhelmed by ‘not knowing’, these practitioners articulated an acceptance and comfort with
the ambiguity and paradox inherent in sustainability issues. In fact, not knowing is seen more as an opportunity than a liability. Henry (interview 2) shares, “now, I would say I'm just more comfortable not knowing… I wouldn't say I now know better how to solve the problem. I'm just much more comfortable not knowing how to solve the problem.” There is also an acknowledgement that we are all in a state of development and that no one is ever ‘done’ developing. Hence, there is a willingness to hold their assumptions lightly, knowing that inevitably these assumptions will change over time. I sense there is a genuine openness to be challenged and surprised by what emerges. Rita says “It's just a constantly evolving experience and I feel like every time I get my hands around a sort of clarity around a piece of it, something else comes along and pushes and challenges that set of assumptions (interview 2). Henry describes:

I feel like I land somewhere, it's just the ground gets pulled from me again. It's learning to walk without a ground… now I would say I hold things a bit more lightly and I'm always willing to be surprised at how things work. (interview 2)

**Transitioning Between Modes of Meaning**

Originally, I was interested in exploring how practitioners’ theories of change may have evolved over time to integrate more awareness of the subtle psycho-social aspects of change. However, I soon discovered that transitions in how the participants conceptualize social change involved more than a simple rethink of theories. These transitions were deeply personal, involving all aspects of the self, including their identity, how they were in relationship to others, and often involved paradoxical feelings of discovery and loss as well as a sense of new clarity accompanied by confusion and disorientation. In this sense, these transitions are more accurately
captured as a shift between ‘modes’ (which I have conceptualized as ways of making meaning) rather than shifts in a particular theory of change.

As people recounted times in their lives when their understanding of the world (and social change) dramatically shifted, there were several conditions that were strikingly similar between participants. First, many participants referred to transitional times as an uncomfortable experience, preceded by a period that felt as though they were “hitting their head against the wall” (Henry, interview 1). More often than not, participants described struggling to understand the psychological and social complexity of sustainability for quite some time. Moreover, it is worth noting that many of the participants had persevered through an often challenging process that called into question their personal assumptions, identity, and way of understanding the world. Henry (interview 2) explains how, being open to new ways of making meaning was profound, but also disorienting:

[I] became aware that it was much messier then I wanted to be and I thought it was. I was not comfortable with the messiness… before I thought I saw everything and now it's a candle that's illuminating the infinite amounts of darkness.

Rita (interview 1) uses a similar metaphor of “going deeper down the iceberg into the dark of the water” to describe a shift in her life where she began developing more awareness of the ‘inner’ aspects of change in herself and in others.

Second, a number of capacities and conditions seemed important to support a transformation in how one makes meaning: for example, willingness to be vulnerable, perseverance, support and acceptance from colleagues, and willingness to experience this metaphorical ‘darkness’ or feel uneasy for a short time. Ultimately, the transitions described in this study transcended the accumulation of more knowledge or skills, although these also were
discussed. Henry (interview 2) suggests this transformation for him is, “much more than just conceptual or cognitive. It's the whole mix of who I am as a person: all the competencies I have as a person.”

And finally, nearly everyone shared similar challenges in trying to authentically work with subjectivity within typical organizational models. Caroline, Maria and Luis described how the organizational cultures that they often work within are dominated by assumptions that reflect the managerial mode; while the practitioners themselves may be comfortable exploring values or emotions (for example) in a process, the clients or decision makers they work with may perceive this inclusion of subjectivity as “touchy feelie” or “woo woo”. Caroline (interview 2) reflects on how it can be personally risky to challenge dominant assumptions about subjectivity in professional settings: “there was an accepted framework for what we think we know about the world and what we think we know about people, and I felt like it wasn’t okay to question that.” Luis (interview 2) also describes how “in the mainstream social change work I don't feel like emotions are something that is talked about a lot or were given a lot of space traditionally.” Caroline (interview 1) shares this concern suggesting that,

[It can] feel very frustrating and lonely in its own way because it’s hard to talk about these things in um in existing… we don’t have these kinds of conversations in a lot of the institutions where from which engagement typically emanates.

**Conclusion**

In reality, all sustainability work engages with psycho-social dimensions, because subjectivity is ubiquitous in the psychological, cultural, and historical context of every experience. However, this study suggests there are varying degrees of awareness and intentionality a practitioner will bring to the ‘inner life’ of the people they engage with in a
sustainability process. For example, someone operating from the ‘coercive’ mode is heavily attached to their own self-identity (including personal assumptions) and is unwilling (and perhaps unable) to call these into question. From the coercive mode, there seems to be an underlying assumption that social change happens by coercing, persuading, or manipulating others to see things the way you do. The managerial mode represents a highly rational approach to sustainability that focuses on gaining expertise, perfecting knowledge, and minimizing ambiguity within a process. Sustainability is seen primarily as a technical problem and people are seen as rational actors that can help or hinder progress.

While someone operating from the managerial mode may be well suited to manage and plan the technical aspects of a sustainability project, this approach to change seems to unknowingly, un-self-consciously, and unintentionally engage with subjectivity. Since one can only be responsible for that which is in one’s awareness, there is an inherent degree of irresponsibility in engagement that neglects the subjective parts of a process, project, or issue. By prioritizing only that which is objective, tangible, or comfortable, practitioners that are primarily operating from the coercive and managerial modes are limited in how deeply and intentionally they can engage the ‘whole’ person, beyond their rational mind. Given that affective and emotional influences are equally (if not more) important (Leiserowitz, 2006; Weber, 2006) to how people respond to environmental issues, it seems critical that practitioners’ awareness is capable of going beyond rational ways of knowing.

Practitioners that reflected the pluralistic and innovator modes seem to bring new capacities for engaging with subjectivity and, subsequently, also bring new intentions for using engagement as a process of empowerment, collaboration, and transformation. The pluralistic mode departs from an exclusively rational mindset to authentically appreciate and invite multiple
perspectives, beliefs, and values into a process. Enhanced awareness of one’s own subjectivity creates an appreciation for the diversity and complexity that exists within all people. There is a belief that we must meet people ‘where they are at’ and that social change results from finding common ground and co-development of solutions. The innovator mode shares much of the characteristics of the pluralistic mode, but is characterised by a belief that one’s own personal transformation and development is inextricably connected to social transformation. Thus, there seems to be a capacity to acknowledge and integrate one’s own limitations, hypocrisies, and anxieties for the purpose of furthering social change. Moreover, the practitioners that demonstrated the innovator mode (e.g. Henry and Rita) assume that sustainability challenges need innovation, and that innovation requires a type of creativity that will emerge from the engagement of our full selves, including uncomfortable emotions, tension, conflict, and anxiety.

In summary, each participant in this study illustrated how they relate to and (at times) embody multiple ways of relating to psycho-social dimensions of sustainability, through what I have called ‘modes’. I interpret these modes as a dynamic way of making meaning that can expose assumptions and illuminate the complexity, but also the limitations, of how subjectivity is being interpreted in sustainability engagement. This next chapter will discuss implications of these findings for the field of sustainability leadership and social mobilization more broadly.
Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

While the subjective psycho-social dimensions of environmental issues are increasingly being recognized as important, how these dimensions are influencing our understanding of social change and sustainability leadership remains unclear and underexplored (Hochachka, 2005). As Boiral et al. (2009) suggest, “environmental leadership has been viewed as monolithic and homogenous, as if all green managers spontaneously share the same values, the same worldview, and the same way of managing environmental issues” (p. 479). This study discovered that beyond what environmental leaders know about the psychological dimensions of sustainability, how they understand and negotiate subjectivity itself is equally (if not more) important in their approach to social change (Boiral et al., 2009; Brown, 2012). In other words, how practitioners understand the role of subjectivity in environmental engagement, their own awareness of the subjective parts of themselves and others, and their level of comfort with varying degrees of ambiguity, control, and complexity appears to be significant in how they interpret and engage with psycho-social dimensions of change. This study illuminates how subjectivity is currently being understood and engaged, but it also demonstrates where practitioners are struggling, what new capacities are likely required for social mobilization, and where further support is needed to develop these capacities.

In this chapter I will present the implications of my findings, including a discussion about leadership capacities that are likely required to more intentionally engage with the ‘inner’ dimensions of sustainability and how we might better support practitioners and leaders to develop these capacities. I conclude with suggestions for future research.
Leadership Capacities for Engaging with Subjectivity in Social Mobilization

A primary focus of sustainability engagement is supporting and facilitating change within people and society. However, intentionally engaging with the subjective, subtle, and unseen dimensions of human systems can be incredibly complicated (Hochachka, 2003). Moreover, sustainability issues themselves are surrounded by uncertainty and ambiguities. To be effective, practitioners must be able to tolerate dynamic conditions where uncertainty, unpredictability, and uncontrollability shape the context (Ferdig, 2007). For many, coming to terms with this ‘messiness’ requires a new way of thinking about change and ultimately requires practitioners to become more comfortable with the inevitable dissonance, diversity, and paradox inherent in human interactive processes (Ferdig, 2007).

This study has demonstrated that a number of capacities must exist if sustainability practitioners are expected to engage more authentically with psycho-social aspects of change: there must be an appreciation for ways of knowing other than the rational; they must be aware of and be able to ‘hold’ multiple and perhaps divergent perspectives; there must be comfort with uncertainty, ambiguity and paradox; and, they must be have a high level of self-awareness and a capacity to be self-reflexive. While it is beyond the scope of this study to explore each of these capacities in detail, three dominant themes from the findings—self-reflexivity, working with diversity of perspectives, and comfort with ambiguity—will be discussed below.

Capacity for self-reflexivity. This research discovered four predominant ways (or ‘modes’ of making meaning) in which the subjective aspects of sustainability are being understood and related to. To be clear, these ‘modes’ did not reflect a difference in knowledge about psychological change processes—in fact, many of the participants had little to no exposure to psychological discourse at all—but represented the subjective aspects they were aware of (in
themselves and in others), able to reflect upon, grapple with, and thus conceptualize in their approach to social change. For example, while participants may have held ecological and democratic values throughout their whole adult life, the way they understood themselves and others in relation to these values had changed over time. They had became more aware of the psychological complexity that exists in people, or as Henry (interview 1) describes it, he became more aware that the subjective aspects of reality is a “Matisse of colours”, not ‘black and white’.

A consistent theme across participants’ interviews is the more they were able to reflect on the psychological complexity of themselves, the more they were able to appreciate these dimensions in others they were engaging.

The capacity for self-reflexivity—the ability to step back and reflect upon your thoughts, assumptions, and emotions—emerged as one of the most important capacities in relation to the way practitioners engaged with the psycho-social aspects of change. Perhaps not surprising, participants most willing to expose and explore their own values, emotions, and identity (for example) in relation to environmental issues, were also most likely to describe how and why these subjective dimensions are important in the environmental engagement work they do.

Schlitz et al. (2010) state that one of the most significant impacts of self-reflexivity is increased ability to ‘hold lightly’ one’s assumptions as “the best working hypothesis one has at the moment” (p. 26). Consistent with Schlitz et al.’s (2010) claim, the participants who demonstrated the ‘pluralistic’ and ‘innovator’ modes in this research also exhibited a high level of self-reflexivity and described “holding lightly” their assumptions about the world. Schlitz et al. (2010) explain that being open to changes in one’s own perspectives, that is, ‘holding lightly’ your assumptions,
…increases the likelihood of developing the ability to hold and consider multiple points of view, to engage with difference, and to find comfort in unfamiliarity… As people become more aware of their own perspective and biases, they are able to see and feel things to which they might otherwise remain blind. (p. 26)

**Capacity to ‘hold’ diverse perspectives.** The contemporary context for social mobilization around environmental issues is often framed as a call for transformative personal and social change (Orr, 2009; O’Sullivan, 2004; Takahashi, 2004). Schlitz et al. (2010) suggest that “transformation is best facilitated by engaging in conversations that consider the perspective of another” (p. 26). By learning about how others understand a situation differently, participants also learn about themselves, often reflecting on their own assumptions and feelings. Friere (1972) refers to this process of individual and collective reflection though dialogue—what he calls ‘conscientization’—a key practice to developing a critical awareness that can challenge dominant social assumptions and support the recognition that each one of us holds personal power.

In order for practitioners to be able to facilitate these kinds of reflective, multi-perspectival, consciousness raising experiences for others, they must be aware of, appreciate, and be able to ‘hold’ diverse perspectives themselves. In other words, practitioners must get comfortable with the inherent paradox and contradiction that comes with engaging different in ways of seeing and being in the world and embrace this psychological complexity as a natural quality of social mobilization. Rather than avoiding the conflict and tension that can result from engaging diverse perspectives, practitioners must be able to explore these differences in a way that enhances the potential for mutual understanding and achieving common ground. Moreover, as the ‘innovator mode’ in this study demonstrated, sustainability leaders may also go beyond
seeing the conflict that comes from exploring differences as something that must be ‘managed’, but also appreciate the potential this tension holds (if engaged carefully) for innovation, creativity, and new lines thinking (Ferdig, 2007).

**Comfort with ambiguity and ‘not knowing’**. The field of sustainability has typically been dominated by leadership approaches that are grounded in theories of change that favour technical expertise, rational knowing, and change management towards pre-determined outcomes (Burke, 2007; Doppelt, 2010; Ferdig, 2007). While social mobilization and environmental engagement are now accepted as an integral part of sustainability, approaches for leading change from a technical orientation still continue to be applied to psychological, social, and cultural contexts, even when outcomes cannot be controlled or predicted with any degree of certainty. For example, Ferdig (2007) states that “we assume that if the change process is managed well, the end state and the steps required to get there—usually determined before the changes are initiated—are likely to occur as planned” (p. 31).

Technical leadership, risk management and careful strategic planning are essential for sustainability solutions today. However, if sustainability practitioners are to more intentionally work with psycho-social dimensions, different approaches to leading change will be required. Rather than controlling for all variables, leaders must develop the capacity to trust the ambiguity and complexity of ‘what emerges’ from the process, surrendering the erroneous belief that we can strategically manage how people will feel or think. Moreover, in this study, several participants described their capacity to accept this lack of control and ‘not knowing the answer’, as an opportunity (rather than a deficiency) to ‘co-create’, ‘explore new territory’, and ‘ask different questions together’. Thus, when practitioners fully embrace the psychological and social complexity of engagement, it also requires them to invite an authentic collaborative spirit
where the practitioner does not see their role as an expert, but as a facilitator, creating the conditions of positive change to emerge, rather than solving people’s problems (Burke, 2007).

**Summary.** In regards to leadership capacities required for working with subjectivity in social change, this study has shown that:

- Self-reflexivity— the ability to step back and reflect upon your thoughts, assumptions, and emotions—is a critical capacity for engagement practitioners;

- With increased self-reflexivity comes an enhanced awareness of the self, but also of the complexity of others;

- Practitioners must be able to acknowledge, ‘hold’ and engage with multiple, diverse, and perhaps dissonant perspectives in order to create conditions for deeper forms of engagement and learning;

- Embracing the human complexity of environmental engagement requires the capacity to trust the ambiguity of ‘what emerges’ from the process; and

- Engaging with the psycho-social aspects of sustainability requires that we are willing to explore our own psyche in order to better understand the psyche of others.

Seriously recognizing these capacities for social change leadership implies a shift away from the role of a sustainability practitioner as an ‘objective observer’, making sense of environmental, economic, political and social systems, but rarely turning the focus inward. It is not to say that objective information and analytical capacities are not important—indeed, they are paramount for any sustainability challenge. Rather, it suggests that as we reconsider the sustainability landscape to explicitly include the inner subjective aspects of ‘the public’, we must necessarily also include the subjective territory of sustainability practitioners themselves.
In summary, it would seem that if the emerging vision for social mobilization is to more intentionally engage with the way the public thinks, feels, and makes meaning, then practitioners must develop some critical capacities to do this well. And (equally as important) opportunities, time, and resources need to be dedicated to support this type of leadership development for practitioners in the field. The next section discusses how practitioners are currently being supported to develop their capacity for understanding and engaging with psychological aspects of social mobilization. I will explore some of the limitations and gaps that exist and present some suggestions for future leadership development.

**Sustainability Leadership Development: Limitations and Opportunities**

Currently, there are a variety of institutes, networks, and projects that are attempting to build bridges between organizations exploring the psychological aspects of change (with climate change being a particular focus) and sustainability practitioners who are engaging, mobilizing, and communicating with the public around these issues. By and large, there have been two primary ways that practitioners are being supported: cross-disciplinary knowledge sharing and training on practical tools, strategies, and methods. In recent years, there has been a growing number of papers, tool-kits, webinars, and conferences to share information about psychological influences on environmental engagement such as values, emotions, and identity, to name a few. For example, in British Columbia, where this study took place, there has been a bustle of province-wide trainings on community based social marketing (McKenzie-Mohr & Smith, 2008), social media as an engagement tool, and ‘scaling-up’ efforts for mobilization on climate change.

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7 Some of these examples include: Climate Access, Mobilization for Climate Action (MC4), British Columbia’s Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions, Columbia University’s Centre for Research on Environmental Decisions, The Yale Project on Climate Change Communication, Psychologists for Social Responsibility and Common Cause UK.
While new knowledge and training has generated some curiosity and enthusiasm, there has been a tendency to overlook the fact that information about subjectivity will be interpreted within the current meaning structures or epistemologies that practitioners currently embody. What this study has demonstrated is that there is not one homogenous way that sustainability leaders will understand and ‘take up’ subjectivity in their engagement work. And, while research about subjectivity holds promising potential, it may only become coherent within one’s theory of change when certain capacities are developed within the practitioners themselves. In other words, it is not likely that research and theory about subjectivity, on its own, will somehow transform the practice of social mobilization. Lundy (2010, p. 45) states, “for real change to occur, those in the process of transformation, particularly those leading the transformation, must possess a new paradigm and put theory into practice.”

In efforts to support sustainability leaders to engage more deeply with psychological dimensions, there has been a tendency to emphasize practitioner training over practitioner development. What I mean by this, is opportunities for leadership development tend to focus on instrumental learning about psychology and methods for engagement, but a ‘thinness’ remains in how we support practitioners to develop more mature ways of understanding people as feeling, thinking, complex beings. While knowledge and training is critical, without appropriate supports to develop new ways of making meaning, simply drawing attention to psychological research and new engagement tools, may be superficial. To borrow an analogy from Kegan & Lahey (2009), it is like you have added new software to an existing operating system. You may have more knowledge about a topic, but without development, your leadership will still be constrained by the limitations of your current operating system—your existing mindset. In other words, as
several participants in this study recognized, we cannot somehow change others, or the world, without also being open to change within ourselves.

**Working with complexity and leadership development.** Before I discuss practical ways that the sustainability field might support practitioner development, a brief revisit of constructive developmental theory and the field of adult development might be helpful. Based on the seminal work of Jean Piaget (1954), constructive developmental theory suggests that an adults’ interpretation of experience and way of understanding the self and the world grow more complex over time. That is, “each meaning system is more complex than the previous one in the sense that it is capable of including, differentiating among, and integrating a more diverse range of experience” (McCauley, Drath, Palus, O’Connor, & Baker, 2006, p. 635). Development in one’s meaning structure happens as a natural unfolding in one’s life, to a certain extent, but also in response to the limitations of existing ways of making meaning. That is, “when contradictions arise in an individuals’ current way of constructing the world, they reconstruct how they understand the world to eliminate the contradiction” (McCauley et al., 2006, p. 365), or they escape the contradiction through mechanisms such as denial or disassociation. Moreover, earlier ways of making meaning are not lost in the developmental process, but are integrated into more complex meaning structures that emerge.

From a developmental perspective, there are two propositions I offer from this research: 1) engaging with psycho-social dimensions intensifies the complexity of sustainability engagement work; this added complexity challenges the assumptions underlying conventional ways of understanding social change for sustainability; and 2) as practitioners begin to engage more intentionally with the ‘inner aspects’ of change, there will likely be some tensions,
discomfort, and lack of coherence as they construct new ways of making meaning that can accommodate the complexity of the context they face.

First, intentionally engaging with emotional, affective, and ontological dimensions of environmental issues adds a layer of subjective complexity that is distinct from the technical complexity that already exists with these issues. Technical complexity is a critical dimension of the sustainability challenge—for example, designing green buildings, setting environmental regulations, and creating plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—and can often be addressed through technical expertise (Heifetz et al., 2009). However, the subjective complexity that this research explored—the realm of affect, identity, and values, for example—cannot be ‘solved’ by any one model, blue-print, or template.

The intangible, unmanageable, and unquantifiable subjective aspects of sustainability require us to reconsider they very way we understand, experience, and interpret the sustainability challenge. In other words, we cannot simply ‘import’ psycho-social dimensions into theories of change that are designed to work with technical problems, without losing a sense of coherence. To borrow an analogy from Westley, Zimmerman, & Patton (2006), it is like the difference between sending a rocket to the moon and raising a child. Both are complex, but in different ways: the former requires high levels of expertise, rigid protocols, and tested formulas. In the latter, expertise will help, but only when balanced with the responsiveness of the child. Moreover, rigid protocols will be counterproductive as the situation is unpredictable, emergent, adapting, and evolving. In short, we must bring the best of our technical expertise and knowledge to the table, but new theories of change will need to emerge that reflect the adaptive nature of working with people and the requirement to tolerate ambiguity, sit with paradox, and engage others patiently and genuinely, rather the ‘fixing’ the problem for them (Burke, 2007).
Second, for some practitioners, the effort to more intentionally work with subjectivity will present a quandary—a contradiction—in how they make meaning and understand change. We know (and what this study confirmed) is that transitioning towards new ways of making meaning can be uncomfortable and often trigger ‘affective roadblocks’ (Schlitz et al., 2010). It can feel disorienting to expose and examine your own biases, assumptions, and feelings, especially when your sense of identity, sense of efficacy, and network of relationships may be heavily attached to a particular way of conceptualizing social change. Furthermore, in this study participants demonstrated various ways that the ‘self’ was protected from anxiety in the context of social change work—for example, by disassociating from difficult emotions or attempting to maintain high levels of control. Changing the way we make meaning—for example, from a ‘managerial mode’ towards a more ‘pluralistic mode’—requires leaders to become vulnerable, putting at risk what has been a very well-functioning way of protecting oneself.

Kegan (1994) calls the ways we avoid the uncomfortable parts of change an ‘immunity to change’—an unconscious ‘system’ that prevents us from experiencing anxiety, but at the same time prevents development towards more complex ways of making meaning. So, what would it look like to more intentionally support practitioners to overcome their ‘immunity to change’? How can sustainability leaders be supported to build the capacities required to more intentionally and effectively support people to deeply engage around sustainability issues?

This research has provided a starting place for exploring the various ways practitioners are making meaning of subjectivity and I have identified the capacities that may need to be nurtured to more fully integrate psycho-social dimensions in environmental engagement. While further research is required to explore how these capacities can be supported and developed, I will provide some high level suggestions here.
Recommendations for Sustainability Leadership Development

Supporting leaders to ‘sit in the soup’. To start, beyond knowledge sharing and skills training, I believe we must also support practitioners to develop core capacities in how they make meaning of subjectivity in sustainability engagement. And, transitions in how we make meaning—epistemological shifts—are often triggered by a ‘crisis of meaning making’ (Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Kuhn, 1970). For example, the participants in this study described times of transformation as a disorienting dilemma where current ways of understanding the world and social change no longer made sense, but new ways of understanding had yet to become clear.

Kegan & Lahey (2009) suggest that what can actually support leaders to engage in transformational changes (rather than avoiding the discomfort of disorienting dilemmas) are the conditions of ‘optimal conflict’. That is, leaders feel the frustration that comes with experiencing the limitations of current ways of knowing, and sufficient supports exist so that they are not overwhelmed by this tension, but are also not able to escape it either. One of my personal mentors calls this ‘sitting in the soup’—the uncomfortable space in which you are letting go of long held assumptions, but new ways of making sense are not yet clear.

Creating conditions for ‘optimal conflict’ requires that we become more comfortable with the ‘messiness’ of leadership development, accepting that it will lead to some coming apart before it leads to a coming back together (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Baron & Cayer (2011) draw on Winnicot's (1965) concept of a ‘holding environment’ to describe how leadership development can be intentionally facilitated and supported through these ‘messy’ conditions. They suggest that small groups working with a facilitator, mentor, or coach over a period of time can support participants to discover taken-for-granted assumptions and make these available for reflection and discussion. An example of this is a community of practice—networks of people
who share a similar professional practice, but commit to come together regularly in a process of mutual inquiry, knowledge sharing, and development (McCauley et al., 2006). Communities of practice could still engage with emerging research on psychological and social aspects of sustainability, however there would be facilitated support to take the learning beyond an intellectual level, including a conscious look at oneself—ones’ own assumptions about change—and openly discuss how this new information challenges or confirms how practitioners make meaning of sustainability at this point in time.

**Create ‘safe’ opportunities for reflection and dialogue.** An important conclusion from this research is that the ongoing practice of leadership development is critical to a ‘subjectively aware’ sustainability practice. And, for this to happen, context is important. We must create opportunities for reflection and dialogue in a safe, ongoing, and supported way. While epistemic transformation can and does happen privately, transformative learning theory suggests that it is best supported when it happens in a relational dialogic context (Brookfield, 2000; Schugurensky, 2002) where there are conditions of solidarity, trust, empathy, and safety (Taylor, 2009).

It was concerning that several participants in this study lamented the absence of safe, supportive, or practical spaces (within organizations and within the sustainability movement generally) where this type of reflection, questioning of assumptions, and non-judgemental dialogue can take place. Moreover, a few participants suggested that they did not have the words to even talk about subjectivity in a way that did not seem “touchy feelie, woo woo” or “completely off the wall” in their work environment. As a start, groups of practitioners may need to claim spaces outside of traditional organizational contexts where they can explore these ideas together, ultimately becoming more comfortable and confident in how they talk about and make sense of subjectivity themselves. To reiterate, it is important this happens in groups if possible.
Create opportunities for learning through action. While I have focused this discussion on the psychological development of practitioners, it is also worth noting that there is an inherent and ongoing tension in how individual transformation connects with social action and social change. We cannot assume that more efficacious sustainability processes will automatically or naturally emerge when practitioners develop a new way of understanding subjectivity. Schugurensky (2002) cautions that if critical reflection and development are not connected to action, there is a danger that these processes will nurture leaders that are more ‘enlightened’ than before, but potentially solipsist and disconnected from reality. Thus, I am suggesting that a focus on practitioner development happens in a context of collective reflection-on-action, what Friere (1972) describes as ‘praxis’: reflection and action upon the world and oneself in order to transform it. In this way, subjectivity is not engaged with simply as a concept or an idea, but as a dimension of reality that we experience through all of whole selves—how we think, feel, and act.

Concluding Reflections

The difference between a future ranging from outright catastrophe to the evolution of global civilization moving toward justice and sustainability will come down to our capacity to understand ourselves fully at all levels, ranging from individuals to the deeper and wider currents of mass psychology . . . At all levels, leaders must be master psychologists, empowering and inspiring, not simply ruling, followers. David Orr in (Psychologists for Social Responsibility & Friends of the Earth, 2010)

I began this thesis reflecting on how my own experience as a facilitator of environmental engagement has left me curious about why we seem to increasingly acknowledge the importance of ‘inner aspects of change’—such as values, emotions, and worldview—but then continue to prioritize and focus our attention on the tactical and tangible areas of social mobilization. A
catalyst for this research was my sense that practitioners are becoming more critical of the ‘taken-for-granted’ positivist assumptions about how change happens and, as a result, are beginning to genuinely inquire about the ‘people change’ side of social change—the subtle psychological and cultural dimensions that influence how we think, feel, and act. While there is a growing discussion about why the psycho-social aspects of change are critical to the efficacy of environmental communications and engagement initiatives (Crompton, 2010; Leiserowitz, 2006; Norgaard, 2011; Whitmarsh & Nye, 2010), I notice there is a lack of attention placed on understanding how sustainability practitioners actually make sense of these ‘inner’ dimensions of change. As practitioners more intentionally work with the subjectivity that ‘lies under the iceberg’ of social change, what assumptions are challenged, what tensions arise, and how do they negotiate this? This thesis attempted to investigate these questions.

In this research I sought to explore how those designing and leading engagement initiatives on sustainability ‘make sense of’ and negotiate psycho-social dimensions within their approach to social change. Using a dialogic narrative methodology (Clarke, 2002; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Lertzman, 2010; Wengraf, 2001) I interviewed seven sustainability practitioners. This method allowed them to freely associate by sharing their own personal stories of leading engagement initiatives, including their underlying motivations, feelings, thoughts as well as areas of anxiety, contradiction, or avoidances. My analysis of their narratives led me to conclude that: 1) how psycho-social aspects of change show up in engagement is strongly influenced by how practitioners make meaning of subjectivity overall—in themselves, in others, and in the world. Within the participants’ narratives, four main ways of making meaning—which I have conceptualized as the coercive, managerial, pluralistic and innovator ‘modes’—emerged and influence how the practitioners approach psycho-social aspects of engagement; 2)
while no one ‘mode’ is better than another in any relative way, some modes seem better suited to tolerate the lack of control, ambiguity, and complexity inherent in working with psychological dimensions of change; and 3) transitions between one’s ‘mode’ is a holistic undertaking that does not happen in any linear way and can often feel disorienting and uncomfortable as one seeks to make meaning of new levels of complexity.

It is rare that one gets an opportunity to deeply listen to the personal and candid reflections of others. Often, participants would share personal experiences, interpretations, or dilemmas that stretched me to reflect on my assumptions in new ways. Indeed, I can recognize each of the ‘modes’ I have described as multi-faceted parts of who I am and how I have understood myself, my practice, and the world throughout my life.

Clearly, leadership for sustainability at this point in time is a tall order for anyone, especially when we take into account the psycho-social dimensions of engaging, mentoring, educating, and supporting others around these complex issues (Moser, 2012). Practitioners require capacities that go beyond mere support for environmental values, strategic thinking, or management expertise. They must also have comfort with unfamiliarity, ability to hold multiple perspectives simultaneously, the ability to see and sit with paradox, the capacity to think systemically, and a high level of self-awareness, to name a few (Boiral et al., 2009; Brown, 2012; Moser, 2012; Schlitz et al., 2010). Furthermore, these capacities are less related to what we know and more a reflection of how we make meaning or how relate to the world.

This research illustrates that navigating the psycho-social aspects of engagement requires not simply the acquisition of new knowledge or skills, but new ways of understanding ourselves. Unless we take a conscious deep look at ourselves and our own assumptions, anxieties, values, and ways of perceiving the world, how can we expect to engage with the values, emotions, or
assumptions of others in a meaningful and authentic way? This is not an easy shift of perception to make. We live in a time where solutions are urgently needed and shortcuts for transformation (if this is possible) are tempting. But, this study has shown that evolving the way we understand and approach social change is not a straightforward task in which leaders can change their practice by simply reading the latest literature and adopting the newest engagement tools and techniques. While new information and tools creates a shift in what we do, we must be cautious of mistaking an innovation in our methods for an innovation of a paradigm. In our eagerness to get down to action, we cannot bypass the types of processes that help sustainability leaders develop themselves—how they make meaning, what they are aware of (in themselves and others) and thus what they are able to reflect on, consider and take responsibility for.

**Future Research**

It is only recently that the topic of psycho-social dimensions of sustainability has begun to be explored in earnest. As Clarke & Hoggett (2009) suggest, “psycho-social studies has emerged as an embryonic new paradigm in the human sciences” (p. 1). This new paradigm has opened space for researchers to explore ‘beneath the surface’ towards the unconscious dynamics that exist at the ‘meeting point’ of inner and outer forces (Clarke & Hoggett, 2009). In relation to future research regarding how sustainability leaders understand and include subjectivity in their change-making efforts, I believe the methodologies that have emerged from psycho-social studies (such as the use of free association and biographical interview methods) hold much potential to research beyond the discursive aspects of environmental engagement.

Important topics for future research might explore how leadership development is embedded and supported in sustainability organizations. What are some of the barriers to working with subjective aspects of change? How are these barriers overcome? What practices or
structures can facilitate a ‘psycho-socially’ aware sustainability practice? An equally important topic for future research is an investigation of how practitioners make space for subjectivity in engagement processes. For example, how does an engagement process look or feel different when leaders consciously attend to psycho-social influences?

These are challenging questions for challenging times. They are not merely questions for university-trained researchers and psychologists. As you read this study, I hope you have reflected on your own experience, noticed your own responses, and shaped your own conclusions. After all, it is only when these questions are taken up by practitioners themselves, paying attention to their own experience as well as that of the scholars and ‘experts’, will we begin an ‘innovative falling forward’ towards an social mobilization practice that can understand, integrate, but also work with the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ aspects of change (Hochachka, 2003, p. 13).
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## Appendix: Excerpt from Henry’s Thematic Table

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Interview 1</th>
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<th>Interview 2</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>104-105</td>
<td>“I started more with a biophysical, my mind was engineer-like, and I started attacking the problem, solving the problem within engineering minds, with systems, putting them into place.”</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>“So I saw it as a very technical problem to solve and not the complex adaptive human nature of it.”</td>
<td>It’s interesting not only how he saw the problems as clear and solve-able, but also how he understood the participants’ roles at this time in his life: “stripped away of values and perspectives”.</td>
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<td>109-110</td>
<td>“[I was] expecting people to be always rational and starting to see that that was not the case.”</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>“For me the role that people played, at that time, was just stripped away of values and perspectives.”</td>
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<td>135-136</td>
<td>“10 years ago I thought things were much simpler and I thought of the world as a system in its purest sense where it's a matter of optimizing variables. And if you can just understand the system, you can just tweak a variable here, tweak a variable there, tweak a variable there, and even just then get an efficient system.”</td>
<td>66-71</td>
<td>It was, this is a problem, it's clear what the problem is, from one prospective-my perspective-[laughing]-it's clear what the problem is, let's just make progress on it. And some things are hard, they're technically complex, but the human mind can solve these, but let's just put a few minds together we'll figure it out. So in a sense I would see people as capital to help us solve the problem and that through discussion we could come to terms on the disagreements that would come up</td>
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