

Inner Sustainability: Exploring experiences of needs, satisfaction, and frustration in
sustainable lifestyle practices

by

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BES, University of Waterloo, 2008

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Abstract

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Sustainable development and sustainable living, a key pursuit of our times, must be premised on human well-being in order to be truly sustainable. Although many have speculated on the possible interaction between sustainable lifestyle practices and the well-being, or satisfaction, of practitioners, there has been limited empirical study of this connection.

The purpose of this study was to explore how people experience satisfaction and frustration in conjunction with the practice of a sustainable lifestyle. Semi-structured interviews were completed with six sustainable lifestyle practitioners associated with Transition Victoria, a community resilience initiative in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Interview transcripts were synthesized into explanatory narratives highlighting experienced outcomes of a sustainable lifestyle practice. A further thematic analysis was completed to identify themes to which participants attributed meaning and potential satisfaction. The results of this analysis were interpreted to draw conclusions about the sorts of satisfying and frustrating experiences that were related to sustainable lifestyle practices for these participants.

Results of the study revealed twenty-six salient themes of important, potentially satisfying phenomena anticipated and experienced by participants. These included needs for food, shelter, transportation, money, health, well-being, relationships, connection, communication, support, recognition, legitimacy, effectiveness, autonomy, action, enjoyment, knowledge, interest, nature, meaning, and identity, and also needs to pursue certain values. Various actions, relationships, and contexts constituting sustainable lifestyles had implications for both satisfying and frustrating essential needs for security, belonging, esteem, competence, knowledge, creativity, leisure, and autonomy. In addition, the pursuit of a sustainable lifestyle was related to the need for and satisfaction of meaning.

The results of this study suggest that, for this small group of participants, sustainable lifestyles hold multiple opportunities for satisfaction and frustration of various needs. Groups wanting to support sustainable lifestyle practitioners might consider ways to maximize opportunities for satisfaction and meaning, and minimize sources of frustration. It is recommended to conduct further research with a larger sample of participants, to extend these findings to more general conclusions about human experiences with sustainable living.

Keywords: sustainable lifestyles, needs satisfaction, qualitative analysis

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Dedication

Dedicated to the memory of Denise Dunn (1946 - 2012)

She was a brilliant champion of all things community resilience, and my
introduction to the Transition movement in Victoria, BC

Introduction

Sustainable development, a significant pursuit of our times, is commonly defined as the process through which present generations meet their own needs, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs¹. Actors, from individuals to international bodies, take action towards sustainable development by reducing environmental impacts, improving human conditions, and maintaining economic systems. Individuals' pro-environmental behaviours are valued by proponents of sustainable development for the objective contributions they can make to the sustainability of ecological systems.

But, who are these nameless individuals? And, how do they feel about their ostensibly sustainable living? What matters to them? Why might they choose to act in the pro-environmental ways they do, while others do not? And, perhaps most importantly, do they experience satisfaction in relation to their sustainable lifestyle practices, and if so, how?

The present study seeks to explore the subjective experiences, and particularly the attributions and experiences of needs and satisfaction, of participants practicing a sustainable lifestyle. In contrast to the 'mainstream' belief that sustainable living fundamentally requires sacrifice and dissatisfaction, theorists of sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles speculate that practicing a sustainable lifestyle could theoretically offer a 'double dividend' of improved conditions of environmental sustainability, along with equivalent or better quality of life and satisfaction for practitioners. Psychological studies have provided evidence of correlation between pro-

¹ "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (WCED, 1987, p. 43)

environmental behaviour and subjective well-being. Academics have speculated about the mechanisms by which practicing a sustainable lifestyle may grant satisfaction for various needs. Empirical studies have illuminated some of the subjective experiences and influences on choice associated with a sustainable lifestyle. However, this area of study still needs empirically evidenced examinations of how, specifically, sustainable lifestyles might provide experiences of satisfaction for essential needs, as well as how this experience seems to interact with the choice to engage in sustainable practices. In Chapter 1, I seek to communicate what is known and not known about the intersection between sustainable living and satisfaction, in order to ground this research and position it as worthwhile.

In Chapter 2, I describe the research methods used in this study, and particularly the unique contributions of taking a qualitative and narrative approach to this research. To contribute an initial foray into the open question of how sustainable living might contribute to satisfaction I conducted exploratory, qualitative, interview research with participants who self identified as pursuing a sustainable lifestyle. In June 2011, I interviewed six² people associated with Transition Victoria – a community resilience initiative based in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada; these included three men and three women, ranging in age from late twenties to mid-sixties. The semi-structured interview framework design was influenced by methods of narrative inquiry, intended to yield storied and narrativizable data. The interviews included questions about participants' general life experiences, their sustainable lifestyle practices, involvement with Transition Victoria, needs and experiences of satisfaction, and anticipations of the future. I then used

² A seventh participant was interviewed but later withdrew from the study.

a narrative analysis to analyze this data, constructing the interview transcripts into explanatory stories highlighting how experiences of satisfaction and frustration arose. I followed this with a thematic analysis of practices, attributions of satisfaction, and experiences of satisfaction and frustration.

In Chapter 3, I present the results of the narrative analysis, in the form of synthesized narratives of each participant's story. I produced a set of six case studies illustrating six unique experiences with sustainable living, highlighting satisfactions and frustrations that arose and how they emerged from the context of a life story. These narratives may serve as case studies of individual experiences with sustainable living, providing narrative examples to allow researchers and potential sustainability practitioners alike to envision possibilities.

Chapter 4 includes results of the thematic analysis. First, I summarize participants' self-reported impact-reducing and other sustainable lifestyle practices, to illustrate that their lifestyles are indeed 'sustainable' to some degree, but also that their lifestyles include meaningful practices with less clear implications for impact reduction. Next I describe the process and results of the thematic analysis, to analyze themes representing phenomena with the potential to contribute to participants' satisfaction as they practice sustainable living. I identified twenty-six themes or 'needs' expressed in participants' accounts. Descriptive results are followed by extensive discussion of the relation of these findings to past research and to the theoretical framework used to contextualize the research problem. Some of the needs appear to have salient gender- and age-related patterns, and (im)materialism and meaning are also discussed. I conclude that sustainable living, for these participants, appears to offer various sources of satisfaction

and dissatisfaction for important needs, and is undertaken with some accepted sacrifice or frustration.

I conclude the thesis with commentary on the distinctiveness and limitations of the study and design, speculative discussion on what findings indicate for theory and practice with regards to promoting and supporting sustainable living, and some preliminary recommendations for groups wishing to support and engage practitioners by considering salient, lifestyle-related needs.

Eco-philosopher Paul Maiteny suggests: “Human induced ecological and social deterioration arises due to cultural constructions - beliefs and worldviews - about well-being. We believe such-and-such activities will bring satisfaction. These, in turn, are expressions of inner psychological needs, desires and demands” (Maiteny, 2000, p. 348), and furthermore that “To find meaning, we must ask the actors, get to know their culture, get ‘inside their heads’, get to know something of their symbolic worlds” (Maiteny, 2000, p. 343). Understanding how people attribute and experience satisfaction, especially in relation to practices of sustainable living, could help us to better understand how to support and encourage such practices in ways that meet human needs.

1

Defining Sustainable Lifestyles and Exploring Evidence for Satisfaction

Sustainable Lifestyles

Within the context of the multi-scale intervention to bring human impacts within biophysical limits, one way of conceptualizing individual contributions to sustainable development is in the form of sustainable lifestyles. In the famous formula representing environmental impacts of human societies, affluence (complementing population and technology) may be considered to substitute for lifestyle (Jackson, 2008). Today, more than ever before in human history, many people have the freedom to choose³ elements of their lifestyles. Seeing in this freedom an opportunity, some sustainable development theorists have promoted the idea of ‘sustainable lifestyles’ as a useful way of understanding - and perhaps encouraging - individual action towards sustainable development (Evans & Abrahamse, 2009). Although the concept of a sustainable lifestyle is much discussed in “media, comment and environmental policy” (Evans & Jackson, 2008, p. 14), it eludes concrete definition. A clearer understanding, it is hoped, could contribute to facilitating support and promotion of such individual interventions in sustainability (Evans & Jackson, 2007; Jensen, 2007).

The sociologist Anthony Giddens provides this comprehensive definition, of the modern concept of lifestyle, as “a more or less integrated set of practices which an

³ For much of human history, lifestyle choices have been more or less constrained and pre-determined by one’s position in society; only with the rise of modernity and more widespread material affluence did the choice element of lifestyles expand (CSD, 2004). Now, material consumption is a substantial part not only of meeting needs, but also expressing identity (Mont, 2008; Jensen, 2007; Giddens, 1991). There are many varied options constituting different lifestyles available now to people, to meet their needs and to express themselves. This modern flexibility has implications for the rise of unsustainable resource use, as people have sought to express themselves through unchecked material consumption. Perhaps this ability to choose likewise offers an avenue to potential responses and solutions to this crisis of environmental sustainability.

individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfill utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity” (Giddens, 1991, p. 81). Lifestyle encompasses the actions and choices an individual makes in their day-to-day life, to meet their functional needs, strive for goals, and enact their self-expression (Jensen, 2007). Visible acts of the lifestyle are shaped by underlying values and attitudes (Jensen, 2007; Scott, 2009), which are likewise influenced by the context provided through interactions, pressures, norms, media messages, implicit world-views, availability, and possibility; such underlying influences may not be consciously perceived (Jensen, 2007). Individuals use lifestyle choices to express their identity by affiliating themselves with, and differentiating from, others. Lifestyles are conservative and dynamic, being founded on underlying constant values, and changed by new experiences and contexts (Centre for Sustainable Development [CSD], 2004; Jensen, 2007). Choices constituting a lifestyle take place in the domains of food, transportation, housing, clothing, consumption, education, occupation, politics, religion, and beyond (Jensen, 2007). When these choices have implications for mitigating environmental impacts, they may be considered to constitute a sustainable lifestyle.

Sustainable lifestyles, as a theoretical concept, are often associated with the closely related concept of sustainable consumption. Many of the lifestyle choices with implications for sustainability have to do with consumption, but, as a coherent set of practices with complex reasons and outcomes, a sustainable lifestyle cannot be reduced to its consumptive activities. The United Nations Environment Programme’s [UNEP] Sustainable Lifestyles Taskforce provides the following conceptualization of sustainable lifestyle:

What is a sustainable lifestyle? Lifestyles are part of our identity; people express their social position, political preferences and psychological aspirations to others through them. [...] For the Taskforce, sustainable lifestyles means rethinking our ways of living, how we buy and how we organize our everyday life. It is also about altering how we socialize, exchange, share, educate and build identities. It means transforming our societies and living in harmony with our natural environment. As citizens, at home and at work, many of our choices - on energy use, transport, food, waste, communication and solidarity - contribute towards building sustainable lifestyles. (Taskforce on Sustainable Lifestyles, n.d., p. 9)

From the Centre for Sustainable Development [CSD]:

Sustainable lifestyles are patterns of action and consumption, used by people to affiliate and differentiate themselves from other people, which: meet basic needs; provide a better quality of life; minimise the use of natural resources and emissions of waste and pollutants over the lifecycle; do not jeopardise the needs of future generations. (CSD, 2004, p. ii)

Definitions of ‘sustainable lifestyle’, in global development and research documents (e.g. Evans & Jackson, 2007; 2008; Hobson, 2002; Mont, 2008; Scott, 2009;), tend to refer to one or more of the following: objective patterns of action, choice and consumption; ecological impacts, resource use, and pollution; social impacts, well-being, and needs satisfaction; and individual considerations like identity and life-project. Besides externally-imposed definitions, sustainable lifestyles are also open to self-definition by those individuals who believe themselves to be practicing such lifestyles (Evans & Jackson, 2007).

Actions and choices may be the characteristics by which sustainable lifestyles are most clearly discernible. Sustainable lifestyle practices can include consumption decisions along with non-consumption activities like leisure, education, and socializing

(Mont, 2008; Taskforce on Sustainable Lifestyles, n.d.). The activities of a sustainable lifestyle commonly take place in the behaviour clusters related to housing, transportation, food, purchase choices, recycling, reducing consumption, reusing, and domestic water and energy conservation (CSD, 2004). A list, published by the Centre for Sustainable Development (CSD), communicates what this organization believes to be some of the ‘most effective’ choices for sustainable living, including items such as “living in multiple person households”, “modal shift from cars to public transport”, “switch from fossil fuels to renewable energy”, “recycle household waste”, “fit a toilet water-saving device”, “reduce meat and dairy consumption”, and other choices in the domains of housing, transportation, energy, waste, water, food, and other consumption (CSD, 2004, p. vi). Factors thought to influence the choice of these activities include: “economic forces” (e.g. income, prices, marketing), “technological progress” (e.g. availability of technologies, infrastructure), “political settings” (e.g. dominant growth model, information, environmental protection policies), “environmental issues”, “sociological and cultural contexts” (e.g. class, education, values, fashion, family, friends, history), and “psychological determinants” (e.g. emotions, needs, desires, identity) (Sustainable Lifestyles and Education for Sustainable Consumption, n.d., pp. 3-4, fig. 1).

Actions of relevance to a sustainable lifestyle tend to be identified for their anticipated contribution to reducing environmental impacts. A UNEP report on sustainable lifestyles notes “the impact of our lifestyles is a result of the resources we consume” (Taskforce on Sustainable Lifestyles, n.d., p. 10). Analysis indicates that choices in food, housing, and transportation have the greatest influence on household-level environmental impact, with clothing, domestic items, appliances, hygiene, cleaning,

holidays, leisure activities, investments and social choices also contributing (Concept Paper for the Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles, n.d., p. 10; Lorek & Spangenberg, 2000; CSD, 2004). Such activities and choices have implications for the depletion of resource-provision systems (land, water, minerals, living organisms, ecosystems), pollution, and biodiversity loss (CSD, 2004). Some researchers, such as those at the CSD, seek to quantitatively measure the impacts of sustainable lifestyle activities, using indicators for energy consumption, resource use, and waste production (CSD, 2004). Examples of such indicators, provided by CSD, are “units of electricity used per household per week”, “ownership of various electrical appliances (e.g. freezer, tumble drier)”, and “percentage of electricity generation from renewable resources” (CSD, 2004, p. iv). The Ecological Footprint is another set of indicators used to help individuals calculate an approximation of their personal lifestyle impact, and to see which practices contribute to this impact (see Global Footprint Network, 2012). Defining sustainable lifestyles by environmental impact is limited by the availability of relevant data and calculation methods (Taskforce on Sustainable Lifestyles, n.d.). While such quantitative indicators of sustainability may be more objective, qualitative conditions of sustainability are inappropriately excluded. Furthermore, while many people are interested in calculating the environmental impact of their lifestyle, objective measures of impact are one facet of a lifestyle that also includes human dimensions.

Discussions of ‘sustainability’ often focus around the state of environmental systems, but this concept also includes human social and economic dimensions. Sustainable lifestyles, if they are to contribute to sustainable development, must not only reduce environmental impacts but must also “deliver [...] a good quality of life” (Evans

& Jackson, 2007; Scott, 2009, p. 1). A low-impact lifestyle that results from poverty, oppression, or other situations in which people are unable to meet their needs, cannot be said to be a sustainable lifestyle (CSD, 2004). Socially sustainable systems include conditions of “social equity, health and wealth”, “access to resources”, “free[dom] from ill health caused by other people’s lifestyles”, and “equality” (CSD, 2004, pp. 4-5). Quality-of-life and economic development indicators measure socially sustainable conditions⁴. Aside from the implications of personal lifestyle choices on distant others, a lifestyle cannot be said to be sustainable if it interferes with the well-being of the person living it. Through their lifestyle choices, individuals must be able to satisfy their needs, express an identity, and associate with others. Conventional consumeristic lifestyles provide individuals with satisfaction for their material needs and - through the symbolic functions of materials - for their non-material essential needs. If consumption is to be altered or reduced for greater sustainability, consideration must be given to replacing these material satisfiers (Evans & Jackson, 2008). It is now recognized that many common human needs are fulfilled by a wide variety of satisfiers: objects and conditions to which an individual or culture has attributed meaning and satisfaction. Maiteny (2000) identifies attribution of satisfaction to material satisfiers as one cause of unsustainable conditions. He uses the term ‘inner sustainability’ to describe a situation in which an individual finds meaning and value in the less materially-intensive choices of a sustainable lifestyle, and thus is internally motivated to pursue such practices. A lifestyle that allows an individual to feel intrinsically rewarded is more likely to be sustained into

⁴ I am unaware of any Footprint-type metric that measures the potential social impacts of personal lifestyle practices, beyond those directly inferred from environmental impacts.

the future. Possibilities for personal, subjective satisfaction in relation to sustainable lifestyles will be discussed in more detail in the third section of this chapter.

While sustainable lifestyles may be described with reference to their activities, impacts, and social implications, thinking about sustainable lifestyles must also consider the subjective perspectives of the individuals practicing such a lifestyle. People pursuing sustainable living will engage in a wide range of combinations of practices within and around the above-described parameters. Self-identification as a sustainable lifestyle practitioner is just that: an identity, that is related - but not rigidly so - to objective sustainability of practices (see Connolly & Prothero, 2008). One danger of defining lifestyle sustainability by rigid sets of actions and impacts comes from their discrepancy in relation to lived experiences of practice. People negotiate complex identities and experiences, within constraining structures, to make choices about how to act on their intentions to be sustainable, and tend to practice sustainability in ways that may seem to be varied and inconsistent (Evans & Jackson, 2007). Confronted with a rigid definition of sustainable living that they cannot relate or conform to, they may become frustrated and discouraged from practicing (see Hobson, 2002). Evans and Jackson (2007) suggest that “it is virtually impossible to give a definition of a sustainable lifestyle because any model must allow for the fact that the overall impact of an individual’s life should be taken into account rather than a formulaic expectation that ‘sustainability’ will govern conduct across all practices” (pp. 17-18). I might define a sustainable lifestyle as any coherent set of actions, behaviours, and choices, (and accompanying values, attitudes, and understandings), that an individual pursues in their attempt to make positive changes in the world, through being relevant to reducing environmental and social impacts and

strengthening ecological sustainability and socio-ecological resilience, as well as personally relevant to how they want to and are able to pursue such lifestyle activities.

Global Policy Attention on Sustainable Lifestyles

Projects, associated with international-level non-profit bodies such as the United Nations, have demonstrated an interest in sustainable lifestyles and the closely-related sustainable consumption⁵, as concepts through which to define and promote individuals' contributions to sustainable development.⁶ Agenda 21, published out of the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, included a chapter entitled "Changing consumption patterns", which identified a need "for new concepts of wealth and prosperity which allow higher standards of living through *changed lifestyles* and are less dependent on the Earth's finite resources and more in harmony with the Earth's carrying capacity" (Changing consumption patterns, 1992, emphasis added; Scott, 2009). More recently, sustainable lifestyles have received attention in the global policy realm, in research undertaken as part of the Marrakech Process, coming out of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, and initiated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). This process has included convening a Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles to focus on "exploring opportunities for the development of practices and choices that enable individuals to meet their needs and aspirations with a sense of responsibility towards the present and future generations, taking into account their environmental and social impacts" (Taskforce on Sustainable Lifestyles, n.d., p. 2). The Task Force has spent a decade conducting research on Sustainable Consumption and Production, and has

⁵ "The most common discussion about lifestyle and sustainable development concerns consumption." (Jensen, 2007, p. 69).

⁶ Sustainable consumption (and production) is "recognised [sic] as one of the essential and overarching objectives of sustainable development." (Scott, 2009, p. 5).

produced two core projects: a ‘Global Survey on Sustainable Lifestyles, and a ‘Literature Review on Sustainable Lifestyles’ (Scott, 2009; Taskforce on Sustainable Development, n.d.). The promise of sustainable lifestyles to contribute to sustainable development - including quality of life for its practitioners - is certainly recognized by international-level bodies, along with many researchers, and no-doubt countless private citizens.

Insofar as individual actions are worthy of consideration in sustainable development, and ‘inner sustainability’ is a meaningful accompaniment to sustainable lifestyles, it is important to understand how people experience satisfaction, and how satisfaction relates to the motivation of such actions.

Human Needs Satisfaction and Motivation

In contemporary times, psychologists and others interested in human conditions and behaviour, have theorized about human motivation as driven by common underlying needs (Gasper, 1996, cited in Jackson, Jager & Stagl, 2004; Jackson et al., 2004). What are needs, and how do they motivate behaviour? Psychologists infer from the behaviours people engage in, and the objects, relationships, and contexts they pursue, that they are driven by underlying, relatively universal, human needs. Obviously, humans need food, water, shelter, and other such conditions in order to live. Beyond physical survival, humans have psychological needs that can be satisfied by the physical, relational, intellectual, and symbolic characteristics of their environments. Being social creatures, humans experience social needs to belong, to be accepted, to be part of a group, to be loved, and to be cared for. As intellectual creatures with a sense of individual consciousness, humans have needs for psychological growth and stimulation, identity, knowledge, autonomy, and self-actualization. Theories of human needs attempt to

categorize these needs, but knowledge and understanding of the exact relationship between experiencing needs, drive to pursue satisfaction, and motivation of the range of human behaviours remains somewhat mysterious.

While theories about needs and motivation have been around for a long time, both in philosophy and in the field of psychology, psychologist Abraham Maslow published one of the most popular modern needs theories in the 1950s. This 'hierarchical theory of human needs' holds that humans experience common needs, and that more basic needs must be substantially satisfied before 'higher' needs can emerge as influential (Jackson et al., 2004; Maslow, 1970). Maslow identified needs in categories of physiological conditions, safety, belongingness and love, esteem, and self-actualization. Beyond these, he conceptualized a number of motivating desires that he saw not as primary needs, but as having properties for satisfying those needs; these are the desires for freedom, knowledge and understanding, and aesthetics (Maslow, 1970). Sustainability theorist Tim Jackson further groups Maslow's categories of needs into three more general categories: material needs, social needs, and growth or self-actualizing needs (Jackson et al., 2004).

Referenced by Jackson and others (2004), in arguments for the possibility of satisfying sustainable lifestyles, is a post-modern matrix of human needs developed by Chilean economist and human-scale development theorist Manfred Max-Neef. Building on preceding work such as Maslow's hierarchy, Max-Neef argues that, while human needs are few and relatively universal, special attention should be paid to the fact that satisfiers for these needs may take almost infinite culturally-specific forms (Max-Neef, 1991). Universal needs are crossed with various existential categories of satisfaction to create an empty matrix that may be filled with possible satisfiers. Max-Neef interprets

universal human needs described by the categories of subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity, and freedom (Max-Neef, 1991). Needs can be satisfied or, in Max-Neef's terminology, 'actualized' by the presence of satisfiers from the existential categories of being, having, doing, or interacting. Max-Neef's theory makes the distinction of recognizing no hierarchy of needs, aside from the priority given to unsatisfied needs for subsistence (Max-Neef, 1991), and explicitly differentiates needs from satisfiers, identifying the latter as multifarious (Jackson et al., 2004). This theory includes more explicit definition of the multiple functions of satisfiers, identifying that a satisfier can have properties for synergy, pseudo-satisfaction, or destruction; some satisfiers may synergistically satisfy more than one need, while others may block the satisfaction of the targeted or other needs (Max-Neef, 1991).

A current predominant psychological theory of needs, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), identifies three essential categories of needs that must all be satisfied in order for a person to experience "psychological growth, integrity, and well-being" (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 4); these are the needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000). While these are strictly psychological needs, the authors acknowledge the existence of physical needs for safety and survival but these needs are not addressed within SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Psychologist Tim Kasser recognizes the above three psychological needs along with the physical need for safety and survival in his understanding of well-being (Kasser, 2009).

Taken together, these three needs theories offer conceptual frameworks for relatively universal categories of human needs, underlying experiences of well-being and satisfaction, driving the pursuit of behaviours, materials, and experiences that provide

satisfiers for needs. Table 1 offers a comparison of the needs included in these three theories, and suggests equivalent categories of needs across the theories.

Table 1 Comparing three theories on categories of human needs

	Maslow's Hierarchy	Max-Neef's Matrix	Psychology's Self-Determination Theory
Physical ⁷	Physiological Safety	Subsistence Protection	Safety/Survival ⁸
Social	Belongingness and Love Esteem	Affection Participation	Relatedness/ Acceptance
Self- Actualizing/ Growth	<i>Knowledge</i> ⁹ <i>Aesthetic</i> <i>Freedom</i> Self-Actualization	Understanding Creation Freedom Idleness/Leisure Identity	Competence Autonomy

Physiological needs for subsistence call for satisfiers taking the form of: food, shelter, health; as well as work, ability to work, opportunity, and the living environment (Max-Neef, 1991). The safety needs are for “security; stability; dependency; protection; freedom from fear, from anxiety and chaos; need for structure, order, law, limits; strength in the protector; and so on” (Maslow, 1970). Safety and protection may be provided by social, health, and insurance systems, and by the opportunity to cooperate and be cared for (Max-Neef, 1991). Satisfiers of affection may be provided by various relationships, qualities of self-esteem, positive opportunities for interaction with self and others, and abilities to love and express emotion with others (Max-Neef, 1991). Participation may be satisfied by being affiliated and actively interacting with others; by having rights,

⁷ These three larger categories of needs are also mentioned by Jackson et al. (2004).

⁸ Kasser (2009) supplements the list of needs from SDT, which are purely psychological, with the addition of the physical needs of Safety/Survival.

⁹ Freedom, knowledge, aesthetic are italicized because Maslow conceptualizes them not as primary needs but as closely implicated in the satisfaction of primary needs.

responsibilities, duties, privileges, and personal qualities enabling action in such contexts (Max-Neef, 1991). The need for knowledge, sometimes understood as “the search for meaning” (Maslow, 1970, p. 48), is pursued through opportunities to “satisfy curiosity, to know, to explain, and to understand” (p. 48), as well as to “systematize, to organize, to analyze, to look for relations and meanings, to construct a system of values” (p. 50). Possible satisfiers are conditions that facilitate exploration and discovery, educational institutions and settings, and the opportunity to participate in the actions of learning (Max-Neef, 1991).

The need for self-actualization requires ‘self-fulfillment’, for a person to act and be in accordance with his or her ‘true nature’, and to achieve one’s potential through creative tasks (Maslow, 1970). Crafting a unique identity is part of self-actualizing, and possible satisfiers for identity take the form of various cultural contexts for affiliation, relation and differentiation; and abilities to know, evaluate, and reflect on oneself (Max-Neef, 1991). Freedom, besides temporal and spatial openness, may be satisfied by the abstract phenomena of autonomy, self-esteem, and other assertive personal qualities, as well as social institutions such as equal rights, and opportunities such as the ability to choose and to dissent (Max-Neef, 1991).

As an aside, it should be recognized that these three needs theories are based in Western and positivistic paradigms (although Max-Neef does acknowledge cultural variability in satisfiers for what he sees as universal underlying needs), as is much of the discourse around essential human needs in relation to ecological sustainability and well-being. I have drawn on these three theories of needs because they are commonly referenced in theoretical discussions of the possibilities for synergistic satisfaction and

sustainability through sustainable lifestyles (e.g. in the work of Jackson et al. [2004], Jackson [2005], Kasser [2009], Maiteny [2000], Connolly and Prothero [2008], Stagl and O'Hara [2001]). It is notable that internal, subjective needs such as meaning and spirituality are absent from even the 'higher' needs described in these theories.

Self-actualization and other ways of expressing and manifesting individuality are central goals in such Western, scientific paradigms, with the inclusion in these theories of needs for esteem, knowledge, freedom, actualization, identity, creation, leisure, competence, and autonomy. In contrast, some other cultures, such as those based in Eastern thought, follow paradigms in which the ultimate goal of human life is not self-actualization and individualization, but rather 'self-realization' (Das, 1989). In such cultures, the ultimate goal of human life is not actualization of the full potential of the individual, but the intentioned realization of oneness with all, which applies to a spiritual self rather than a phenomenal or individual self (Das, 1989).

These cultural difference in what is seen as the 'highest' goal of human life has implications for understandings of essential needs in each culture. Maslow's and other Western theories of human needs are based on the assumption that needs satisfaction caters to the needs of an inevitably autonomous or self-directing individual agent, rather than a being that is fundamentally and spirituality at one with all, and thus the needs theories examined here cannot be said to be accurate or relevant to every culture. However, within the Western world, and especially within the existing theory surrounding sustainable living and human practitioner well-being, these theories encompass the conventional thought on these issues. Consideration of spirituality, meaning, and other non-objective 'needs' could bring greater depth to Western

understandings of human well-being. Examinations of how sustainable living and well-being intersect in a different (i.e. non-Western) culture should consider what sorts of needs might be relevant within that culture's paradigms.

As to how needs are thought to motivate behaviours, this is a complex, tenuous and still not fully understood relationship. Maslow describes needs as primarily unconscious drives for conscious behaviour, but also recognizes that there are other non-need motivators for behaviour, and that some behaviours are not motivated at all (Maslow, 1970). Behaviours are not undertaken with the simple, conscious intention to satisfy a single underlying need. While experiences of needing may be discerned consciously, conscious desires and motivated behaviours are not exact representations of underlying drives to satisfy needs (Maslow, 1970). The sorts of satisfiers that may apply to the various needs may vary quite drastically, depending on cultural differences, and even personal preferences and interpretations (Maslow, 1970; Max-Neef, 1991). Something thought to be a satisfier could apply to one need or more than one need, with varying 'strength' to offer satisfaction, or could even confound satisfaction. Max-Neef has discussed the possibilities for 'satisfiers' to be synergistically satisfying to more than one need, or to pseudo-satisfy, or even destroy the possibility for satisfaction. Maslow recognizes synergy from the perspective of motivators, noting that behaviours may be multi-motivated, or motivated by multiple needs (Maslow, 1970). It should also be noted that needs are not finite containers to be filled, but that it is the nature of the human psyche to continuously be experiencing drives for further satisfaction, so that as the satisfaction of one need is experienced, new needs requiring satisfaction emerge to consciousness (Maiteny, 2000; Maslow, 1970). As an insatiable human experience,

needing is subjectively and culturally attributed to various different material and non-material satisfiers, in an ongoing search for meaning and fulfillment (Maiteny, 2000). Maslow delineates 'lower' and 'higher' needs, with higher needs such as for self-actualization emerging to consciousness only once lower needs such as for subsistence are adequately satisfied. However, he does admit that lower needs do not require full satisfaction for higher needs to emerge, but only that lower needs tend to be relatively more satisfied on average in the population (Maslow, 1970).

Satisfaction and dissatisfaction in underlying needs may encourage motivation of relevant behaviours by activating positive emotional experiences. In discussing self-determination theory, Deci and Ryan (2000) examine in more detail the implications of needs and non-need motivators of behaviour. They argue that, while behaviours are typically not engaged in solely and directly to satisfy needs, behaviours pursued for reasons of interest and value may likewise be associated with a context offering needs satisfaction and thus providing experiences of psychological well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Such satisfaction from behaviours and experiences pursued for other reasons can also, over time, influence and reinforce what people will tend to find interesting and important (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This apparent indirect relationship between satisfaction and motivation is important to note for the present study, because it suggests that a range of pro-environmental behaviours could accommodate unique personal needs for satisfaction, and that satisfying, meaningful pro-environmental behaviours could be reinforced over time.

Max-Neef (1992, cited in Jackson et al., 2004) identifies possible emotional correlates for states of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of various needs. Satisfaction is

generally associated with positive emotional states and frustration with negative emotional states (Jackson et al., 2004). Satisfying the need for subsistence may give rise to a feeling of being satiated, while its dissatisfaction is associated with hunger. Similarly, the need for protection may be associated with feelings of safety or anxiety; affection with feelings of love, hate or indifference; understanding with feelings of being smart or stupid; participation with feelings of belonging or isolation; leisure with feelings of playfulness or stress; creation with feelings of inspiration or conversely being uninspired; identity with positive feelings of confidence or negative feelings of insecurity; freedom with feelings of independence or of being bound (Max-Neef, 1992, cited in Jackson et al., 2004). In theory, this presence of a negative emotion will provide the motivation or drive to pursue satisfaction of the frustrated need (Jackson et al., 2004), and presumably a positive emotion will encourage repetition of the behaviour that led to satisfaction of a need.

Understanding how needs and satisfaction allow for experiences of well-being, and how such experiences might be implicated in the motivation of human behaviour, illuminates the significance of sustainable lifestyles that are also satisfying. In the next section, I will summarize and synthesize theoretical and empirical evidence for the sorts of satisfactions thought to be potentially available in the practice of a sustainable lifestyle.

Speculation and Evidence for Sustainable Satisfaction

Human well-being - as satisfaction of essential needs - is key in the common definition of sustainable development: “Sustainable development is development that meets the *needs* of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to

meet their own *needs*” (World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED], 1987, p. 43, emphasis added). The drive of sustainable development is the intention to alleviate various human poverties, and prevent such poverties from being experienced by future generations. While sustainable development certainly has implications for the well-being of the human race as a whole, what about the individual contributing to a sustainable future through his or her actions? Naturally, any efforts towards sustainable development must maintain needs satisfaction in the practitioner or contributor. It is commonly suggested that one reason people might not want to practice sustainable living is because they perceive it as a sacrifice, and a threat to their well-being. Why might they think this?

In contemporary, economically-driven societies, material consumption is often equated with human well-being, for example, through the policy of using Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a measure of development.¹⁰ Collectively and individually, economic growth and material consumption are seen as the primary means of satisfying human needs (Jackson, 2008). Mitigating the impacts of human activities on the environment by reducing the intensity of material consumption is perceived as a “practice of restraint, which may mean acting contrary to personal desires, needs, and ultimately, happiness” (Brown & Kasser, 2005, p. 349). Such material consumption does much more than satisfy physical needs for food and shelter. Human cultures have evolved to use material goods symbolically, in order to satisfy every kind of need. Material possessions can be used to communicate status, negotiate relationships, and even provide the tools of

¹⁰ Within this materialistic paradigm, many efforts at development have been based around economic development and physical infrastructure. Sustainable development interventions have tended to take an objective, physical, a-cultural approach, aiming to change physical conditions, and employing technological and economic schemes, rather than considering cultural values (Riedy, 2007).

transcendent and self-actualizing experiences (Jackson, 2005). And of course there is money, the output of an economic-growth society, which grants security and can be used to buy satisfiers for other needs. Economic growth in these societies is held up by creating demand in consumers for new material goods, advertised with the promise that they can help the purchaser pursue satisfaction symbolically, by expressing identity and gaining admiration.

The satisfaction of these goods is certainly compelling, and it is reinforced by a cultural context that values material satisfiers. This sort of symbolic satisfaction, no matter how deeply ingrained, is not a property of the objects themselves, but is attributed to them by humans and transmitted in culture. Attributing status of ‘satisfier’ to specific objects and practices is the result of “cultural constructions - beliefs and worldviews - about well-being” (Maiteny, 2000. p. 348). When this meaning, and hence satisfaction, is attributed to materially intensive objects and acts, then this cultural position contributes to conditions of unsustainability (Maiteny, 2000). Unsustainable conditions are caused by people doing things they find meaningful and satisfying; “the ways in which individuals seek to achieve psychological and emotional well-being in their lives is inevitably expressed in behaviour that impacts on ecological (and social) processes” (Maiteny, 2000, p. 340). There are a couple of places to go from here. Beliefs about satisfaction may not be most effective at granting satisfaction. Remember Max-Neef’s (1991) identification of pseudo-satisfiers and destroyers, objects and experiences that appear to offer satisfaction but in fact thwart satisfaction. Many recognize that for all our material wealth, we do not experience greater well-being than those with less material ‘satisfaction’ (Jackson et al., 2004; Jackson, 2008). Current conditions and approaches

have been critiqued as not optimal to human well-being (Jackson et al., 2004): “The combined social and ecological critique suggests that existing patterns of consumption already threaten our quality of life, not just because of their impact on the environment, but also because of their failure to satisfy our needs” (Jackson et al., 2004, p. 97).

Sustainable development scholars have critiqued contemporary social and environmental conditions from the perspective of needs theory, arguing that current conditions do not lead to the optimum satisfaction of accepted human needs (Jackson et al., 2004). They argue that, not only are contemporary mainstream lifestyles environmentally damaging with their high material consumption, but, also, such modern lifestyles fall short in satisfying many people (psychologically, emotionally, socially, spiritually; global disparity so some are not satisfied physically) (Jackson et al., 2004). Evidence suggests that material consumption can be strongly correlated with well-being only up to a point of subsistence, and indeed materialistic pursuits may be implicated in inhibited satisfaction and well-being in other areas of life (Brown & Kasser, 2005; Jackson, 2008).

Given cultural variability (Maiteny, 2000; Maslow, 1970; Max-Neef, 1991; Das, 1989) of what one will find and pursue as satisfying or meaningful¹¹, the shift to finding satisfaction from less materially intensive satisfiers does not require transgressing fundamental human needs, but only requires cultural change, and change in personal beliefs, about where satisfaction is attributed; as Jackson helpfully summarizes: “Cultural change, in this perspective, can be construed as the process of dropping one particular

¹¹ Indeed, conventional ‘satisfiers’ or other responses to needs may be fundamentally dissatisfying and meaningless within a different cultural context. For example, in a culture where human striving is aimed at transcending attachment to material needs and comforts to achieve spiritual enlightenment, even seemingly basic ‘satisfiers’ like shelter and family may be viewed very differently, let alone material luxury goods promoted as satisfiers in consumerist cultures.

satisfier or set of satisfiers in favour of another. The underlying needs have not changed, but the particular forms of being, having, doing and interacting in which the culture engages in order to satisfy those needs may vary extensively” (Jackson et al., 2004, p. 90).

Given the limits to sustainability and satisfaction within mainstream attributions of what is satisfying, it is thought that the practice of more sustainable lifestyles could offer better satisfaction in addition to being more sustainable. “Reducing the material profligacy of our lives, according to this view, is good for the environment. But it is also good for us. The humanistic position appears to offer us a significant ‘double dividend’: the possibility of living better by consuming less” (Jackson et al., 2004, p. 97).

Given the importance of cultural and personal subjective perspectives, beliefs about, and experiences of satisfaction, in determining whether satisfaction will be pursued in sustainable or unsustainable ways, it is important to know more about these subjective perspectives and experiences. Knowing where people attribute meaning and derive satisfaction is important for at least two reasons: 1) to know what encouragement would be meaningful to them given current perceptions of satisfaction, 2) to know whether there are opportunities to change their perceptions of satisfaction, by taking note of what sorts of cultural changes in satisfaction attribution would be needed and taking note of opportunities for such changes. If sustainable societies are to arise, individuals must find meaning and value in non-material, low-impact, and sustainable satisfiers (Maiteny, 2000). In order to “find meaning, we must ask the actors, get to know their culture, get ‘inside their heads’, get to know something of their symbolic worlds” (Maiteny, 2000, p. 343).

In this research I have focused on the subjective experiences and perspectives of people who are currently practicing sustainable lifestyles by their own definition¹². I chose to focus on people who self-identify as practicing a sustainable lifestyle, because I do not know much about how such individuals derive satisfaction in their lifestyles (i.e. to what do they attribute properties of satisfaction? How do experiences of satisfaction influence their practices?). I think it is useful to start by considering the experiences of people who are now attempting to practice sustainable living, to see whether this provides insight for how to consider the interplay of experiences of satisfaction and sustainable practices. Perhaps this inquiry might offer lessons for how to consider the role of satisfaction and its attribution in thinking about promoting, encouraging, or supporting engagement in sustainable lifestyle practices more widely. What follows is the result of a literature review, providing evidence for whether and how sustainable practices seem to be able to offer satisfaction.

Review of Empirical Studies

Results of some psychological studies suggest that sustainable practices and well-being can indeed coexist. DeYoung conducted questionnaire research that indicated correlations between the desire to live an ecological lifestyle and i) satisfaction derived from practicing frugality; as well as ii) satisfaction from participation, suggesting that people who are interested in practicing sustainable living may be likely to experience

¹² In future it will be useful to compare subjective experiences and satisfaction for sustainable lifestyle practitioners and non-practitioners, and to learn more about the attitudes non-practitioners hold towards such lifestyle practices. These questions are beyond the scope of the present research, but may be pursued in future to perhaps help better understand factors that might influence more widespread adoption of sustainable lifestyle practices.

satisfaction from participation and frugality (DeYoung, 1990, Table 2).¹³ This early study into sustainable living practices and experiences of satisfaction indicates some connection between these two phenomena. Brown and Kasser (2005) conducted a couple of studies through which they showed that constructs of self-reported pro-environmental behaviour and personal well-being are correlated (Brown & Kasser, 2005). Other psychological studies offer results that are congruent with this hypothesis (see Kasser, 2009). It is speculated that “these positive associations between ecological sustainability and personal well-being may occur, at least in part, because living sustainably creates environments and supports behaviors that satisfy psychological needs” (Kasser, 2009, p. 176). While it is valuable to know that the hypothesis of ‘living better by consuming less’ appears to be empirically true, these studies provide only a certain kind of empirical evidence. Such studies tend to be conducted *ex situ*, using mass-administered questionnaires, and narrow scales for self-reported behaviours and inner experiences of well-being. While these studies are valuable for suggesting that this correlation of pro-environmental behaviour and well-being may be generalizable to the population at large, they remain silent on what contributes to the experienced well-being and how this connects with the pro-environmental behaviour and its motivations and outcomes.

The theories of human needs (described in the previous section) provide a basis to speculate about the sorts of satisfiers that could be available from practicing a sustainable lifestyle. Lifestyles are sets of behaviours, and these behaviours may bring people into contact with various contexts. Psychologists recognize that “whether people’s psychological needs are satisfied depends both on the environments in which they live

¹³ Conversely, the desire for a technological lifestyle was positively correlated with satisfaction derived from material luxuries.

and on the behaviours in which they engage” (Kasser, 2009, p. 175), and both of these influences are determined by lifestyle.

Sustainable lifestyle practices have implications for physical needs for survival, health, and security, as these are dependent on the environment (Kasser, 2009). People need to ensure the sustainability of the ecological life support systems they themselves depend on. Sustainable lifestyles may contribute to needs for security by working to avert threats to the environment, and ecosystem services significant to human quality of life and survival (e.g. climate, food, water, air quality, etc.) (Kasser, 2009). In the longer term, engagement in sustainable lifestyle and resilience building activities may contribute to the future satisfaction of needs. Building up local food resources, infrastructure, capital, etc. ensures that it is there to meet ones needs in the future. In these ways, sustainable living may contribute to satisfying needs for subsistence and security.

Lifestyles include practices that can connect people with others, or differentiate them, with implications for how their social needs are satisfied. Kasser (2009) speculates that practices and contexts associated with a sustainable lifestyle - such as greater participation in local economies - could provide people with more and different sorts of interactions, relationships, and community connectedness (Kasser, 2009). Cultivating relationships with others who hold similar (pro-environmental) values, to which one can ‘relate’, may provide sustainable lifestyle practitioners with the satisfaction of belongingness (Kasser, 2009). Some speculate that the rise of sustainable community initiatives is driven in part by the desire for a greater sense of community (Maslow, 1970; Mont, 2008). Practicing a sustainable lifestyle, insofar as people act voluntarily from an

evaluation of interest or importance, may offer satisfaction of the need for autonomy (Kasser, 2009).

Although not explicitly described by the cited needs theorists (except perhaps as a subset of the needs for understanding and identity), meaning seems to be another important need to consider in the discussion of potential satisfactions available from a sustainable lifestyle. Evans and Jackson (2007) identify meaning as an important function of material consumption, and see lifestyles likewise as an avenue through which meaning may be sought. I might position the need for meaning alongside the other self-actualizing needs, such as identity and autonomy, although it could be that meaning, along with spirituality, is excluded from the aforementioned needs theories because such 'needs' do not easily fit in with these scientific psychological and positivist paradigms of reality. Evans and Jackson (2007) analyze the function of lifestyles to protect against meaninglessness, and thus see sustainable lifestyles as a possible way to replace at least some of the meanings provided by consumerism. For example, people may derive meaning from practice sustainable living as part of a self-actualizing 'life project', or from perceiving their contribution to the betterment of their community and the environment (Evans & Jackson, 2007).

A potentially ambiguous source of satisfaction is in competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Kasser, 2009). Sustainable lifestyles may allow individuals to experience competence as they master new practices, but may also produce experiences of incompetence while one is learning these new tasks. It is suggested that, upon gaining competence in these tasks, people may feel more confident and autonomous to be doing

more things for themselves, in contrast to a non-sustainable lifestyle in which many tasks are commodified and done by others (Kasser, 2009).

While sustainable lifestyles seem able to offer, in theory, more sustainable satisfiers for people's needs, the practice of a sustainable lifestyle may also interfere with satisfaction. Although some argue for the potential of sustainable lifestyles to offer satisfaction through the provision of less materially-intensive satisfiers, opponents identify the important roles and functions of materialistic satisfiers and lifestyle practices. There are some obvious exceptions to the possibilities for non-material satisfaction; namely there are material resources that are essential to survival: food, water, shelter, clothing, and tools. Beyond these necessities of survival, material goods are implicated in the satisfaction of other, non-physical human needs, through their symbolic functions (Evans & Jackson, 2008; Jackson, 2007). People use material artifacts to develop and express their identities (Jackson, 2008), to associate or differentiate themselves from social groups (Jackson, 2005; Jackson, 2008), to communicate social status (CSD, 2004; Jackson, 2005; Jackson, 2008). Material exchange is used in the maintenance of interpersonal relationships, which in turn satisfy needs for belonging and affection (Evans & Jackson, 2008; Jackson, 2008). Material consumption may also be used in the actualization of 'higher' needs, for "understanding, meaning, and transcendence" (Jackson, 2005, p. 31). These important functions of material goods appear to pose a barrier to the adoption of less materially-intensive sustainable lifestyles (Evans & Jackson, 2008, citing Jackson, 2004, 2005, 2006).

Besides the problem of reducing access to material satisfiers that serve symbolic functions, the practice of a sustainable lifestyle may have other negative implications for

personal satisfaction and well-being. Engaging in a sustainable lifestyle has potentially negative implications for belonging and relatedness. For example, engaging in alternative practices could lead to the breakdown of relationships with family, friends, and community who do not share the values of sustainable living, and engaging in sustainable living could also pose a challenge to one's traditional roles within the family. Elgin, writing on voluntary simplicity lifestyles, noted that it is especially difficult to make change to less consumeristic ways in one's own life, given that adopting an alternative lifestyle can introduce interpersonal tensions, and that such alternative lifestyles have less infrastructural, community and popular support (Elgin, 1981). Unsustainable activities and choices are undertaken in the course of the honest pursuit of seemingly immaterial satisfactions like relationships and meaning (Jackson, 2008), so the interaction between (unsustainable) material consumption and satisfaction is complicated, to say the least. These are the results of theoretical speculation on how sustainable lifestyle practices may contribute to or hinder the satisfaction of essential human needs.

Considering Kasser's (2009) call for more empirical research into the needs satisfaction possibilities offered by sustainable lifestyle practices, a search of the literature revealed a number of recent studies using empirical and qualitative methods to explore the subjective experiences of people practicing sustainable living.

Degenhardt conducted a biographical inquiry with people practicing sustainable lifestyles, with the goal of determining factors that contribute to people choosing such lifestyles, by focusing on "the reasons, the historical geneses, as well [as] the personal characteristics that lead to this lifestyle" (Degenhardt, 2002, p. 124). His analysis uncovered four types of biographical stories behind participants' current sustainable

practices. He concluded that the findings illustrated how the choice to practice a sustainable lifestyle is emotional or visceral rather than rational, being tied to early identity-shaping events or negative experiences, and feelings of empathy, along with the necessary environmental awareness to direct the impulse for action (Degenhardt, 2002). He also noted the importance of self-reflectiveness, in which participants were found to reflect on how their behaviours aligned with their values, in order to practice a life they found meaningful (Degenhardt, 2002).

Hobson conducted research examining practitioners' attitudes to a rationalization discourse of sustainable consumption - a discourse that supposes sustainable consumption is the result of rational choices to reduce impact. She interviewed participants of a UK sustainable lifestyle-promotion program, to determine whether their sustainable lifestyle practices are rational. Through interviewing participants of the Action at Home program, which provides people with information to promote sustainable consumption, Hobson found that these people were frustrated and annoyed with a program that they perceived as pushing partial lists of actions overly focused on consumption activities (Hobson, 2002). She also found that people were particularly frustrated at being asked to reduce their consumption further, when they were already low-income and living frugally, especially as they perceived the government as hypocritical on being frugal and conservative itself (Hobson, 2002). Participants were frustrated when they felt the government was attempting to prescribe how they should live, and generally did not feel that the information provided by the program was relevant to them (Hobson, 2002). Hobson considered that perhaps one reason the rationalization discourse failed to attain participants' approval is because lifestyles are fundamentally complex and not

rationalizable (Hobson, 2002). She explained, “Lifestyles formed through a multitude of personal and historical processes were being forced into a narrow, one-dimensional frame of reference that had little to do with the day-to-day experiences of interviewees” (Hobson, 2002, p. 111).

Connolly and Prothero carried out in-depth interviews with seven people living in Ireland who self-identified as green consumers, and their results present some interesting findings regarding how such people see themselves and their practices. Participants drew on narratives of frugality and simplicity, and idealized consumption (Connolly & Prothero, 2008). Although green consumption choices were surreptitiously made in the interest of environmental issues, often they turned out to be primarily motivated by concerns about personal and family health and safety (Connolly & Prothero, 2008). This study found that participants had clear identities associated with their ‘green’ practices, which suggests that self-identity as a green consumer is just that - an identity, rather than an objective evaluation.

Evans and Abrahamse recently conducted a study using qualitative interviews to inquire into the subjective experiences of people engaged in sustainable lifestyles, and yielding a detailed picture of the practices, motivations, and experiences of some such people. In this exploratory work, they set out to discover “tensions, constraints, rewards and opportunities” experienced by participants (Evans & Abrahamse, 2009, p. 486). They found that some of the motivations people had for beginning what would become an environmentally sustainable lifestyle were orientations towards frugality, vegetarianism, animal rights, healthy diet, social justice, and human rights (Evans & Abrahamse, 2009). The researchers analyzed that tensions and inconsistencies arose in sustainable lifestyle

practices, due to tensions between sustainable and more ‘mainstream’ pursuits, as well as between the various concerns motivating lifestyle practices (e.g. social justice, animal rights, health). Their salient conclusion was that “individuals continually negotiate and renegotiate a range of conflicting agendas against each other” and that sustainable lifestyles must be “understood as a process” at the intersection between the various drivers for how people act and live (Evans & Abrahamse, 2009, p. 500).

Black and Cherrier conducted phenomenological interview research with sixteen women, from Canada and Australia, who were acting on values of anti-consumption in their lifestyles. The researchers’ intention was to examine values, motivations, and practices occurring in conjunction with such a lifestyle (Black & Cherrier, 2010). From their analysis, they found that these women, rather than holding primary identities as environmentalists or anti-consumers, negotiated pro-environmental choices against their preferred primary roles, such as wife, mother, artist, or caring person, and the associated values and actions of these other identities. If a more sustainable option appeared to conflict with a woman’s preferred or desired role, they tended to forego the ‘greener’ option (Black & Cherrier, 2010). For example, a woman with a preferred identity of ‘good mother’ who includes exciting family vacations within how she defines that role may choose to travel even when this choice is inconsistent with her values of conservation (Black & Cherrier, 2010). The women were able to practice sustainable living only so long as they could easily integrate it within the demands of their existing roles and primary identities (Black & Cherrier, 2010). Sustainable lifestyles arise from a complex negotiation between personal and environmental values, which has interesting

implications for how lifestyles are constructed to satisfy personal, familial, and also environmental needs (Black & Cherrier, 2010).

Evans conducted participant observation research while living in an intentional community in the UK (Evans, 2010). From his analysis he found that participants in such a community oscillate between attachment to and detachment from the community (Evans, 2010). He was surprised to find that the participants were strongly individuals in their time away from the site, in their private cabins, and even in the tendency not to socialize with other community members during work and meal times. He did observe times when community cohesion and togetherness were more salient, such as when members came together to provide emotional support to a person who was experiencing a family emergency. From these findings, he concludes that intentional communities may be effective at providing moral guidance and the support of association, while also necessarily allowing for inconsistency of practice as people differentiate themselves from the community, and that this has lessons for ways to promote sustainable living that recognize complexity of individual identities and motivations (Evans, 2010).

Finally, Stagl and O'Hara conducted a study focusing on one behaviour that may be part of a sustainable lifestyle practice - the choice to consume from a community supported agriculture scheme (CSA), and analyzed the motivations and subjective satisfactions people experienced in relation to this practice, along with objective measures of the sustainability of such a consumption scheme (Stagl & O'Hara, 2001). This study was based on administering a questionnaire to people who subscribed to a CSA, and to a non-CSA control group. Questions were about motivations and satisfactions related to CSA participation, and food consumption habits and attitudes

(Stagl & O'Hara, 2001). Their analysis looked for correlations between Bossel's orienters of system viability, or systemic needs (existence/subsistence, efficiency/effectiveness, freedom of action, security, adaptability, coexistence) as indicators of sustainability, and Max-Neef's categories of human needs. Their intention was to evaluate the extent to which engagement in a specific behaviour - CSA participation - is both objectively sustainable and subjectively satisfying (Stagl & O'Hara, 2001). From their analysis they conclude that CSAs can function as synergistic satisfiers that also meet systemic needs for sustainability, by satisfying multiple human needs for subsistence, leisure, identity, meaning and participation, and with positive implications for the sustainability needs of security, adaptability, coexistence, and psychological needs (Stagl & O'Hara, 2001). While not as qualitatively subjective as the other studies discussed here, this one provides a useful case study for how to comparatively examine the correlation of indicators for sustainability and satisfaction in a common 'sustainable' practice; and thus for identifying in such practices synergistic satisfiers for human and environmental needs.

Taken together, these studies offer insight into people's experiences with practicing sustainable living, and suggest how such lifestyles tend to be negotiated, motivated, and satisfying. First of all, while none of the studies sought to specifically examine needs satisfaction of the sustainable lifestyle as a gestalt, many of their findings offer insight into sources of satisfaction in such practices.¹⁴ As mentioned, Stagl and O'Hara found that one sustainable practice - consuming from CSA - is able to synergistically satisfy human needs for subsistence, leisure, identity, meaning, and

¹⁴ Evans and Jackson (2008) make reference to an ethnographic study done by Evans (2008) specifically on satisfaction associated with sustainable lifestyles; however, I could not find a copy of this study. They claim that this study observed participants deriving satisfaction for needs of meaning, relatedness, autonomy, identity, and health, and concluded that this demonstrates the possibility to substitute for the social roles of consumption with more sustainable alternatives (Evans & Jackson, 2008).

participation (Stagl & O'Hara, 2001). Black and Cherrier's analysis of women practicing anti-consumption found that such practices allow people to "experience anti-consumption for sustainability as pleasurable and self-fulfilling practices" (Black & Cherrier, 2010, p. 438). In presenting descriptions of their participants to support their claim, Black and Cherrier (2010) also provide clues to potential sources of satisfaction. For example, the description: "her core values evolve around saving money and reducing her consumption offers a means to saving money" (Black & Cherrier, 2010, pp. 446-447), suggests satisfying a need for security through protecting financial assets. The passages "expression of her identity as a caring woman who gives in order to receive something back" (pp. 446-447) and "[a]nti-consumption for sustainability gives her a sense of belonging to a diversity of environmental groups" (pp. 446-447), bring to mind satisfactions of belongingness, acceptance, security, and identity. Having freedom to use sustainable lifestyle practices as a means of self-expression (Black & Cherrier, 2010) could also satisfy needs for identity, autonomy, and perhaps self-actualization. Evans (2010) observed intentional community members as motivated and engaged in activities that seemed to offer satisfaction for needs of emotional attachment, support, belongingness, identity, self-actualization, and meaning (Evans, 2010). They could have also experienced the satisfaction of autonomy in having the freedom to make the choices to practice in the ways that they did.

Secondly, these studies offer suggestions as to how sustainable lifestyle practices tend to be engaged in and motivated, providing a basis for further speculation on properties that may enable such practices to be satisfying. A number of these studies highlighted that the way people practice sustainability in their lives tends to be

inconsistent, non-rational, and influenced by various factors like identity, values, and biographical experiences. Sustainable practices seem to be engaged in inconsistently, if working from the theory that they are motivated by a common underlying value of sustainability. One explanation for this is that sustainable lifestyles are practiced in non-rational ways and are influenced by various personal qualities. Degenhardt found that sustainable lifestyle practices were sometimes motivated by visceral (non-rational) experiences (Degenhardt, 2002). Hobson found that participants became frustrated when approached with the rational discourse of an initiative trying to promote sustainable living, which suggests that this discourse may have been incongruent with the non-rational nature of their motivation; as well it may have failed to accommodate their other personal needs and qualities (Hobson, 2002). Connolly and Prothero found that people who made choices with the expressed intention of being sustainable were really motivated by various considerations, including personal needs and concerns (Connolly & Prothero, 2008). Researchers have analyzed that these apparent inconsistencies of behaviour choice arise when people take into consideration personally important factors like identity and different suites of values, alongside their sustainability values.

Identity seems to be a salient factor influencing how participants practiced sustainable living, giving rise to the apparent inconsistency of practice if one assumes a primary basis in sustainability values. Black and Cherrier (2010) in particular highlighted how different identities (mother, artist, athlete) could influence personal practices such that engagement in sustainable living appeared to be inconsistent. Interestingly, Connolly and Prothero (2008) found that their study participants held strong values as 'green' consumers, but in fact their behaviours tended to be motivated more by their personal

needs and concerns, suggesting that other identities and other needs may tend to take priority over ‘green’ identities in motivating behaviours. When people are able to act in harmony with their preferred identities, they may experience satisfaction of the need for autonomy, insofar as people are free to act and be who they prefer. Values (besides sustainability) were another personal factor that seemed to influence practice. Participants in some of the studies (Connolly & Prothero, 2008; Degenhardt, 2002; Evans & Abrahamse, 2009) appeared to be motivated in their behaviours by personal values and meaning. Evans and Abrahamse (2009) uncovered how individuals’ practices were the result of negotiating multiple sets of values (frugality, social justice, animal rights). Acting on one’s values could conceivably offer satisfaction for needs of self-actualization. Self-actualization, as the need to manifest or act on one’s own ‘true nature’ (Maslow, 1970) could be seen to be available when people are pursuing personally valued and meaningful actions.

Seemingly inconsistent sustainability practices could perhaps be more positively described as *flexible* practices. As mentioned, a number of the empirical studies found that peoples’ sustainable lifestyle practices emerge from a complex negotiation of various roles and values that are important to them (Black & Cherrier, 2010; Evans, 2010; Evans & Abrahamse, 2009). Recognizing that sustainable lifestyle practices will tend to emerge from this complex negotiation, rather than simply as an expression of sustainability values, and allowing for flexibility of practice to accommodate these motivational factors could serve to enhance the availability of satisfaction for needs like identity, autonomy, and self-actualization. In other words, it may be beneficial to think of sustainable lifestyle practices in this flexible ways, in order to consider how to accommodate the systemic

properties of sustainability to the individual motivators of identities, values, and other needs, to more effectively support and encourage such practices.

Both identity and lifestyle are seen to be flexible in modern times, when people have many opportunities and choices through which to create their identities, rather than being locked into a status and occupation from birth (Evans & Jackson, 2007). Reviewing the results of these studies suggest that it is important to consider people's preferred identities, and other personal motivational factors like values and needs, as people seem not to be primarily motivated by their sustainability values. Such an approach to supporting practices of sustainable living has benefits and drawbacks. On the one hand, allowing for sustainable practices to be engaged in flexible ways, that allow for people to accommodate their other needs, values, and identities could encourage more people to incorporate sustainability into their lifestyle. Tailoring practices to accommodate these other motivators could encourage more people to participate in such practices. On the other hand, this flexibility could lead to practices that are not only inconsistent but that are perhaps negligibly objectively sustainable. These studies suggest that people will tend to prioritize other needs, values, and identities ahead of sustainability, when these are divergent or in conflict. If policies would seek to promote and support sustainable practices in ways that are accommodating to individual's conditions, they would do well to understand more about how people are motivated and make decisions in practice, in order to bring their interventions more closely in line with approaches that are both satisfying and sustainable.

Phenomena of autonomy, individuality, identity, self-actualization, and agency are significant in understanding lifestyles in the present modern era. Traditionally, personal choices that would constitute a lifestyle had been more constrained by structural factors; people were born into a certain status by virtue of their family, class, occupation, gender, etc. (Evans & Jackson, 2007). In the balance between structure and agency as factors used to explain individual behaviours and situations, the modern era marks a shift towards the greater influence of agency – the ability of humans to change their world, including its structures, through action that is “volitional, purposeful, and meaningful”, and that “emerges through the ability of humans to ascribe meaning to objects and events, to define the situation based on those meanings, and then to act” out of impulses that are fundamentally subjective and not deterministic (Musolf, 2003, p. 3). Now, with the multiplicity of possible structures and contexts people can act in relation to, individuals have greater freedom to choose elements of their lifestyle (Evans & Jackson, 2007). These choices then act as an expression of the identity of the individual (Giddens, 1991). Conventionally, consumption choices and activities are seen as an avenue through which people can make choices to express their identity in a way that is personally meaningful (Evans & Jackson, 2007). Although participants in these studies may have changed or even reduced their consumption with the aim of being more sustainable, they nevertheless still find meaning, self-expression, and exercise agency through their various lifestyle choices. Also, as discussed earlier, in the section on needs theories, self-actualization, identity, and freedom are often conceptualized as or assumed to be the highest goals of individual life in modern, Western cultures (Das, 1989). Thus, it is not surprising that examination of lifestyles, and the subjective experiences of such, reported

in these studies would conclude on the importance of personal choice, freedom, identity, expression, and meaning in how people practice.

The conclusions of the above studies are limited by the nature of the samples on which they are based. These studies tend to consider only people who are already practicing sustainable living to some extent, who have freely chosen to adopt such a lifestyle and who have generally volunteered to participate in a study. The nature of qualitative research called for a small number of participants in each study. Thus, the conclusions reached based on these studies may not hold for the larger population of people practicing sustainable lifestyles, let alone the general public who may or may not be concerned with sustainability (Evans & Jackson, 2008).

While there is hope about the possibilities to promote sustainable living through the promise that such lifestyles may be inherently more satisfying, this relationship merits further exploration, particularly by seeking empirical evidence of the personal subjective experiences of people who define themselves as engaged in practicing sustainable living. I have found no other study that examines the experiences of sustainable living and needs satisfaction (where the means and nature of needs satisfaction is specifically researched), and furthermore that explores how these experiences of satisfaction emerge in a narrative framework of the participants' life stories. The next chapter describes research I have done to this end, to try to discover more about experiences of satisfaction (and dissatisfaction) in people's practices of sustainable living.

2

Conducting a Narrative Inquiry on Sustainable Living Experiences

Study Design

Given the identified gap in understanding subjective experiences of satisfaction in people who practice sustainable living, and the need for more empirical evidence (Kasser, 2009) and to ask practitioners themselves for their perspectives (Maiteny, 2000), I chose to conduct narrative research based on interviews with self-identified sustainable lifestyle practitioners associated with a related community organization.

The narrative approach falls within the reform paradigm of social science research, which (in contrast to positivistic research) holds that there is value in knowledge of that which is not objectively knowable, generalizable, quantifiable, or amenable to cause and effect explanations (Polkinghorne, 2007). As such, “narrative research may obtain information not usually available by other methods, such as in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences of particular individuals” (Smith, 2000, pp. 331-332). Instead of objective knowledge, narrative research “privileges positionality and subjectivity” (Riessman, 2003, p. 332), recognizing the relative ‘truth’ of people’s subjective experiences, which is the very ‘truth’ I want to know more about. In this paradigm, semi-structured personal accounts are seen as valid evidence for answering questions about personal experiences and meanings (Polkinghorne, 2007; Riessman, 1993; Sparkes & Smith, 2008), thus narrative research provides a useful paradigm from which to approach this research problem, by providing a method with which to analyze personal accounts of subjective experiences.

Narrative methods are additionally beneficial to understanding subjective experiences by providing access to perspectives implicated in how people make decisions to act. Humans largely understand themselves and their lives through stories, or ‘narrative cognition’; they experience, communicate, make sense, derive meaning, and self-identify through narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995; Smith, 2000). Because of this, narratives are a particularly accurate representation of subjective inner experiences, constituting people’s realities (Riessman, 2003; Sparkes & Smith, 2008). Taking a narrative approach prevents reduction and fragmentation of meaning inherent in accounts of personal experiences (Riessman, 1993; 2003). I needed to use an approach that allowed the preservation of individuals’ unique experiences, rather than imposing external boundaries on how they could respond, or prematurely breaking down their rich experiences and risking losing significant details in the process. Lastly, narrative analysis allows the researcher to see where, when, and to what people attribute phenomena; what events or conditions influenced outcomes from their perspective, as well as why something is significant to them. Polkinghorne (1995) states: ”Stories express a kind of knowledge that uniquely describes human experience in which actions and happenings contribute positively and negatively to attaining goals and fulfilling purposes” (p. 8). This is what I wanted to know about sustainable lifestyle practitioners, recognizing that people’s subjective perspectives are implicated in how they choose to act.

The type of narrative analysis method I chose¹⁵ is conducted with ‘diachronic data’, which contains information on the time-ordered sequence of events, describes how events unfolded including how prior events influence later events, and may also contain

¹⁵ Polkinghorne’s ‘narrative analysis’ - constructing coherent explanatory stories from the data

reference to intentions behind actions (Polkinghorne, 1995). I collected such data through semi-structured interviews.

Study Procedures

When setting out to explore personal experiences of satisfaction in sustainable living, I was particularly interested in the potential social satisfaction that could be derived in connection with a community-of-practice group.¹⁶ I chose to recruit participants from the community initiative of Transition Victoria (TVic). This initiative is based on the Transition Towns model for community action, which was developed in the UK (Hopkins, 2008). It is a model for people in a geographic area to work together on planning and taking action in various sectors to enhance the resilience of their community, particularly to address concerns about climate change and peak oil (Hopkins, 2008). I see this as a community group that might conceivably provide social, moral, or practical support to people who are trying to act on sustainability and sustainable living. TVic convenes a number of working groups on areas like: housing, food, transportation, economy, energy, reskilling, and emotional support, and many of these are relevant to the sorts of actions one might take at the individual level as part of a sustainable lifestyle. The Transition movement differs from some other environmental groups in its wider

¹⁶ Originally I had hoped this research would help me to say something about Transition Victoria as a case study, and what it provides to some participants in terms of needs satisfaction. Through conducting interviews it became clear that the research participants were involved with TVic to widely varying degrees, and furthermore there were many possible sources of satisfaction from their practice and actions on sustainable living besides that available through TVic. As a result of this discovery, I reconceptualized TVic in this study as a context through which I sought participants who self-identified as pursuing a sustainable lifestyle, and were somehow in contact with a wider community of practice – even if just as a recipient of TVic’s e-mail communications. The research question then became ‘How does engagement in sustainable living practice satisfy participants’ needs?’ rather than ‘How does engagement in a sustainable lifestyle community initiative satisfy participants’ needs?’, expanding the focus on possible sources of satisfaction from the engagement in the community initiative to the engagement with sustainable living practice as a whole.

focus on various approaches and actions of sustainable living and community resilience, rather than holding a narrow focus on a specific environmental concern. Transition Initiatives are different from an eco-village or other similar intentional community because the Transition model does not include leaving the existing geographical community to establish a sustainable community elsewhere.

In addition to the clear alignment of the goals and working groups of Transition Victoria with the spectrum of sustainable lifestyle activities, TVic is based in Victoria, BC, Canada, a community somewhat known for its high concentration of people interested and active in various pursuits around sustainability, conservation, sustainable consumption, etc., making it a good context through which to seek people engaged in various sustainable living pursuits. Furthermore, being based in a city in Canada, a western, developed nation, these participants provide knowledge from the perspective of a population that has specific considerations within a global shift to greater sustainability; namely, people in a western, capitalist, developed nation face different challenges, pressures, and expectations in the shift to sustainability than, say, a southern, developing nation with a different standard of living. This also implies that the participants in a study in Victoria are likely to be more relatively affluent in a global perspective, and have a certain level of luxury rather than mere subsistence in their lives.

Transition Victoria defines itself as “part of a global grassroots movement supporting citizen action toward reducing oil dependence and building local community resilience and ecological sustainability” (Transition Victoria, 2012). TVic was initiated shortly after November 2008, following a workshop put on by representatives from Transition Totnes to grow the movement in North America (personal communication,

Dorothy). Due to the nature of the movement, there is no such thing as official membership in Transition Victoria (pers. comm., Dorothy). As of April 30, 2012, 661 people are subscribed to Transition Victoria's online presence on the 'ning' website (Transition Victoria, 2012), but the number who are actively involved in attending meetings is much lower (pers. comm., Dorothy; Geoff; John). There are also people who have been exposed to Transition Victoria's activities, or who have attended and participated in events but who are not formally associated with the initiative (pers. comm., Charles; Dorothy). Transition Victoria is newer than many other sustainability-oriented organizations in Victoria, and likely post-dates the sustainability interests and activities of many of its members.¹⁷

I conducted personal, semi-structured interviews with participants of Transition Victoria who self-identify as pursuing a sustainable lifestyle practice. Participants were recruited through a message included in TVic's monthly e-mail communication with its subscribers. This message included a brief description of the study, and the characteristics of the participants sought for interviews. The request I made was for: "volunteers to participate in a study exploring the subjective experiences of people attempting to live a sustainable lifestyle, and who are also engaged with a group effort on community sustainability." Interested parties were invited to contact the researcher by e-mail or phone to express their interest in participating.

Seven people from TVic volunteered to be interviewed (although one person later withdrew after the interview). In all, I ended up with interview data from three men and three women, ranging in age from late-twenties to mid-sixties. Two of the subjects were

¹⁷ All participants interviewed had an interest in sustainability issues prior to getting involved in the Transition Movement, and indeed it was their orientation towards sustainability that led them to be interested in TVic.

married, and so I interviewed them together, but all other interviews were one-on-one. Interviews were conducted between June 8 and June 21, 2011, at various locations within the Greater Victoria area. Participants were offered the choice to conduct the interview in a location convenient and comfortable to them. Most participants chose to be interviewed in their home, with a couple scheduling the meeting at a local coffee shop, and one at a post-secondary institution campus. All participants were extended the right to confidentiality and anonymity (with limitations), and were informed of potential limits to anonymity due to the size and nature of the sample population (see Appendix A for consent form; these research methods with human subjects were approved by the UVic Human Research Ethics Board). Participants expressed their acknowledgement of these conditions and limits and their consent to participate by signing a consent form. Participants were identified by a pseudonym to protect their identity, unless they preferred their real first name to be used. Interviews lasted between 1 hour, and 2 hours 24 minutes. A total 8 hours 15 minutes of interview data was recorded (excluding that of the interviewee who withdrew from the study). All the questions and probes were not necessarily explicitly posed in each interview, as they may have become redundant or irrelevant given how a participant had responded to prior questions. Nonetheless, every attempt was made to standardize the interviews and the same topics were probed in every interview.

Interview Framework

The interview framework (Table 2) was designed to be flexible and open to the range of answers and possible directions for the conversation as guided by participants. In other words, this was a semi-structured interview design. Questions were worded to elicit

responses with narrative material, by opening the interview with a general request for their life story, and prompting them to answer other questions with reference to specific times and events, to tell what led to a condition. I asked open-ended questions about their lives and experiences and meaning, and primed using questions containing words like ‘story’, and by asking them to elaborate on various responses by giving examples of what something might look like to them. Polkinghorne (1995) explains, “the interviewer can solicit stories by simply asking the interviewee to tell how something happened. The stories are generated as reminiscences of how and why something occurred or what led to an action being undertaken” (p. 13). I tried to follow this guidance during the interviews. I asked participants first for a brief life story, then delved into how they came to be interested in sustainable living, what sustainable action they took, and how they got involved with and participated in TVic. I asked them to describe how their self-identified needs were satisfied or not satisfied by their participation, and found that they also identified various satisfying and frustrating experiences related to their lifestyle.

Table 2 Interview framework

A – Life Story & Needs

1. First of all, I am interested to know a little about you, and the experiences that you feel have shaped your life choices. Could you tell me, briefly, your life story?

- approximate age?
- family growing up? important values?
- education?
- occupation?
- reason for moving to Victoria? when?
- family now?

2. What would you say are your essential needs in life?

- what is important to you, in your life? what wouldn't you give up?
- what do you need to have or be or do, to feel that you have a good quality of life?
- what do you value?

B – Sustainable Living & Transition Victoria

3. What does it mean to you personally to live a sustainable lifestyle?

- what would you say is your definition of ‘sustainable living’?
- what initiated your interest in sustainable living? when? what was happening at that time? who was involved?

- what sorts of things do you do to live sustainably? what led you to act on these things?
4. What led you to get involved with Transition Victoria?
- where did you first hear about Transition Victoria (or the Transition Towns movement)? when?
5. What sorts of things do you do with Transition Victoria?
- events; activities?
 - are there things you do on your own or at home that have been inspired by your interactions with Transition Victoria?
6. Is your involvement with Transition Victoria part of your interest in sustainable living?
- what is the connection between Transition Victoria and your sustainable living?
- C – Research Question
7. Thinking about your essential needs, that we discussed earlier, what does Transition Victoria give you that is satisfying to these needs?
- if anything?
 - what do you find satisfying about being involved with Transition Victoria?
- D - Future
8. Do you see yourself continuing to be involved with Transition Victoria as part of your future? How?
- what would encourage you? what would make it difficult?
 - if someone were to ask for your advice, what would you say would need to happen for initiatives like Transition Victoria to become more mainstream? by mainstream I mean that more of the population would participate in such groups and activities

I returned interview data (in the form of transcripts and summaries) to participants, leaving them with the option to contact me if they would like to change or add anything. Returning interview data (transcripts, summaries) to participants can act as a validity check to bring the data closer to the participants' experienced or perceived meaning. This stage allows for participants to reflect on what they have said, and add clarification if they find it necessary, or change statements that, upon reflection, they feel to be less accurate. Of course, there is still the barrier of translation between experience and interview data, and between participant and researcher understandings of the

meanings of the interview data, but this additional stage of participant feedback serves to reduce mis-translation as much as possible.

Narrative Analysis

Following data collection, using semi-structured interview methods to elicit narrative materials of subjective experiences, I conducted a narrative analysis with the data. Collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing this narrative data produces case studies of participants' subjective experiences with their sustainable living practice. This process presents their experiences in a form supportive of further analysis and interpretation.

While narrative approaches to analysis are not as established or universally agreed upon as some other qualitative data analysis approaches, there are some useful guidelines to conducting analysis with narrative materials, particularly from Polkinghorne (1995; 2007). Polkinghorne (1995) describes 'narrative analysis' as the process of using materials produced through narrative inquiry to construct an explanation of how an outcome came to occur, by connecting character traits, interactions, and events with plot; leading to an outcome. 'Narrative analysis' can be used to "produce[] knowledge of particular situations" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 21). This analytical approach allows for a holistic understanding of the subjective experiences grounded in context, and makes salient explanations for how the experiences came to be. Narrative approaches to analysis are useful in preventing reduction in analysis, by preserving the complex interrelated elements constituting a subjective experience (Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, 1993). Because I am interested in satisfaction and frustration as outcomes of the practice of a sustainable lifestyle, and am working with a small number of participants and thus more interested in "produc[ing] knowledge of particular situations" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 21)

rather than general principles, Polkinghorne's approach to 'narrative analysis' is most useful to the data and goals of the present research. This approach allows me to explore specific experiences, to gain an understanding of how outcomes of satisfaction seem to emerge under unique conditions, for these specific participants, from their perspectives.

In conducting what Polkinghorne refers to as 'narrative analysis', relying as it does on 'narrative reasoning' or cognition, "researchers collect descriptions of events and happenings and synthesize or configure them by means of a plot into a story or stories (for example, a history, case study, or biographic episode). Thus, [...] narrative analysis moves from elements to stories" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 12). Stories contain common elements: the protagonist and their unique characteristics, their goals, the actions and choices they take towards them, and also a 'before' and 'after', where the story begins under one condition and, through the events of the story, the protagonist ends up in a different situation (Polkinghorne, 1995). Other elements that can go into constructing a narrative are: indicators of temporal relationship, such that the story can be seen to have a beginning, middle, and ending; plot elements and movements towards or away from a desired outcome (McCance, McKenna, & Boore, 2001; Polkinghorne, 1995); values and evaluations held by the protagonist¹⁸, that is, what they think of the happenings, what they would like to happen, etc. (Smith, 2000, p. 328); context, as in 'external influences on the narrator', which can include culture, historical era, location, and relationships (Polkinghorne, 1995; Smith, 2000, p. 328). Past experience likewise can shape

¹⁸ "The story is about the central character and movement toward an outcome. The researcher needs to concentrate on the choices and actions of this central person. To understand the person, we must grasp the person's meanings and understandings; the agent's vision of the world; and his or her plans, purposes, motivations, and interests. Attention to the inner struggles, emotional states, and valuing of the protagonist provides important data." (Polkinghorne, 1995, pp. 16-18)

protagonists' choices; Polkinghorne (1995) refers in particular to historical events that a person may have experienced in the course of their life. Consider, for example, the ways in which a person's perspective and story may be changed by living through the Great Depression, World War II, or the hippie movement surrounding the Vietnam War. Physical characteristics, age, and physical state (health, illness) affect the protagonist's self-concept and choices, and so are also relevant to the narrative (Polkinghorne, 1995). These various narrative elements must be sought from the interview data.

Narrative analysis begins with reading and re-reading the data to cultivate familiarity. Following this, a first stage of the narrative analysis process for this study was seeking and highlighting pertinent narrative elements in the interview transcripts. These elements are: characteristics of the protagonist's identity, cultural context and influential early experiences (including parents' values), important others, values/goals/needs, choices/actions, outcomes, and plot elements or events that are not encompassed by the other elements. Polkinghorne (1995) recommends beginning narrative analysis by identifying the outcomes, and then using these outcomes to determine which preceding events and conditions to include in the story. For this study, I was interested in the outcomes of experienced satisfaction and frustration, so identified experiences of satisfaction and the types of satisfiers and needs satisfied, as well as the converse: frustration, or dissatisfaction, or wishing. After outcomes were identified, I placed in order the elements that constituted the participants' stories, illustrating how conditions, events, experiences, and choices led to the outcomes. I chose to omit some details from the interviews, when these appeared to be extraneous to the narrative on an individual's sustainable lifestyle practice and associated outcomes of satisfaction and

frustration. Data from the interviews is synthesized into explanatory narratives, explaining how these outcomes came to be, and the constructed explanation must contain the common features/structure of a story. These are: a temporal unfolding with ‘beginning, middle, and end’/plot, with a ‘denouement’ taking place near the chronological end of the story, a setting or context, individualized characters, and “details that differentiate this story from similar ones. The power of a storied outcome is derived from its presentation of a distinctive individual, in a unique situation, dealing with issues in a personal manner” (Polkinghorne, 1995, pp. 16-18). Following these guidelines, and constructing a story linking the protagonist’s traits, context, relationships, and in particular their values/goals and actions/choices to experienced outcomes, should, Polkinghorne implores, ‘make sense’. The story constructed through narrative analysis is judged on the basis of how well it provides an explanation as to how the outcomes came to be that is ‘plausible’, ‘understandable’, and ‘meaningful’. (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 16-18).

This type of analysis allows me to see how experiences of satisfaction or frustration arose through a person’s practice of a (sustainable) lifestyle, because the result is a story that explains how a character, situation, and sequence of events and choices and interactions with other actors, led to outcomes of satisfaction or frustration. The produced results contribute an answer to the research question, as they present case studies of the experiences of sustainable lifestyle practitioners with their accounts of how needs, satisfaction, and frustration interplay with their practice. Although such results are not generalizable to draw conclusions for what the average person might experience in such a

practice, I can provide discussion on patterns observed for the individual participants in this study.

Since narrative research falls under the reform paradigm of social science research, the stories produced through a narrative analysis are recognized as but one possible configuration of the events, and these narratives are by no means representative of an objective 'truth'. Riessman (1993, Figure 1.1) identifies five stages of translation in narrative research: from the participants' experiences to their understandings and interpretations of these experiences; from their interpretation to their 'telling' to the interviewer; from their communication to how the researcher transcribes it; from the transcription to the researcher's analysis; and finally from the researcher's communicated analysis to the understanding of the report-reader. In terms of selecting narrative material for the analysis, it is recognized that this choice "is strongly influenced by the investigator's evolving understandings, disciplinary preferences, and research questions" (Riessman, 2003, p. 337). This can serve to mix the voices of interview participants and researcher, which can be mitigated by presenting substantial transcriptions (Riessman, 2003). In constructing the narratives, I have tried to stay true to the participants' meanings of their experiences, through using their own words in paraphrase as much as possible, including extensive quotations, and, at this stage, seeking explanation, context, and significance of their choices and experiences from within their own speech. Only later will I analyze the meaning I attribute to their accounts by introducing my own interpretation and discussion in reference to the wider body of knowledge. The subjects may understand different meanings at each stage of the narrative research process. Nevertheless, this still represents valuable knowledge, insofar as subjective experiences

and perspectives are influential to how sustainable lifestyles are practiced, and understood and supported in the wider society.

Results of the narrative analysis - six stories providing illustrative case studies of sustainable lifestyle practices, with a focus on needs, satisfaction, and frustration, and how these arise from experiences, choices, etc. - are presented in Chapter 3.

Qualitative Thematic Analysis

Following the narrative analysis phase - constructing the interview data into stories illustrating how outcomes of satisfaction and frustration emerged from a sustainable lifestyle - I turned to conducting a thematic analysis on the attributions and experiences of satisfaction and frustration. This brings an additional magnification of focus to what is going on in these stories. Writing the narratives helped me to see how things are connected, and conducting the thematic analysis helped me to understand broader patterns of connection and meaning. In the narratives, phenomena are presented as important, meaningful, and more importantly, true for participants. The thematic analysis serves to make explicit what is assumed from their stories. Namely, to what do they attribute satisfaction and motivational importance in their life practices and stories, and how are these attributions, as well as experiences of satisfaction and frustration of such implicated in how they practice sustainability within their lives?

For the thematic analysis, I followed a generic social science method for processing large amounts of qualitative data into manageable themes (Creswell, 2009, Figure 9.1). First, I returned to the transcripts, and split each text into many short segments, each containing one main topic or idea or event. I isolated only those segments that referred to an evaluation or attribution of potential satisfaction/meaning/importance,

or to an experience of satisfaction or frustration/yearning.¹⁹ Next, I tried a number of approaches to coding or sorting these segments into emergent themes - representing the different sorts of things, experiences, and phenomena held by the participants to be a 'need' or otherwise important and meaningful for them in their lifestyle and practice – before settling on a final interpretation. I came up with an initial set of themes based on the segments extracted from participants' responses to the second interview question: "What would you say are your essential needs in life?", developing these themes concurrent with sorting the segments into these themes. Next, I turned to the segments that emerged in response to the seventh interview question: "Thinking about your essential needs, that we discussed earlier, what does Transition Victoria give you that is satisfying to these needs?", and sorted them into the developing themes, adding and altering themes as necessary. Finally, I sorted the segments drawn from the rest of the interview text (not in response to interview question 2 or 7), again adapting themes as it made sense to me to do so. The result was twenty-six themes, each referring to a different 'need' or phenomenon to which participants attributed meaning and the potential for satisfaction. I further grouped these themes into three categories, based on whether the 'need' was most pertinent as an intention in how participants felt a need to practice, as a process or context of practice, or as an outcome of practice. These identified themes of 'needing' and reported experiences of satisfaction and frustration of these participant-generated needs provide the basis for discussion of what sustainable lifestyle practitioners hold as salient needs and how these needs are satisfied or frustrated in relation to their lifestyle practices.

¹⁹ To conduct an analysis on the participants' collective practices, I skimmed all the transcripts for, and made a list of, the practices and behaviours they reported engaging in as part of their sustainable lifestyle.

Results of the thematic analysis: description of emergent themes of ‘needs’ and discussion of their satisfaction and frustration, preceded by a description of participants’ reported sustainable practices, are presented in Chapter 4.

3

Results of Narrative Analysis - Six Stories of Sustainable Lifestyle Practice

Introduction to Narrative Results

These stories were constructed using the interview data in the form of transcripts. Through careful reading and re-reading, note-taking, summarizing, arranging and rearranging, and story writing, I have sought to capture what seems to be the essence of each person's story documenting how and why they have practiced sustainable living, what led to their involvement in Transition Victoria, what they recognize as their needs in life, and what satisfaction they have gotten from their practices. Excerpted quotations²⁰ from the transcripts, describing notable events in the participants' own words are strung together with my own summary of the remaining relevant data.

I have intentionally structured the stories similarly. Each starts with a brief description of the interview participant and the interview location. The participant's early life and family are described. Then the events of their adult life unfold, including events such as: leaving home, attending post-secondary school, marriage, or pursuing a career. Often, this time in their life includes moments when they became more aware of sustainability issues, and might have changed their lifestyle practices accordingly. Next I describe their current practices surrounding sustainable living, along with what motivates their choices and how they see themselves, if these perspectives were given. Following relevant events or conditions, outcomes of experienced satisfaction or frustration are

²⁰ Excerpts, taken from transcripts, have been edited for clarity by removing pauses, repetition, and words that do not add to the meaning of the passage (e.g. um, like, you know, so, and). Quotations are italicized for visibility. When others' (non-participants) names are mentioned in excerpts, names have been changed to first initial to protect privacy.

described. The stories conclude with a brief description of what the future may hold for the participant and their practice. These stories are intended to make salient how participants practice sustainable living by their own definition, what they recognize as motivating them to practice in the way they do, and the satisfactions and frustrations they have experienced in relation to their lifestyle choices.

Geoff's Story

I met Geoff, to conduct our interview on the University of Victoria campus. He is young, in his late-twenties. We found a place to sit on some benches in an outdoor courtyard, and we began the interview.

Geoff was born in a suburb in the lower mainland of British Columbia, and spent his childhood there. His parents divorced before he was old enough to remember them being together. He divided his time between his parents' houses. He has one sister and a couple of step-siblings. Gradually he shifted to spending more time living with his father, simply because this was closer to this school and where most of his friends lived.

There was a ravine at the end of the street, and Geoff enjoyed playing there with his childhood friends, enjoying contact with nature and some degree of freedom. He explained, *"I knew how fun it could be outside. We had good friends on the street that we lived on. We could definitely play and do fun things, and the ravine was right there. It was basically our whole playground, and we could do whatever we wanted."* When Geoff was fifteen, his father moved to a small hobby farm, and Geoff went with him. Here there was also a nearby ravine to enjoy. Geoff's father took up the buying and selling of chickens, and Geoff helped with this work.

At times, both parents were heads of single-income households, and practiced frugality out of necessity. Geoff worked alongside both parents at various times. Geoff's father worked blue-collar jobs as a delivery driver, first delivering bread then later flowers. It was from his father that Geoff learned the value of work and financial responsibility. His father also taught him to think first before acting, and encouraged him to pursue a career based on intellectual rather than physical labour. Physical health, exercise, sports, outdoor recreation, and healthy eating were also encouraged in the family. Geoff's mother turned out to be gay, a situation he credits with making him socially conscious and accepting.

When Geoff was eighteen, he left home to attend a college in the Kootenays region of British Columbia. He first studied kinesiology and neuroscience before switching to major in biology. At college, he got involved with the student association, and later served as president. He also worked part-time at a hospital, putting into practice his biological knowledge, and putting himself through school. In the summer and holidays, he worked in first aid, site safety, and construction in the oil and gas industries. After a couple years, Geoff decided he wanted to experience life in a different place and a slightly larger community, so he transferred to the University of Northern British Columbia to complete his degree in biology.

After completing the degree, he stayed at UNBC for an extra year, taking some electives, doing course upgrading, and spending more time with friends. He described how he happened to take a course that would change the direction of his career path: *"I went back for that extra year of undergrad. I already graduated, but I was going back, [to take] some courses; upgrading and stuff. I was talking to a counselor and I said,*

'Well, what can I do? What kind of extra course can I do?' And she goes, 'Well there's this 499 option, where you can basically find a professor, and basically make your own course, or basically make your own whatever you want to do.' And I said, 'Okay, that's really interesting'. So she said, 'Is there anything that you'd like to work on?' And I said, 'Well you know, there's renewable energy. I really like renewable energy'. And I don't even know why I thought about that at the time. Maybe if I thought about it a bit more. I really haven't. It's just been something I did. Yeah, I don't know why I actually started.'

In retrospect, Geoff can see how studying biology was influential in his focus on sustainability issues. He explained, *"I started getting more and more associated with sustainability. That had been happening for the past... before moving to UVic, probably a year or two before. I started to really start paying attention. My biology degree was very influential because it allowed me to see the scientific reasoning behind all the environmental issues: climate change, deforestation, toxicity, all these different issues that are happening. It gave me a complete understanding of why they occur."* He also started regularly reading an environmental blog, from which he gained *"an understanding of what's going on in the world, and where there's opportunity and where there are problems."*

Geoff reflected on how the values his parents instilled in him in his youth provided a framework for how he understands and values sustainability; *"the foundation of everything that's supported sustainability was built through my being raised the way I was. So, financial control. My mom having... it's not an alternative lifestyle. It's just a different... no, it's not even that either. My mom being gay, and that being an influence for social freedoms, and rights of individuals. That was something that was there, for the*

social aspect. Then financial stuff was always... come on, you have to make sure that you have money to go to school. You can't just put yourself into endless debt. You have to be responsible. That was the financial aspect of it. All these things are part of sustainability. Everything is connected."

"Health. My dad always talked to me about the health issue. That was something that's related to sustainability because, listen, we can't be destroying our bodies. We can't be burdening our healthcare system. So I guess there's a lot of key things throughout my life that have pushed me towards a more sustainable lifestyle."

"Sustainability always has this association with being 'green', but I definitely see it as being associated with health, with finances, with social issues. All these things are part of it. And maybe sustainability is not the best word. Maybe it's just a better world, or a better lifestyle."

Following that last year of undergraduate studies, Geoff moved to Victoria, BC, to undertake a Master's degree in kinesiology and neuroscience. He decided to come to Victoria because there was a well-funded opportunity to study with a professor here, because he liked the Island, and because he wanted to experience life in another community. While in Victoria, Geoff continued to correspond with his professor from the renewable energy course, conducting research, and entering contests. He recounted these experiences: *"I'm researching renewable energy for UNBC. I have a contract with them to research their wind energy potential at their four campuses. Because that's been something that has always been talked about, with their campus. Now I've sort of solved the issue of if there's enough wind or if there's not enough wind."*

“In the first semester [with] my professor that I did the research project with renewable energy, him and I entered a contest with BC Hydro to win 5000 dollars. It was called the BC Hydro Innovative Challenge. We basically did all these... you know, write up this paper. You show that UNBC could do all this. Even though I was at UVic. We were still associated. And so we ended up winning that in January that year, so January 2008. That kind of solidified that I was not really wanting to continue on [in kinesiology].”

For this work in renewable energy research, Geoff received financial reward, and recognition from his peers and industry: *“From then on I entered contests and I’ve won a few things. I know where there’s opportunity to win too. I won a 4000 dollar computer with a design for a house. I won, just last week, a thousand dollars in a contest at the International Student Energy Summit. With my team, so 4000 dollar prize split between four of us. That was good. It was a lot of work. More work than the other ones, for less money. But it was very satisfying, ‘cause it was peers that were voting and also industry professionals. It was good.”*

The opportunities for success in the field of renewable energy, along with the belief that it could allow him to have a greater impact on people’s well-being, led Geoff to decide that he would not continue in kinesiology and neuroscience after completing the Masters. In his words: *“I think within the first year I decided that the kinesiology or the neuroscience degree was not going to be something I was going to continue, and that sustainability was probably something that was extremely important; even more important than medicine, and I could reach more people and influence more people, and to a higher degree. The importance of it is way more than health.”*

He thinks that renewable energy is an important pursuit because of the substantial implications for reducing carbon emissions and mitigating climate change. *“I think energy is the most important thing, and carbon is the most important thing that we need to be working on, because of the implications. The implications of climate change. Carbon emissions leading to climate change. It’s at the core of our issues, and our consumption, and our toxifying our environment. It really is. It is the absolute core. And it is the primary thing we need to be working on. And that’s why I feel I’ve directed myself towards it. But I’ve also put on the spin of biology and life, and that is involved with my PhD and the work that I do.”*

Besides the implications for environmental impacts, he perceives renewable energy as sustainable in the sense of offering a more lasting source of energy: *“It just makes sense to me. Why would you pursue a limited resource when you can get a resource that’s perpetual, and far cleaner, and lasts longer, and gives you more energy overall.”* Geoff’s is also drawn to renewable energy as a source of a ‘free resource’: *“I find renewable energy is this really interesting thing because you get a resource that we can use for free. You get a resource for free. It’s like finding gold if you were in the gold industry or any type of mining industry, or oil and gas. I see the draw of why people like to get it out of the ground, because you’re getting this thing for basically free, and you’re able to sell it.”*; *“I see renewable energy as this thing that exists, like wind energy. You put in a wind turbine, you get money out.”*

Besides his research on renewable energy, Geoff has over the last couple years taken action on sustainability through choices in his day-to-day life. He mainly travels by bicycle, and limits his use of fossil-fuel-powered vehicles: *“I have my bike as my primary*

mode of transportation. If I need to go to Vancouver I'm not driving. I'm taking the bus. I have a truck, although it's been sitting uninsured for the last year and a half." His transportation choices are influenced by the conviction that he should try to minimize his impact with regard to greenhouse gas emissions, and also the recognition that it is more personally financially sustainable to travel lightly, and to make the choices associated with a sustainable lifestyle and reduced consumption: *"I still really like my truck. I like the utility of it. I will move with it in September. Although, I realize that it's completely inappropriate to be using it for my needs."*; *"Obviously an informed decision means I guess I can't just drive my car wherever I want. And it's also the financial things too, right? My finances are not the highest, although I'm doing fine right now. It's cheaper not to have a car, and it's cheaper to stay more local. And sustainability, a sustainable lifestyle is also more affordable, because you just consume less, and if you are not consuming things on a regular basis that are unsustainable - so gasoline, or disposable things in life."*

Geoff would like to travel and explore the world, but he prioritizes reducing emissions and environmental impacts, and so finds other ways to satisfy these desires: *"There's so many amazing things around the world that I would love to see, but I do it in different ways. I love looking at other people's photos of their travels. There's the show called The Amazing Race, and I love watching that show for two reasons. One, it exposes other people to other aspects of other lives in the world, and different areas of the world. It broadens their horizon. It's probably the best reality show on TV in my opinion. And I get to see things that I've never seen before, or lifestyles or activities; things that people do. Yeah, I'll definitely live through other means right now."* He also takes local trips. He

would like to have the option to actually travel and explore further a field in a low-impact way: *“I’d really like an electric car just because it’s much easier and you can explore farther, quicker. You can experience more things easier. The types of cars we have are extremely heavy and very wasteful. I would like a very very light, light electric vehicle, which would be awesome.”*

Geoff also practices sustainability through waste reduction and recycling: *“I recycle. Through recycling and conservation, I’ve made one can of garbage for eighteen months. Garbage can that’s maybe about two feet tall, by a foot and a half wide, by eight inches deep.”* Geoff engages in some sustainable practices around food; he gardens, and forages: *“I have my own garden in my back yard. If I didn’t have the space in a backyard, or if my apartment didn’t have a backyard for me to use, I probably wouldn’t have a garden. I probably would just focus more on the cherry tree down the street.”* He finds that foraging for local urban fruit can also be a fun and socially satisfying leisure pursuit: *“I can go ride down the Galloping Goose [trail] in the late summer with a whole bunch of friends, and we can pick blackberries and cherries and plums and apples. We have just as good a social time, and we get something out of it that we can bring home with us. [...] It’s just something fun to do. It’s an activity that enriches my life, and provides me with something. It’s not because I need the food. It’s because it’s something that’s local, it’s good for the environment, it’s taking advantage of a local resource, and it’s social. So it fits a whole bunch of different needs and desires in one.”* Geoff is oriented to promoting sustainable living activities to others, through outreach, advocacy, and personal visible participation: *“I advocate. I go out to causes. I spread the word, socially.”*

While living in Victoria, Geoff has gotten involved with a couple of sustainability activism organizations, including Transition Victoria: *“ I didn’t know much about Transition Victoria when they first started, at the first meeting, but I knew it was something I wanted to at least show up to, to show my support.”* Geoff was drawn to participate in TVic through the green energy group, and would later step up to facilitate this group, which also provided him with the opportunity to bring people together to work on a project that interested him. He recounted: *“I’m always involved with green energy stuff, and they had a green energy group that I was primarily interested in. I wasn’t the facilitator in the beginning. There was another guy, and he was the facilitator for I guess maybe a couple months. Then he stepped down, and I thought, why not, I wanna do some things. I decided to throw my hat in. I said, ‘ I’ve got this project for a solar air heater that I’d like to do. We can build the solar air heater, and we can demonstrate it off to a whole bunch of people. Then we can sell it, or do whatever.’ That got a lot of attention. Everybody kind of came around that.”*

At the time of our interview, Geoff had just completed his Masters, and was intending to return to UNBC shortly, to pursue a PhD in renewable energy. At present, he is most interested in contributing to sustainability through academic research and implementing renewable energy projects, because he perceives or anticipates this avenue providing him with more personal reward, as well as allowing him to have a greater personal impact. With this more lucrative and legitimate opportunity on his horizon, Geoff feels less of an incentive to continue his involvement with the Transition movement. Towards the end of the interview, he spoke at length about his perceptions on these different ways of working on sustainability and how they fit into his personal

experience: *“I’ve been involved [with TVic] for about a year now. Just over a year. Maybe a year and a couple months, as the main facilitator [of the Green Energy group]. So as the main facilitator, that was that. Then I wanted somebody else to take the reins, so I put up a few messages saying, ‘if anybody wants to take over for being facilitator. If you’ve got any projects you wanna make involved - get some experience, do some things - that’d be awesome’. However, nobody has stepped up, and I’m still assuming the role of facilitator. I have not done much, because I have my renewable energy research. I have my PhD. I feel like when I have taken on the renewable energy research and my PhD, I’ve had less of a drive to be involved in Transition, because I have a more direct and important cause to work on.”*

“I’m working in a really related field. Now I have a much stronger purpose, and it’s stronger than the options [provided by a] Transition Town. I have to go that way. It provides money. To me, Transition does not. It gives me a legitimate avenue. Transition is somewhat of a legitimate avenue, but being associated with the university as a researcher gives you so much more backing. So many options have opened. More options have opened up in the last two months, from being associated with the university, than the last year and a half of being associated with Transition Town. So I think I’m doing the right thing by being more involved in my PhD and research - my paid research - than Transition, because it’s more affecting. It’s more influencing. It’s more important...to me.”

“I think anybody that would see me go would realize that I am still working on the things, and I’m not just giving up. Definitely not.”

“[I’ll be] working in a different way. And that was something that I hadn’t really figured out over the last few years. Is: what is my direction? I had so many things I was associated with and looking at and being involved with, but nothing really fit a main purpose. Now, the research and the PhD definitely does fit that purpose, and gives me meaning and direction, or something to work on.”

Geoff anticipates his research as providing him with a more unified, more tangible, way to make change for sustainability. The potential scale of the positive impact of his work, and apparent compatibility with conventional economics, is compelling. He exclaimed: *“But now the PhD and the research - the paid research - that I’m doing... that is so tangible! They could build a five-million dollar wind turbine based on my recommendation. That’s crazy!”*

Vivian’s Story

I met Vivian at her home, where she offered me a cup of tea and a home-baked square. Vivian, in her late fifties, is retired and is quite active in her community. She comes across as quiet, thoughtful, and intellectual. For an hour, she talked with me about her life and her sustainable practices.

Vivian grew up and spent much of her life in Southern Ontario. She was the youngest of three children, and her father passed away when she was quite young, leaving them to be raised in a single-parent household. Vivian’s mother worked, and her mother’s employer sometimes helped the family financially. When Vivian was twelve, she and her mother moved from a house into a townhouse; her two older siblings no longer lived at home. Although sustainable living was not in Vivian’s awareness at that

time, she remembers being able to walk to most places, and liking that everything she needed was nearby.

As Vivian matured, she noticed differences between herself, and her family and peers. With classmates, Vivian felt different due to her socioeconomic status. She recounted going to Switzerland for her Grade Thirteen year, and coming back early because she felt like she did not fit in and found that experience ‘difficult’: *“The other students there were from upper middle class families and I wasn’t. And I felt that. I felt the feeling different and it’s difficult.”* With her family, Vivian noted that she was just different from them: *“My mother and I are pretty different, I would say. I’m different from my whole family.”* She recalls trying to talk about issues and ideas that were important to her, with her mother, and having her intellectual advances rejected: *“I once tried to talk to my mother. Well, more than once, tried to talk to my mother about ideas. Issues. And one comment she made to me once was, ‘That’s too deep for me’. So you know, we don’t have that kind of relationship.”* Vivian noted that such feelings of being different have given her both satisfaction and dissatisfaction: *“I guess I’ve always been a bit rebellious; sort of a pioneer, interested in doing it differently and being different.”* and, *“I’m on the edge of, ‘yes I want to be a pioneer’. But then I do it and I think, ‘gosh, it’s hard being different’. I’ve had that experience numerous times, in my life. That’s a theme in my life. So I’m getting better at being different.”*

Starting from her short time living in Switzerland, and then attending university and volunteering, Vivian entered contexts and met people who allowed her to know *“that there were other ways of doing things”*, and to reflect on what was interesting and

important to her. She described thinking: *“There were some people I met along the way that [were talking about things that] I thought, ‘yes, yes that’s important’.”*

Now an adult, Vivian got married and had a daughter, before attending university as a mature student. Her studies started in business, but she soon switched to political science due to greater interest, and then graduated with a degree in public administration. In our interview Vivian did not talk extensively about the intervening years. She held a number of jobs, in different cities in Southern Ontario, at non-governmental agencies, and doing administrative work for small businesses and self-employed professionals, allowing her the satisfaction of learning about available government services. Her first marriage ended, and she got remarried. She noted some preferences and sustainable practices from that time. Through her career, she came to realize that she has an aversion to bureaucracy and to the silo-ing of knowledge and expertise in some organizations. In her home, she composted and grew some herbs; she looked for jobs she could walk to and walked to work, among other ‘little’ things.

Nearing retirement, Vivian and her second husband took steps to construct a straw-bale house in the community in Ontario where they wanted to move after retiring. This project was their larger-scale attempt to ‘walk the talk’. The construction did not work out, and they abandoned that plan. In the autumn of 2004, Vivian and her second husband moved to Victoria, BC. This move allowed Vivian to think about making other changes to her lifestyle. Of her approach to sustainable living to that point, Vivian reflected, *“It just sort of seems almost like little quirky things. Never seeing the whole picture and trying to put it all together until we got here [to Victoria].”* Moving across the country, Vivian and her husband decided to leave their car behind and see if they

could live without owning a vehicle. When they were ready to buy a house in Victoria, they looked for a place with a small footprint and that was within walking distance of amenities, like the library, and transit. They were also hoping to find a place where they would be able to grow some of their own food.

Shortly after moving to Victoria, Vivian experienced a turning point in her thinking and action on sustainability. Vivian and her husband planned a trip to Australia and New Zealand, and she had recently read *The Weather Makers*, by Tim Flannery. As they hopped from plane to plane, Vivian was struck by the gravity of the global environmental situation and by her own responsibility in this process. She explained, *“After reading that book I realized the depth of the problem. When we were in Australia we took a lot of planes. And that’s what really woke me up. I said, to myself, ‘I have to change my behaviour. It’s not about everybody else. I have to change my behaviour, and hopefully help other people wake up to that.’ Yeah, I just felt this sense every time I got on a plane: ‘Oh, it’s me’. It was after that that I really took it seriously. Before it was, ‘yeah maybe we could do this,’ you know. And we were doing more than other people were doing even at that point. But, after that it was like, this is a social justice issue. It really became more clear to me that it was a social justice issue.”* Vivian was moved by her perception that she contributed to improving or decimating conditions for other living beings and people. She became convinced that she had to take sustainable living even more seriously, to act on her sense of compassion. *“Once I recognized how we’re affecting the rest of the world, and the people in the rest of the world, as well as animals. It’s compassion. ‘Cause I feel very strongly that I don’t want to contribute. I am contributing, so I want to lower my contribution, to killing of other people on the planet.*

So, I use the word compassion, and I use the term taking responsibility for that. It might sound judgmental. It might sound self-righteous. But to me, that's the way it is."

At present, Vivian and her husband live in a small house within walking distance of amenities and transit. Vivian is enjoying her retirement. Being retired, and living in a comfortable climate, allows her time and space to take care of her physical need for exercise; she goes for walks every morning. She and her husband grow some of their own food in a community plot alongside their condo, and also garden around their front walkway and in a small greenhouse in their backyard. They have the financial freedom to be able to buy the ethical, sustainable and healthy food they choose, and the food they purchase is generally from local, organic suppliers. Vivian gets her clothing from second hand stores and ethical companies. She and her husband continue to keep a worm composter. They have taken steps to increase the energy efficiency of their home. Vivian chooses low-impact transportation; she walks when possible, and takes the bus or carpools when necessary. Longer trips are made by bus or train. When Vivian goes to Ontario to visit her mother, she takes the train, and she and her husband have recently enjoyed regional bus-tour vacations. Vivian's daughter lives nearby, in Vancouver, and they talk often on the phone. It is important to Vivian to know that her daughter is doing well, and staying in touch helps with that.

Upon moving to Victoria, Vivian continued her tradition of community participation by volunteering with the James Bay Community Project, with Saanich Emergency Preparedness, and attending Unitarian church services and discussions. Through this participation, Vivian was able to gain knowledge of local community services, which is important to her. She recounted, *"Another place I started to volunteer*

when I got here was the James Bay Community Project, and I'm actually finishing up my six years with them next week. And that helped me to learn more about this area; the social services of this area. That's always important to me; knowing what social services are available in an area, and that really helped me with that."

Also through this participation, particularly in the Unitarian discussion groups, Vivian has been able to meet and develop relationships with people who share her values and her perception of what is important. Having these relationships gives Vivian people with which to share, 'vent', and discuss, which she sees as contributing to her mental health. She explained: *"I value some of the relationships that I've made. Other people who have the same values that I do, so that I can share with them and vent with them. I need that. When we moved here, we joined the Unitarian Church in James Bay. They have a forum after their service every Sunday where they talk for an hour. That has helped me, 'cause I didn't really get the chance to talk much, except in university. So, since then, not much. That sort of brought that out in me again. So I value them for that."* She noted the personal, mental health benefits of having such connections: *"That's good for a person's mental health, to be able to go and share with other people and not feel like they're just all out there on their own."*

Vivian described scenarios that she imagines would be upsetting if she did not have people to talk with: *"Well, today for instance. I don't know if it was the post carbon website, or somebody. Well, actually, no, it was in the Globe and Mail. In the business section of the Globe and Mail today, it said that OPEC was not going to be able to meet oil demand in the second half of the year, and they expected it would be a tight situation. So, you know, they don't come out and say in articles like that that the oil price is going*

to go to such-and-such and the food price is going to go to so-and-so, but that's what happens in these cases. And if you were alone and you had no one to share it with, that wouldn't feel too good I don't think.”; “There was also an article I read today or yesterday about the glaciers, in the Rockies, are thinner. And so what does that mean? Well, it didn't talk too much about what that means. When you get scientists talking about these things, they don't go down that road usually. Well what does it mean? So, BC for instance is a province that relies on hydro. It kind of means big things for BC. And, people not connecting those dots, I need to go and talk to people about those dots that need to be connected. I wouldn't want to be home alone. That wouldn't be good.”

More recently, Vivian started participating in Transition Victoria. This initiative appealed to her because it seemed to integrate numerous issues, and focused on action and preparation. She described its appeal to her: *“The fact that it had three of the converging issues appealed to me. It wasn't just about one little geographic area, or one little species. It was broadly based and it was about action; actually doing something, and doing it locally. I started to recognize that it was the local actions that really were important. That's what drew me to it.”* TVic resonated with what Vivian thought was important, including making connections between ‘silos’, raising awareness, taking action, and preparing for anticipated future conditions. *“At the time, for me, I was interested because of the silo thing. Could we build some connections between some of these silos, like university and business and government?”*

“I see two areas of interest for me, and one is the awareness raising and trying to figure out how to do that. I have my ideas about that. And also, preparing. It's sort of the mitigation, adaptation thing. Sure we can mitigate, but we're going to have to adapt, as

well. We need to prepare, in my mind. And that's my emergency preparedness thing coming up too. What are we going to offer people when their lifestyles are so different, and they're scared?"; "If you prepare it before it happens then to me that's important."

Vivian has been driven by a value of social justice, to want to help other people, and she also feels that her personal well-being is connected to the well-being of others. She stated, *"social justice is definitely part of my motivation. I also think that we're not safe unless we're all safe. What's the point of me doing it? It's gotta be everybody."*

The way Vivian has been involved with TVic seems to reflect her career training and interests. She has participated with the Green Economy working group, and the group called Building Regional Connections. Projects appeal to Vivian's interest in planning. Taking action on her plans has given her a sense of satisfaction when things have gone well and connections were made. She said, *"I like the projects. But also, I'm a real planning kind of person. I like to think about: what do we want to do? What's the best way of doing that? Let's figure out the steps."*

"One of the working groups that I was really involved in is Building Regional Connections. It's not really active right now, but I'm still active with a few of the same people, not all of them. That group was really enjoyable because we did a few actions. Victoria had the OCP - their official community plan thing happening. It's still happening. We recognized that a lot of the areas were sort of progressive except the economy area, so we had a thing at city hall where we invited some people, local people, to come and talk about it. I hate to use the word 'high level people', but we had the Chamber of Commerce executive director, and the economic development agency director, and some other people who are known for their ideas about the economy. That

went really well. We were really pleased with that.”; “When you do a project and you get some new people involved, that makes you feel good. There can be some satisfaction in having taken some action.”

Her involvement with TVic has likewise provided her with knowledge of what is happening in the community, as well as with the moral support of people to talk to and take action with. Describing the activities of the Building Regional Connections working group, Vivian said, *“we tried to make a list of other projects that we could do. We also tried to spend time talking about ideas and issues, and that way we got to know each other better, and felt good doing that.”* Of TVic in general she stated: *“It satisfies my need to feel like I’m doing something, because I can’t do it alone! Nobody can do it alone. Well, maybe there’s some people who could do it alone. Most of us can’t.”*

A frustration Vivian has experienced through her participation is in finding that much of the larger community of Victoria seems unsupportive of changes towards sustainability; she interprets that many people are afraid, in denial, or simply do not want to take action or make change.

Nevertheless, Vivian anticipates continuing to be involved in community activity for sustainability in much the same way, stating *“as long as I can find a few people, just a couple even, who wanna do something that I’m passionate about, that’s all that really matters.”*

John’s Story

Walking through the front yard, I spied signs of chicken coops and a food garden. I knocked on the front door, and was invited inside to meet John and his wife Tanis. We sat in their sparsely but comfortably furnished living room, and began the interview.

John was born in the late fifties, in the Okanagan Valley, to parents he would come to describe as ‘liberal’. He was the oldest of four children, and all were encouraged towards creative, artistic expression and community-mindedness. *“The ethic of both my parents was to leave the world a better place than the way you found it. And I think, creativity and community-service and what-not are things that were really exemplified for us, and very inspiring”*, he said. John’s mother and father were both quite involved in their community, in local politics and stewardship, and exposed their children to these values. They provided an environment in which John was exposed to diverse people and ideas, which he credits with making him more aware and open-minded. *“My mom was involved with politics, and my dad [was] as well, and campaigning for people. They were very active in the community, and knew all kinds of people from all walks of life, so [it] was a very broad upbringing.”*; *“Lived a fairly normal life with liberal parents who were open to lots of ideas and a lot of people coming and going from our household. Starting in 1969 we became friends with a family who were starting a commune in the Slocan Valley called the New Family. The members of that, some of the members, became regular visitors to our house. I think through that, I became aware of the whole idea of alternative lifestyles. It wasn’t something that I was hankering after, but my mind was open.”*

After completing high school, John started working. He continued to learn, and to develop his views on alternative lifestyles by reading and meeting different people. *“I went through a period where I sort of became a hippie. I did lots of reading. I had a Volkswagen and teepee, and I traveled around. I got into tree planting and just kind of*

fell in with the right crowd - people who were definitely living on the fringes of society, either by choice or by circumstance.”

John then went to university, following in his father’s career footsteps by majoring in architecture. However, he soon became disenchanted with architecture, as he observed discrepancies between its common practice and socio-environmental contexts.

“I began to become very disenchanted with the practice of architecture, because it seemed to have no acknowledgement of the social and environmental context of life. This was back in the mid-eighties. I was obviously at that point doing a lot of reading and thinking about that. And tree planting, I think, had really opened my eyes to what was going on in the woods and stuff. Reading on stewardship. Reading on eco-philosophy. Reading on anarchy, and stuff like that. Just trying to figure out my way. What were my values going to be?”

An architecture course on Technology, Society, and the Environment helped John reorient to his values by helping him see the impacts of common practices surrounding technology, and also giving him the perspective that such actions are not predetermined and that he could choose to pursue different actions in line with his values. *“ I took a course in second year architecture called Technology, Society, and the Environment, at Carleton. It was an interdisciplinary course that looked at how technology leads to environmental impacts, and it kind of connected all the dots. I think that was instrumental in me leaving architecture. It changed my whole life direction in my twenties. There have been books along the way too that have been very pivotal for me.”*

“What was it about that course?”, I asked him. “Did it just bring to your attention this connection between technology and environmental impact? What was it about that?”

“Uh-huh. And the fact that values lead to things, and these are choices we make. They’re not a given. There’s no determinism here. We’ve chosen to have this culture, and we can change it. It just totally resonated for me. My whole twenties were really in pursuit of those questions”, he replied.

Having been exposed to alternative values and lifestyles in his youth, John seemed to already be thinking about his personal values. Taking this architecture course helped him to further reflect on his values and choices, in light of the understanding that they would determine his and others’ impact on the natural environment. He went for a Master’s and chose in his thesis project to explore a question about values and place, for which he interviewed people living in the Slocan Valley. *“I finished a B.A. in Environmental Studies from Carleton, and I did a Master’s at UBC. I chose in my Master’s to focus on these questions of values, and how values of sustainability and personal responsibility and right livelihood became manifest in the landscape in particular places. This was a geography thing. I did a lot of research, lot of fieldwork, lot of interviews with people, tracing their path. How they came to live in the Slocan Valley, why they were there, and what that was all about, and I wrote a thesis on it.”*

Returning to BC, and completing a Masters from UBC, John settled in the Kootenay region with his partner at the time. They had a baby, and John spent the next few years starting a business, working, building a house, raising his child, and living the family life. *“I moved to Nelson, and got involved with having a baby and starting a*

business, and kind of focused just on life and building a house and that kind of thing. Career and parenting took up the next ten or twelve...fourteen years.”

In contrast to the freedom and excitement of his young-adulthood spent examining the questions of values and change, John spent his thirties feeling ineffective and, between work and the family, did not have temporal or financial flexibility to act as much on his values of sustainability. *“My thirties were feeling like I couldn’t change anything. I was raising a baby, and I was too busy and poor.”* He tried to incorporate his values where he could, in his work as a home designer, by promoting ecological and energy-efficient design elements. *“I was always an advocate for things like small houses. I’m a home designer, so I was advocating for reducing the footprint by building smaller, and building energy efficient, and using the sun and stuff like that.”*

Although John had long been aware and acting on issues of sustainability, he was reawakened to the seriousness of the environmental situation following a viewing of Al Gore’s *An Inconvenient Truth*. This left him reinvigorated in his desire to incorporate sustainable practices into his career and life. One way he did this was by pursuing more education, taking courses in sustainable design, to inform his business as a home designer. *“I really began to feel, around 2003 or four, that this century was really shaping up in a pretty dire fashion. I think Al Gore’s movie had a tremendous impact on me, of just summarizing it all. I decided that I didn’t want to practice the way I had been practicing. I really wanted to start changing.”; “I began taking courses in sustainable design, and learning as much as I could, and that’s really what my major focus is now in my business.”*

John and his former partner moved to Victoria from Vancouver, so they could save money on rent and afford to buy a house. Once here, that relationship ‘fell apart’. Later, John met Tanis and was drawn to her partly on the basis of their common values surrounding sustainable living. *“Met Tanis. Tanis was talking about... not to me directly, but what I learned about her was that she was really concerned with many of the same questions about how to live a sustainable life, and I think that was one of the things that drew me to her in the first place. Since connecting, it’s been very much of a sense that we’re on a parallel course, and our vision and our dreams kind of inspire each other and push each other further.”*

At present, John and Tanis take action on sustainability at home by growing food, keeping chickens, and heating their house with wood. John recognizes that there are limitations to the extent that they can make their home sustainable because they do not own the house. *“I think we have a ways to go. Part of the challenge is that we live in this house, and we don’t own this house. It’s a very leaky, energy-inefficient house, even though we heat with wood. It goes through almost three cords of wood a year. [...] Goes through a lot of energy to keep it warm, and doesn’t really take advantage of the sun, and nothing that comes in stays. That feels kind of gross and unfortunate. But many of the other things in our lives, I feel like we’re getting there.”* They are also learning more about food growing and preservation. *“We can’t do much with the amount of land we have here and the fact that we don’t own it. I think we’re in training for our ultimate situation which is gonna have more opportunity for food growing. So we’re learning how to do all this stuff. [...] How to do preserves, and how to grow good compost, and do all those things. The chickens have been fantastic.”* John has made a conscious choice to

limit his travel, especially air travel. *“I, too, have done a fair amount of travel in my life. I’ve really decided that there’s definitely places I’d still love to go, but I just don’t feel good about being on a plane anymore. I think I’ve been able to stop travel for work. I’ve turned down jobs, and meetings and stuff for work that would require flights, and I think I can stick with it.”*

Recently, John and Tanis have given up John’s car, and they get around by bicycle. They also belong to a car-sharing co-operative for when a car is necessary. John has gained satisfaction from relying on more sustainable forms of transportation, both in feeling empowered that he has taken the action of losing the car, and also in the benefits of bicycling: exercise, and connecting with people in the neighbourhood and with nature. *“Losing the car is one of the most empowering and wonderful things that I think I’ve done in years and years. Just, a sense that, hey, there’s actually something that we can do that’s more than just symbolic. Yeah. And, it comes with lots of benefits.”*, he said. *“Exercise. Getting to know your immediate neighbourhood more. Just being more conscious about travel, and about life in general. A car is a ticket to being very unconscious about everything; about your choices as a consumer. If you can just go down to the store and grab something, it’s very different than if you have to make the effort. So that’s been great. Sustainability is about all of those things.”*

John and Tanis also incorporate their sustainable living into their purchase decisions, buying second-hand clothing, and local, organic food. *“We’re not big shoppers. We tend for the most part to get by with Value Village, and. As you can see we wear stuff until it falls apart.”* John said, gesturing to his frayed pant hem. *“Yeah. We spend a lot on food, in order to get organic and good quality food. What else do we do?”*

You know, other than the recycling and the no flying and the biking everywhere. Belong to the car co-op. Yeah, really feeling that that's working well for us."

John takes action on sustainability through his career. He feels both satisfied in that he can have a positive impact in this way, but also frustrated that some decisions about implementing a sustainable design are beyond his control, and there are limitations to the positive impacts of one building. *"I'm trying to promote all these ideas of sustainability in my career. And that's very satisfying. But it's also frustrating too, because even if you do the perfect house for one person it's not much of an impact. It's gotta be something that's replicable, and that can be used to inspire and inform lots of people."*

In his approach to sustainable living, John is guided by an understanding of the concept of sustainability that includes a sense of social justice. He believes it is important to try to consume at a level that is equitable to other people and other living things. *"I'd say, keeping the footprint small. But I think for me it's a question of justice. Like not using more than our share. I feel a responsibility to try to reign in what we consume, to a level which seems equitable with other beings and other people."* An alignment between his values and how he lives his life is very important to John. *"I think there has to be alignment between my actions and my values. Between what I do for a living and how I spend my time, and what my values are. That's a big one for me."*

John has continued to read and stay informed on issues of sustainability, as he did when he was a young man. *"I have a very strong need to kind of understand what's going on in the bigger world, as much as possible. So the geopolitical, environmental context of our actions is always important to me. Whether or not we can do anything about it. It just*

feels like being a global citizen requires that. And also, keeping an eye to the future.”, he told me.

“That’s important for you, to know what’s going on in the world. So that you can react to it? Or respond? Or just to know?”, I asked.

He clarified, *“To know, to react, to respond. And also to be inspired to act, and to have a continual source of motivation, to make the harder and harder choices to do what’s right.”*

It was through reading a web-log on sustainability that John first learned of the Transition Towns movement. He was drawn to the Transition model as a promising approach *“synthesiz[ing] all the strands of sustainable living”*, and he and Tanis decided to attend the initial Transition training that took place in Victoria around 2008. *“Two and a half years ago, we went to a training for Transition weekend. It was an expensive workshop, but we both saw the value in, and became quite convinced that Transition, the Transition Town movement, synthesizes all the strands of sustainable living, and kind of critiquing alternatives to the way business has been done forever, better than almost anything I’d heard before. And still feel that. And, so, got quite involved in the Transition movement.”*

Following the initial training workshop, John attended a number of Transition Victoria events and became the main facilitator for its Shelter and Housing working group. After he had spent a few months facilitating this group, Tanis gave birth to their child, and John redirected his attention to his family and took a break from the working group. *“And, then I took leadership of a working group, which I called Shelter and Housing. We had a core group with about six or seven people, and we met three or four*

times, a year ago last spring. And then our baby was born. As soon as my focus was taken elsewhere, everyone just dropped it.”; “It was a very frustrating process to try to get people to come to meetings anyways. It’s an idea that everyone says is a good one, but yet no one seems to be really crazy about putting their energy into it and their time. So, after K. was born, I took four or five months away.”

A difficulty and frustration John has experienced in his participation with TVic has been that there are so few people participating, and even fewer taking initiative to put their energy into action. *“I just want something to be somewhat self-sustaining and not always require me, or us holding it up. I want people to get excited and run with it, and then give guidance and feed energy to it. But not be responsible for facilitating the meetings, and creating the space, and sending out the minutes. Every month. Month after month.”* In this way, Transition has not achieved the potential that John thinks it would have if it were to engage more energy, and actually be able to put its mandates into practice. Nevertheless, the few people he has encountered through this organization that are enthusiastic and motivated are an inspiration to him. *“There are very, very good people. I really cherish those meetings. Just being around folks that are so highly motivated. They’re so motivated from such a good place. And, bring so much.”*

Of all the people I spoke with, John was perhaps the most enthusiastic and hopeful about the Transition movement as an avenue for action on sustainable living. *“I think that there’s many things in the idea of a less carbon-intensive lifestyle, that relate directly to what we’re trying to do for our own lives. And it just provides a theoretical framework for that, for our own lives, our efforts. And potentially for building community support. Or, communities of support. Within the larger community. So, I think it’s got a*

lot to say to that. I could see how it could be very beneficial to us. Right now it's all a bit abstract. Because, it's business as usual in so many respects. But, if oil goes to 200 and 300 dollars a barrel, things would change very quickly. And, I think we would really begin to see the benefits of a group like that." It is because of these benefits that John remains committed to supporting Transition Victoria however he can. *"And, I think that it's worthwhile enough that even when I despair of its trajectory, I think it's worth keeping alive."*

Going forward, John is particularly interested in more local-level Transition Initiatives. Along with another TVic member, John helped initiate Transition Fernwood in the fall of 2010, and he is also very interested in the possibility for a street-level Transition initiative in his neighbourhood. *"Yeah. I'm trying to talk [Tanis] into getting a Transition street started on our street here. I think it's got great potential."*; *"From the experience of a friend who's a member of a Transition street, in this neighbourhood but a couple of blocks over, he said it was marvelous the way it brought people out of their homes. And introduced him to people he had never met. And, that he found there was a lot more care and interest than he had ever believed possible. So that might be possible here too."*

"I think part of the problem is that Victoria just seems too big. You know. That's one of the reasons we wanted to try Transition Fernwood. And maybe why Transition Streets are a good idea. Victoria's too big. You can go a whole year and not see any of those people, except when you go to meetings. And it seems so big and so daunting. You put energy out and it just dissipates in this big sea of complacency. We need some places where we can get a critical mass and get some enthusiasm. And a concrete

accomplishment that we can draw attention to. And then have that replicated over here and over here.” While John is quite eager about doing what he can to make some form of Transition initiative work, Tanis expressed reservations, which could pose a barrier to John’s continued involvement with this movement. Nevertheless, they are both committed to continuing to pursue sustainability in their own lives, and to seek to contribute to the development of a supportive community of practice.

During the interview, John referred to their ‘ultimate situation’, and following the recorded portion of the interview, John and Tanis were eager to show me a chart they had created with some friends. It consisted of criteria that members of this group required if they were to collectively undertake some sort of intentional sustainable community arrangement, so this type of pursuit of a sustainable lifestyle may be in John and Tanis’ future.

Tanis’ Story

Tanis is John’s partner. Although John is the one who is really involved with TVic, which is how I got in contact with them, I had the opportunity to speak with both of them about their stories surrounding their sustainable living. Tanis seems young, but is in her late 30s. Her feelings and beliefs are brought across strongly, despite the fact that she seems to have low energy and has struggled with chronic fatigue and other health issues. During the hour in which I interviewed John, Tanis also shared with me some of her life story.

Tanis was born in the early 1970s, as the oldest of three children. She lived in Calgary for much of her early childhood. There, she could play outdoors, in the snow; climb trees, and ‘roam a little bit’. When she was eight, her family moved to the lower

mainland of British Columbia, where she was no longer able to enjoy playing outdoors. Tanis' parents held conservative values and, in contrast to John's parents, were uninvolved in the community. From Tanis' perspective, what was important to her parents was family and being able to provide for their children, both in terms of 'getting groceries on the table' and 'having a nice house'. Tanis perceived that it was important to her parents to maintain appearances and to 'keep up with the Joneses'. They enjoyed watching television as a main leisure activity.

After high school Tanis attended university. She chose to study biology simply because it appealed to her. Up until near the end of her undergraduate degree, Tanis went through life in a way that she would later come to describe as 'unconscious'. She had been brought up to understand that she should behave in a certain way, get good grades to be rewarded, and that she could not engage with the problems of the world or act in opposition to dominant family and cultural values. *"Just went through kind of unconscious, operating on the assumption that life was about getting good grades and I'd be having some kind of reward at the end. Woke up pretty close to the end of my degree and realized... well, I woke up to environmental concerns. I'd been given this impression that I couldn't engage in the world and that there was nothing to be done. Making waves wasn't what people did. [...] I was aware of [environmental issues], but it was as if I didn't have the concept of me being able to engage it. I guess, I had grown up with the world not making sense, because I'm different from my parents. And I thought the way you went through life was just keep your head down, and just do the repetitive, boring, daily stuff, and that was your only option."*

A field course experience in her 4th year of the biology degree opened Tanis' mind to the possibilities for action on environmental issues. On this field excursion, small groups from the class had to present skits on environmental issues. One of the groups performed a satirical skit on the environmental impacts of eating meat. *"I was in a fourth year class that was started off at the end of summer with a field camp, and we had to do these interesting projects. One of the projects was quite a creative one by another group of four, that was called 'Why Cows are Evil'. They dressed up in cow costumes and made all kinds of funny dialogue about cow farts and stuff like that. And, it finally sunk in that I could actually make some choices that were, I don't know, different."* From watching this performance, Tanis had the sudden realization that she could choose not to eat meat, so this was the first change she made to her lifestyle. *"Well, I guess it was just as simple as realizing that I could choose not to eat meat. So that was when I started not eating meat. [...] I gave up eating meat. That was my window into greater awareness."*

From this initial foray into choosing a different lifestyle action, Tanis slowly became engaged in alternative lifestyle choices, transcending her earlier understanding about how she could or should live and act. *"Although it took me quite a few years longer, to really be able to have enough role models to see that I could be different, and that there were other ways of doing things and that I could do it too. 'Cause where I'd come from, there was this culture of disengagement."* Along the way, she met people who demonstrated different choices and actions, and these encounters helped her see other changes she could make to her lifestyle. *"I met a guy who I was totally smitten by, who was vegan and anarchist, and really on the edge of anything I experienced before. So I learned how to be vegan from him, and just became more rad[ical]. After moving*

out of my parents' house, I stopped eating meat, and stopped eating cheese, because I didn't really want to buy it, didn't really want to cook it. Becoming vegan was really easy for me."

Through making different choices, and figuring out how she wanted to live, Tanis became more different from her family of origin, and this created tension when her parents did not understand her choices. *"And so I guess, from my parents point of view I became fairly rad."*

"How did your parents react to [your choices]?", I asked her.

"Not well.", she said. *"Quiet annoyed with me when I would come for family meals. Even for my birthday meal she made me cook the main course because she wouldn't cook vegan. Yeah. Judgment."*

Following from her initial exposure to sustainable living through food, Tanis would make the lifestyle domain of food the primary avenue through which she personally took action towards sustainability. She also used food as a way to do outreach and act as an example to others. It was important to her to lead through the example of her actions, rather than to passively condemn others' choices. *"From there I've really focused on taking personal responsibility. Trying not to condemn others for their choices, but through the way I live trying to show them other ways. When I was vegan, for example, I had a dozen or maybe even two dozen people come over for vegan meals so they could tell what it was like. They weren't vegan and I wanted them to know that there was actually decent vegan food that they could eat. I had a spectrum of people come over for this meal. Food was my forum for a long time."*

After university, Tanis experienced another awakening, this time about what she could expect in life. She discovered that an understanding that she had gained while growing up, that hard work and good grades alone translated into job success, was flawed. *“I graduated from university and was still without a clue, because I thought that getting good grades would somehow get me somewhere. I hadn’t really engaged with a direction. I just went through like a studious, good girl, and chose the classes, and got A’s. And worked in the summer, and didn’t really pursue anything. Until it got almost too late. Well, it was too late. And I was just like ‘holy crap!’.”*

Following graduation, Tanis spent about a year working at unskilled labour that she found unsatisfying and that would not lead to a career for her, and as a result she was unhappy. By chance, she was able to make a connection through a co-worker of her mother’s, to a biology firm. She participated in a number of information interviews before being hired. This first job led to further opportunities with the company, and set her on the career path of becoming a watershed restoration biologist. She described this experience as an ‘awesome learning opportunity’. *“I was going for an information interview and I guess made a good impression and got my toe in the door. Through a couple interviews, got a temporary job that turned into a permanent job, which turned into an awesome learning opportunity. I became a watershed restoration biologist. It’s been great, in terms of what I was able to learn, and the things I’ve moved in to subsequently.”*

In addition to providing her with meaningful work and a valuable learning experience, Tanis’ career has also given her the satisfaction of autonomy. In this job, she is able to flexibly manage her time and to choose which projects she wants to work on.

“Since I thankfully left my bakery job, I’ve had a lot of autonomy in my day-to-day working life.”

“So the ability to make your own schedule, and choose what you do?”, I asked.

“Yeah, well, for the first while I wasn’t able to make my own schedule. That’s definitely changed. I definitely have that now. But, I had a lot of autonomy in terms of what projects I pursued, and how I worked. And I still do.”, she clarified.

Tanis’ job, along with her personal household activities, like growing food, and choosing a sustainable diet, are the avenues through which she takes action for sustainability. Tanis has struggled with low energy, and some health issues, and this has made her careful about where and how she allots her energy to meet her needs, achieve her goals, and work on her values. *“And just focusing my energies more through my work. Coinciding with my first job was also a really long period of chronic fatigue, so not really having a lot of energy outside my job. So making that kind of be the forum for my focus, for my environmental stuff, which it mostly has been.”*

Over time, since university, Tanis has incorporated a broader range of activities into her sustainable lifestyle. In the theme of food, she was a vegan for quite a while, then a vegetarian. Due to health issues, and life changes such as her pregnancy, Tanis has returned to eating meat, but she is very aware of where it comes from and conscious of its impact. For example, she chooses birds over mammals as a less energetically expensive source of meat. When eating fish, she chooses species that she knows to be associated with lower environmental impacts. She follows similar principles to choose low impact produce. *“I had stopped being vegan because I had some food allergies, that just became too restrictive for that. And then when I became pregnant, I started eating meat. So,*

pretty far from it at the moment. But we like to eat food that's local as much as possible. Although a lot of our stuff does come from California. Try not to let it be from much further than that. And we like to eat, when we do eat meat, we like to make sure that it's free range. And we keep chickens so that we can have ethical eggs."

"Until I got pregnant I didn't eat meat. I did eat fish, but I only would eat salmon and halibut. Not things like rockfish, or fake crab and stuff like that. So, the food has always been an important angle. And, I don't buy, very rarely buy stuff like grapes and mangos and bananas and, stuff like that."

"For me I define [sustainable living] as having a small footprint. I'm concerned about where the things I buy come from. And how many demands I'm placing on the earth with my consumption. I've tried to be pretty pragmatic about it. For example, eating birds is less ecologically expensive than eating mammals, and stuff like that. I've done a footprint analysis before."

Tanis is an avid food gardener, and for the past decade or so has raised chickens for their eggs. Keeping her own chickens also allows her to know that they have been treated ethically. *"For me it was just kind of a no-brainer because I was really concerned about where my eggs came from, and how they were treated. I wanted to make sure it was better."*

In addition to being an action on environmental issues, Tanis' food choices also allow some control over her and her family's exposure to chemicals. *"Well, one of my big concerns right now is the environment [my daughter is] growing up in, in terms of substances that are affecting her. Like bisphenol-A and phthalates and all that kind of stuff. I'm really concerned and actually kind of disgusted with the way that we handle*

that in our society. I really would like for her to be able to grow up unaffected by cancer-causing chemicals. So far, we've failed quite miserably in those regards. We'd been feeding her some stuff from cans, until we've realized how bad that was. Stuff like that. I'd very much like her to grow up in a chemical free environment." Although Tanis had changed her daughter's food, Tanis remains concerned about the chemicals her daughter will be exposed to growing up.

Tanis has not owned a car since she was nineteen. She did travel quite a bit in the late nineties, early two thousands, both for work and for leisure. Since then, her travel has dropped off, and she has come to realize that she does not need to travel by air anymore because she has already had her travel experiences and because she is concerned about the impacts of travel. *"Well it's helped that I lost the travel bug. But, I've just come to acknowledge that I had done a lot of my globetrotting, and that I've consumed a lot of resources without really thinking about it. And I could probably stay home from now on and that would be fine."* As mentioned in John's story, Tanis and John recently gave up their car. It was useful to have when their daughter was still an infant, but now that she is a toddler, they are able to bike with her.

Unlike John, Tanis has not been involved with Transition Victoria, aside from attending a couple of public events. Personal circumstances such as health issues like chronic fatigue, and recently giving birth to and raising a child, limit how much time and energy she has to give to other things. Her brief encounters with TVic have been enough to know that it does not have much to attract her at this time, especially given her limited energy. *"I haven't participated. The initial workshop that John refers to was when I was about three or four months pregnant. I had some difficult aspects of the pregnancy and,*

you know, a new baby and everything. I could not care less. [...] And then subsequently there was a lot of internal problems in the group dynamic, focused mainly around one person, that were really off-putting to me and I did not want to spend any energy in that direction until it was resolved. It has resolved, but unfortunately sucked the life out of the group at the same time. So I haven't been involved at all, with the exception of just showing up at a couple events."

Tanis does see the potential for the Transition movement to offer her something attractive or satisfying in the future. *"Originally I felt some hope and excitement about a model that integrated so many disparate issues, and actually provided a forum for action, that seemed like it would really be inclusive and appealing to people. I thought, 'wow, this seems really promising'. I'm sad that it hasn't really met its potential here in Victoria."* Tanis anticipates that, if TVic were to achieve its potential by being able to put ideas into action more effectively, it may provide her with the satisfaction of working together with others on issues that are important to her. *"If it were to meet it's potential, I think it would definitely meet a need I have to work together with others to improve conditions. You know, improve sustainability."*

As it is, she does not have spare energy, and TVic does not possess enough momentum and incentive, for her to consider participating. *"I guess I don't really have the motivation or energy to be an initiator with this group. So, for me to get involved, there would have to be more going on that attracted me. [...] A healthier group dynamic would probably have to happen before I'd be attracted to spend time there."* For the time being, she will continue to make her personal lifestyle choices, and her work, the forum for her action on sustainability.

Charles' Story

Charles, a sixty-year-old man, comes across as highly intelligent, well read, and is eager to discuss the promotion of sustainable living. I met him at the house that he leases and shares with roommates; its yard and rooms are a testament to his long-standing activism on sustainable living and salvage. Sitting in the kitchen, he tells me about his life.

Charles grew up in the Maritimes, with two siblings. The fact that his parents lived through the Great Depression, and the culture of the Maritimes at the time, meant that Charles' family lived frugally. His father was a traveling salesman, and he and the family moved often for work. From a young age, Charles felt he was an outsider, often a stranger. *"I was an outsider in that I was always ... we moved. We were in a different town almost every year. Maybe that's where my outsider-ness comes from. I was used to being a stranger in different places."*

He also had a unique ability for critical thinking, and recalls moments when he became aware of properties of ecology that were not widely recognized. As a schoolboy, Charles tended to think outside the box, and saw systemic connections, and appreciated finding concepts that could help him make sense of the world. *"Perhaps a crucial point in my youth in a classroom in Nova Scotia, when I was, I think I might've been eight or ten, in a science class we covered the carbon cycle. Instead of being O-shaped, it was Q-shaped. There were the cows and the grass and the trees and clouds and things. But, there was extra carbon coming in from a refinery in the corner of the picture. I spoke up in class, just as a kid, and I said, 'that means that there's continuously less and less oxygen and more and more carbon dioxide.' I understood right then, you can't go on that way indefinitely. I take pride in that. [...] My teacher, who I remember warmly, she said,*

'don't worry about it, Charles.' That's what the world is still saying mostly. But now things are getting so scary that not all the world is saying that.'

Reflecting as an adult, Charles sees his interest in sustainability and ecological issues emerging from a young age. *"Well, like I said, even in grade school I was attuned to ecological issues. One moment I remember was when I first read the word 'ecology'. I read some definition of it. I don't know how I would define it now. I guess the study of the interrelationship of living things is one definition. But I remember when I read the word ecology, I thought, 'that word's gonna be useful.' It only just came into popular use in my lifetime. But I remember back in the Maritimes, in what I now understand is the stifling intellectual environment of Maritime schooling, somehow I came across the word ecology, and I thought, 'hey, that's one I can use.' So, no I don't remember there being a particular moment of insight. I grew into it pretty early, like we're going back more than half a century now. I remember that moment, though. I remember finding the word."* As an adult, Charles would wonder whether his early, 'unwelcome' training as an outsider has made it easier for him to exercise critical thinking and making observations that were uncommon, from his perspective outside the group. As Charles grew up, he came to find the intellectual climate of the Maritimes 'stifling', but finished high school there, on his father's advice.

Both his parents were addicted to alcohol. *"I didn't know my father very well. He was a traveling salesman. He was on the road a lot. But he had a hard time, as I've had a hard time, settling down into a job. Matter of fact, he and I both did the same thing. Had the experience of working some place, finding relative success in an organization, exposing corruption in that organization, and losing a job and a career because of it. So,*

he drifted into alcoholism, in his later years. He died much younger than I am.” Charles describes his father as an outsider and a misfit, and sees himself as following in his father’s footsteps in that sense. Out of a sense of self-preservation, Charles’ left his home right after high school. With emotion, he described *“the household was almost impossible with both of them drinking. By the time I got out, I just had to get out of there. It was a bad situation.”* Leaving his family was a ‘smart’ thing for Charles to do at the time, and he took pride in being able to do this. His decision was also influenced by dominant beliefs of the era that suggested social connections were not important for men. In his adulthood, Charles would come to see himself as a ‘leaver’, in that for most of his life he was quick to leave relationships at the first sign of trouble. *“When things don’t work I take off.”* He would never marry.

From the Maritimes, Charles went to Toronto, to Rochdale College, where he connected with the hippie movement. With them, he was glad to find a community supportive of critical thought, self-reliance, and a range of lifestyle choices. Charles saw himself as a revolutionary, and thought his actions with this subculture were going to contribute to changing the world, saving it from the looming ecological crisis. *“And we thought we were changing the world. I thought this was the beginning of some wave of transformation that was going to save the planet. Because even then it was obvious that there was a big ecological crisis shaping up.”* However, he also had the perception that the mainstream culture could potentially keep going, and reflects that his lifestyle choices were more an aesthetic preference than a necessity. He and his cohorts participated in activities like reskilling, cycling, eating local food, and being self-reliant.

When Rochdale College closed down (in the 1970s), many of the ‘hippies’ moved west to BC, and Charles with them. There was a common belief that the west was ‘fresher’, still a frontier of unclaimed land, but Charles discovered upon arrival that this was not so. Charles held various jobs in the fields of emergency response and first aid, before his interest in mechanics emerged. *“Already my interest in mechanical things was blossoming. I’d had no confidence or skill in mechanical, electro-mechanical things at all as a kid. But then, that’s one thing that started to blossom as a young hippie. I started fixing things. And now that’s the main focus of my life, is I build things and I fix things.”* Charles studied to become a mechanical technician, then moved to Victoria for a job in this field, twenty-five years ago.

At present, Charles works as a school bus driver to pay the bills, but much of his work is related to building and fixing, mostly mechanical things. Charles does a substantial amount of salvaging, of machines and parts, and of other useful materials. *“But, mirrors in particular are an example of something that just gets thrown away in this society, that we should grab because they’re compact. You can store stacks of them. You can leave them in the woods. And it doesn’t even matter whether they crack or anything. Because the reason we’ll need them is for focusing solar collectors. If we wind up having to make our own solar collectors, we’re not going to want to build photovoltaic panels.”*

Charles operates from a perceived need to prepare for collapse, and thus engages in ‘tooling up’, experimenting, and salvaging resources that will likely be useful in the future. For example, he talked of using roto-tillers, including ones converted to spaders and powered wheelbarrows, in order to facilitate small plot agriculture. *“That’s what I’m*

doing is roto-tillers, mason bees, but I'm lining myself up... I'm tooling up to do solar focusing, and various kinds of human powered or electric wagons." Charles also shares his knowledge and skills with community members through workshops and tours.

From this mechanical work, Charles derives a sense of satisfaction from being able to make and fix things for himself, using his hands. *"Another satisfaction, that is relevant in this, that's missing in consumer society, is that there's a great satisfaction in just making things for yourself. Something that I've repaired, I get more satisfaction from something I've salvaged, something I got broken and fixed. Quite aside from the fact that it's cheaper, it's just more of an expression of me. And it shows more control over my experience."*; *"Living in consumer society where it's pretty much always cheaper just to buy the product, it just was a satisfaction to me to do it myself. Even though, if I just spent that time working for the man, and spending the money to buy products, I'd actually wind up with more stuff. More results. Nonetheless. See, I don't own this house. I don't have much to show for my life in terms of possessions. But, I wanted to know how to do things, and I've got that to show for it. I'm getting pretty good at fixing things."*; *"So there's a another satisfaction that consumer society doesn't offer. Is that great satisfaction of just being more autonomous."*; *"That's what's carried me through all this is it's been a great satisfaction of my life that I don't have to rely on money for so many things. When something breaks I can generally fix it myself."*

In choosing sustainable actions to focus on, Charles is driven by interest as well as perceived necessity. He reflects that he takes actions and cultivates skills that are relatively more rare in the local sustainable living movement. *"I just don't think it's worth my time [to grow food], because I'm focusing on things that so few people are*

doing.”; “I’m spreading my energy all over the place. I’ll show you around here later. The reason the backyard is such a mess is ‘cause I’m trying to do too many things. But there’s so many urgent opportunities. And there’s things that urgently need to be done.”

In addition to taking action, Charles spends considerable time thinking about how the sustainable society he envisions might be created. He makes lists of the many tasks and roles he sees as necessary in such a community, and ponders how to encourage more people to take up these roles, for example, through prestige economies or credit hours. *“I write lists sometimes of the many things that somebody in our community needs to dig into.”*

Charles stated his personal definition of sustainability: *“choosing sustainability can no longer refer to a style of consumption that steers the global corporate economy towards a less destructive path.”* He is convinced that, *“we have to produce, and we have to produce collectively. We have to learn a whole range of skills. [...] Yeah, that’s what [sustainable living] means to me. It means not just consuming more sustainable things but actually producing more. Being able to produce more for yourself. And not just in the household, but now it’s crucial for sustainability to also produce at the community level, or at the relatively local level.”* His key point is that sustainability requires not only reduced consumption, but also essentially different production – more localized, collective production to meet the needs of the community. Charles sees mechanical and technical skills as particularly important in such a future. *“What we mostly need is an agrarian and industrial society, just on a smaller scale. But that involves specialization, acquiring special tools and special skills, and many of the skills that aren’t in use in this society at all.”*

Charles is guided by a vision of the future in which conventional channels of production and distribution will fail, and people's survival will depend on developing skills of local production and community self-reliance. *"Lives depend on this. The sooner we can engage more people in doing this kind of work the more people are going to survive. We're gonna have a population crash. If it's a smooth crash, it'll mostly be all old people. But, it could be a violent crash. Could be starvation. Could be wars. Like, civil wars, local wars. 'Let's get Fairfield!', you know. Things like that. It's hard to imagine a time when the stakes have been higher, for humanity.";* *"That's perhaps the most crucial role. Is to establish in people's minds that don't believe, that don't understand, that haven't had that vision of the streets being empty of cars. And, paint peeling off of houses. And, this phrase that crosses my mind sometimes, 'Skinnier people and fewer of them'. That's the future I see."*

Like most human beings, Charles appreciates affection, and especially respect and recognition for his efforts. He also values feeling like his life is relevant to the times he is living in, and this manifests through his values and actions on preparing for the collapse he anticipates. However, he recognizes a tension between needing to act on his perceptions and receiving positive recognition, particularly as he tends to see things differently than others. In doing what he sees as important Charles doesn't always receive a lot of support or respect from a lot of people. On the one hand, he wants to practice critical thought and engage in work he sees as necessary and meaningful, but on the other hand he would like more support, acceptance, and appreciation for this. *"There's some benefits to [being an outsider]. It's made it easier for me. Yeah, I guess there's an insight, is that very few people are comfortable being an outsider. Regardless of whether*

they're intellectually capable of critical thought, if they're not emotionally capable of saying what's gonna offend everyone around them, which, I've demonstrated that capability to my cost. But that's one of the pleasures in my life. I've really paid for it, but I say what I think. And if it pisses people off well, there's a price to pay, but nonetheless there's a satisfaction in it."

Although Charles takes some pride in the work that he does, and is gratified to get recognition from people for his leadership of action, he is deeply frustrated that there are not more people like him in the community, working proactively to figure out how to do things to adapt to a future that will require more sustainable action. *"People do give me strokes. When they started up Transition Fernwood, people were saying, 'Yeah, we gotta get Charles in there.' But I didn't join. I'm already busy. I'm not sure we need another organization. But, people do give credit. A number of people have said to Dorothy that the linen project is the single most heartening thing going on for them in Transition. And Transition just adopted it from me. I started it before Transition even came along. So, it is heartening. I get some credit in a way. But on the other hand, it's sort of discouraging. I'd rather I wasn't the star in that respect. I'd rather there were other people I was struggling to keep up with. You know, as it is, just what meagre things I've been able to pull together, in the spare time of a not very focused or happy life."*

Although I got in contact with him through Transition Victoria, Charles is critical of much of the Transition movement and the sustainability movement in general. Charles is quick to criticize people and groups who are superficially focused on the same things as him, but who are working in ways he sees as being ineffective, including those who he believes are more interested in talking and being recognized, than actually doing the very

hard work of acting to prepare for resilient communities. *“The community I wish I had, I wish I was in, would be one where other people would run out and do things like planting the flax and doing all the other stuff, and then they’d come to me just for the mechanical part. Because there’s so much to be done just in the machine design end that it could keep me really busy, and using skills that are more scarce in our community than what you need to do the other parts. So that’s my forlorn wish, is that there was more of that kind of thing going on.”*; *“I have to try and constrain my bitterness because it’s such a disappointment to finally have an organization come along, that is nominally focused on what I perceive as necessary. [...] I can really have a satisfying role in a community of people who are seeking to prepare. But we don’t have such a community. We have this pretend community come along, but who won’t frigging do it!”*

Charles’ frustration seems to stem from his perception that groups like TVic seem to be offering leadership on community sustainability and resilience, but without the substance of the skills and qualities he sees as necessary to the success of such pursuits. *“In terms of, what kind of leadership we need is people who are willing to do hard things that they don’t know how to do, and suffer setbacks and failures and embarrassments.”*

In addition to the lack of widespread positive leadership, much of the local sustainability movement has left Charles frustrated in that he has much knowledge to share, that could provide a valuable asset to a community with a supportive structure of others doing similar work in different fields. He feels he has a lot to offer the community from his collected knowledge, both in terms of collected skills related to actual practice of activities (as well as the types of activities that could be done, that other people could

take on), and in theories on how to best organize and mobilize. For example, in addition to the skills that he practices in building and repairing things, he also knows quite a bit about many things relevant to developing sustainable and resilient communities, whether it be theories for social organization or alternative energy and storage technologies, or food production.

In addition to wanting people to be willing to prepare for their own benefit, he would like others to shoulder the burden of figuring things out, either to do them and support the community in that way or perhaps to teach them to others. He has found a natural inclination to the mechanical, sees a need for others to have these skills, and wants to teach them. In addition to having people willing to learn, he also needs others who are willing to ‘learn to learn’, so that he’s not alone in developing and holding this vital knowledge, and so more could be developed. *“Somebody needs to get that all figured out. We need an expert on phase change materials. I could reel off a dozen examples, or many examples. I write lists sometimes of the many things that we need, that somebody in our community needs to dig into.”*

“Yeah, we need people who are willing to learn. And in particular people who are willing to learn to learn.”; “What we need is people who are willing to learn things. That involve or require experiment, and trial and error. Because many of these things that we need to figure out...”

“There’s all kinds of details that need to be figured out. And that’s the kind of work that I perceive. When I say ‘people like me’ I mean people who are willing to launch into things that aren’t already readily available.”

“Yeah, so that came out of your question about needs, but that’s a need that is satisfied, a little bit. Although not much. I would love to find people who want to learn what I can teach. I’ve picked up a broad general knowledge of how machines work, and how to repair them and how to salvage them.”; “So, it’s a great frustration to me that among this precious community of people who are preparing, they’re almost all learning to grow things.”

Conversely, Charles speaks warmly of the few people he has encountered who he feels ‘get it’ in the same way he does. *“There’s many people out there just slogging away at various little things.”; “There’s many people out there, often operating in isolation and without support, who are my heroes.”* These people may not receive any recognition for their important work, and indeed are sometimes working in relative isolation and unsupported. In the public eye are leaders who are leading by example, taking significant action in their own lives for sustainability, and exemplifying the sort of leadership that Charles sees as necessary. *“[Astyk]’s an inspiration. Aside from intellectual insights, which she offers, some of which I find valuable. Aside from that, she’s doing it. She’s actually living the life.”* His resolve is bolstered by knowing that there are a few others out there, working as he is, to act on what they see as necessary, with or without support, and lead in new directions. Although, he wishes there were many more people like them, and that there was more cooperation among them. *“There’s loads of people out there. But, even just finding them is hard.”*

Some of Charles’ exposure to these compatriots, though rare, have given him a deep sense of satisfaction of feeling that he is connected to, respected by and appreciated by people, and also that he is connecting to the future and his hard work has the potential

to make a difference beyond his lifespan. He describes one such encounter poignantly and with emotion. *“But being connected to people and respected by people is important. And having a connection to the future. Like, one connection that’s important to me is this young woman named E. who was in town here for a year or two.”*; *“E., I may never see her again, but it’s a satisfaction that she helped me organize some classes. I offer shop skills classes here sometimes. Repair skills. Particularly focused on agrarian stuff. On roto-tillers, and wheelbarrows, and hand tools, and things that farmers need. It’s very satisfying to me that to think that long after I’ve gone, E. or somebody will be out somewhere, and they’ll have some machine they really need to fix, that they depend on. And they’ll do something like maybe break off a bolt, so that they can’t fix the machine unless they can extract the broken stud out of the hole, which is quite a trick. But, I taught E. how to do it, so I imagine her using one of these tricks, and thinking, ‘Thank God I knew how to do this’, and thinking back, thinking ‘Charles showed me how to do this’. It almost makes me weep talking about it. It offers a chance to connect to life beyond myself.”*

Charles provides an analysis for this satisfaction as coming partly from the position of belonging and contributing to a culture, and transcending one’s individual life. *“That satisfaction of being part of something more profound and long-living than this shallow culture. The idea of actually being part of a culture, in the sense of a culture is people passing along insight from one generation to another, of actually building so that everybody doesn’t have to start fresh. Both in technical matters, but also matters of character and wisdom and so on.”*

Charles sees his knowledge, and his frustration at not having a completely suitable avenue through which to share it and contribute to the cultural memory, as meaningful given his present life stage. He is sixty years old, and conscious of his mortality. A satisfaction he perceives as available, although mostly not experienced by him, is of contributing to the community and the future by passing on his knowledge. *“So, like I say, I’m getting older. I want... this is sort of a chance to, without having planned it that way, to make sense of my life. Now the skills I’ve developed, without really understanding that I was developing them or without understanding that, they would be really relevant to what was coming. Right now I’m happily in this position, I can be really helpful. I can really have a satisfying role in a community of people who are seeking to prepare, but we don’t have such a community.”*

Perhaps it is because of the recognition of this temporal limitation of human experience that Charles is now yearning to pass on his collected knowledge and skills to his community, to help them out in the trying times he sees on the horizon, and to make sense and meaning of his own life. As he nears the end of his life, he is looking for a way to understand his experience and to hope to leave something positive from his life’s work. He notes that he is satisfied on the rare occasion that he does have to pass on his knowledge, be part of and contribute to the continuing culture, but would like to have much more of this type of opportunity. *“The few chances that I get to pass on what I’ve clumsily collected over a lifetime are satisfaction to me, but they’re rare. That’s something, a need that could be much better satisfied. A need to pass on what I’ve collected. The need to find a community of people who share my sense of what needs to be done.”*

He sees the work he does and wants to do or have done as part of an anticipatory movement. Despite his frustration at feeling relatively alone in his commitment and leadership and sustainable local production and industry pursuits, Charles made no mention of contemplating giving up. With or without the support and community he craves, Charles will continue the difficult work of building and fixing; anticipating collapse and preparing to live through it.

Dorothy's Story

I first met Dorothy in the spring of 2010 at a Transition Victoria outreach event. She was clearly one of the leaders of the event, running things and greeting everyone. When I was ready to start my research and wanted to interview members of Transition Victoria, she volunteered. I saw Dorothy again early in the summer of 2011. We were to meet at a coffee shop in her neighbourhood. Due to her busy schedule, there was a miscommunication about the time we were to meet, but eventually she rolled up on her bicycle. We sat down together over tea, and began the interview.

Dorothy is originally from Britain. She was a post-war baby, making her at present nearly sixty-five years old. Dorothy's father served in the British navy on a submarine during World War II, and survived many traumas. After the war, he worked as an engine maintenance mechanic in a factory. Dorothy's mother worked in the home raising her six children. *"My mother was a full-time housewife, because frugal living takes time."*; *"Doing all those frugal things. Not having all the frills that we have. All the labor saving devices that we have had. She used to knit all our sweaters. That was tough. Because it was cheaper to do it that way."*; *"She was actually a little bit of an*

intellectual. She'd had post-secondary education. And here she was, down on her knees, scrubbing floors. Doing all this stuff all the time."

Dorothy's family of origin practiced what would now be considered sustainable living, but out of necessity and frugality and because it was how people lived at the time. Her parents had grown up in the Great Depression, gone through the war, and lived in a rural area. In this simple and frugal upbringing Dorothy felt she had a very 'stable' childhood. Living in a small, rural community brought Dorothy into contact with nature, animals, and farming.

After secondary school, Dorothy went on to attend the University of Manchester where she studied sociology. Upon graduating, she became a schoolteacher and taught in high schools in London, UK. After working as a teacher for a few years, Dorothy went to travel through Europe with her closest sister. They went to Greece to swim in the ocean and lie on the beaches, and made their way to Israel to see kibbutz. It was in Israel that Dorothy met the man who would be her husband, a gentleman from Victoria, BC.

Dorothy ended her travels and went to work on a dairy farm in England, where her husband soon joined her and there they had their first son. Dorothy moved with her husband to Canada in the early 1970s. She and her son briefly returned to Europe and lived in France. It was there that she dabbled in the back-to-the-land movement. *"Briefly we were gonna live in France, and that was in a tent at, what was called at that time, 'back to the land'. 1970. [...] And we were going to literally be living at a subsistence level. Pump in the kitchen."* Eventually, Dorothy returned to Canada, to Victoria, BC, where she and her husband had their second son. They have been in Victoria, BC ever since.

When they first moved to Canada, Dorothy thought they would continue to pursue a simple lifestyle of living off the land. *“I thought that’s what we’re going to do here. We were gonna do it when we came here, but it never happened. We were rural for awhile here, but then came to town.”* They started out living in a rural area, then moved to the city to be close to the alternative school they wanted their children to attend. *“Partly because we wanted our children to go to a particular school. And we’re still in the neighbourhood at that school.”*

Dorothy continued to practice sustainable living extensively in myriad other ways. *“And I brought through behaviour from the UK, from my homeland to here. I was shocked by the extravagance of North America.”*; *“I have frugal habits and I’ve always thought it was wise to be that way. Little things like always growing food. Always avoiding the use of a clothes drier. Hanging things on lines and racks.”*; *“I still do those things and have done all my life, those two examples I gave you. I’ve always reused and recycled. Just the little things like, the back sides of paper. I’m appalled by the waste that we have. I believe in the importance of growing food. It’s frightening how far away our food is.”*

Dorothy noted that she and her husband have always been ‘a bit alternative in [their] ways’. When they first moved to Victoria, in the 1970s, they joined a food co-op in which members were responsible for bulk ordering food and all the other activities of management. They chose to send their children to an alternative school. She has always practiced a frugal lifestyle, and cannot pinpoint a time when she came to hold values of sustainability, reflecting that she has always held these values in some sense. *“Yeah, I think it was more of an evolution. I never didn’t think about it in a way.”* Part of her

orientation to these issues and practices came from recognition that contemporary economic systems are unsustainable. *“When I was in Manchester University, I did a course in economics. I hated it. I absolutely hated it. But I did it anyway, cause I had to. And, I can remember thinking, ‘this is like a pyramid scheme’. Way back then, this was 1967.”* She has long been interested and active in social justice also. *“Harm reduction’s one of the things that I was involved with. Although it wasn’t called that then. But, the more important thing about drugs is that people are safe. Rather than keeping them off, you know. That people are safe. It’s all to do with legal and illegal drugs. And, back in the day, when I was a student and a teacher in England, I was very involved in. What’s it called. Well, anti-Vietnam war, anti-war, peace movements. CND, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Things like that. Typical 60s stuff. 60s, early 70s stuff. Anti-Vietnam was a big one. Supporting the Americans.”; “And I’m a bit of a left-winger. I believe in the common good and well-being. Not always good at it myself, mind you. But, I believe it’s the best way to go. Caring for others, without needing to.”* She sees her personal well-being as contingent on the well-being of others in her community. *“Well-being. And my well-being on my own... somebody living on the street downtown, and being obviously unhappy, that affects my well-being. So, I have to have a sense of community, in order to right those.”*

In Victoria, Dorothy worked as an elementary school teacher/librarian/computer lab teacher. Working part-time gave her the freedom to practice frugal living. *“The other thing, I’ve always been a part-time teacher. I’ve always felt that that was plenty for me to live on. At other times, that extra bit of time you get can go into the garden and the family. Manage it. That frugality has allowed me to do that. And the willingness to hand-*

wash. And stay at home and put my washing out in the morning, cause you can't do it in the afternoon. It doesn't dry on the line by the evening." Despite holding these frugal values, Dorothy has still at times experienced the pull of consumer culture. *"We had a brief time, when K. and I had full-time jobs, and I became as much as a spendthrift as anybody else. Partly justified by the job and the time it took and the effort it took. And the clothing it took. It was a good excuse, a job is a good excuse to spend a lot of money on clothing."*; *"I, like a lot of other people, I would go out shopping, thinking it would make me happy. Second-hand shopping for sure. But, it doesn't. It's a temporary fix."* Dorothy retired from teaching about two years ago. She has three grandchildren by her son who still lives nearby, and was expecting one grandchild on the way from her other son who now lives in Toronto.

Throughout our conversation, Dorothy repeatedly touched on themes of intergenerational equity and social justice. Dorothy does not consider herself religious, and at times she would say she was an atheist. Now, she is beginning to consider her spiritual side, although she equates spirituality with psychology and emotion. She follows the path of 'trying to be kind'. Dorothy feels a strong personal responsibility to do what she can for sustainability and the condition of current community members and future generations. Dorothy recognizes that she has been helped by her parents' contribution to intergenerational equity. *"Thanks to the hard work of our parents, which comes down to the whole economy thing that I've been thinking about lately, we own our house. We have no debt on our house. Both our children have debts, but they're held by us, some of that debt, 'cause we've loaned them money, to get started in their business. And both took jobs. They're both doing pretty well in those jobs, and they're paying it back."*

This valuing intergenerational and intra-generational equity begun with her own children and grandchildren, but also extends to other people in the community and elsewhere, and other people she does not even know. *“The other thing is that, not my grandchildren maybe, but someone else’s grandchildren are already suffering from those habits that we have. From those kinds of habits, the wasteful habits that we have here. And all we’re thinking about is the bottom dollar. How much it costs, in money terms.”* She sees the contemporary period of material abundance as an anomaly and so feels responsible to share this wealth. *“[Nicole Foss/Stoneleigh] talked about sharing the wealth generationally. How important that is for the likes of you here now, and our descendents. That this has been a little bubble of wealth, and we, my generation have been the ones benefited. And so, we owe it, if we care. If we care, we have to do something about that, I think. And we’re in a position to. I’ve got a small pension from my teaching.”* She worries about her descendents and what kind of life they, and other future generations, might be able to have. *“They’re not going to be able to, unless they’re very cream of the crop and they’re fighting for it, they’re not going to be able to have the kind of lifestyle that I have led. Or my contemporaries have led.”*

In devoting so much of her time and energy to what she sees as very important work on community resilience and ensuring sustainability for future generations, Dorothy has had to make some sacrifices. Her fierce commitment to taking action on sustainable living, especially in the community, has at times created conflict in her relationships with her family members. Her choice to limit her air travel has created tensions in relationship with her son who lives in Ontario, both because she cannot visit him there, and because he himself flies frequently for work. *“One things it’s done for me, that’s upset me, is I*

can't easily fly. And I have a grandchild due in Toronto, in November. That's a huge source of grief, that I can't. Well, first of all, I want them to move here, of course. But, they don't want to move here. To be separate. Realizing the importance of family and community. And, I'm feeling it for them too. Hoping they can have a community, in a crunch. I'm not going to be part of that. To help support each other. But I am going to miss it. It's a conflict."

"My son, he flies. He makes movies about heavy metal music. He flies all over the place to meet these millionaire rock musicians. It's caused a certain stress between us. We made a joke that my not flying is enabling him to fly. But at the same time, I think there are ways. It's tension and a little bit of alienation from your own kids, and it's hard. 'Why don't you come see me, mom? I've got the money.'"; "Yeah. He gets it. He has to repress this, because his career depends on it."; "Hard for him. Just to have my example. What a pain, to have a mother like me, when you're in show biz."

She also perceives a tension between her lifestyle choices and those of friends who live differently; she sees this tension as possibly arising from their guilt at not living more sustainably as she is. *"Many of my friends, there's a certain alienation, when you start writing it. Selling your car. We don't have a car.";* *"My friends who are driving big cars around with one person in them, I'm a challenge to what they're doing. Even without saying anything, it can cause a discomfort. And also they feel guilty that they're not doing anything about it. If they get it at all."* Or, maybe, it is simply that they do not understand her motivations. *"A lot of my peers who've retired from teaching. When I see them, they ask me where I'm traveling. I'm expected to do all those things that I deserve after all my hard work.";* *"That's what they're looking forward to when they've retired,*

if they haven't already. Traveling.” It is not that Dorothy does not have a desire to travel, but this is a desire she sacrifices because she is more concerned about the environmental and social impacts. *“It's hard for me to say anything because I sure love traveling. Always did. Particularly, when I usually travel I go back to England to see my family. Now I've got a brother in Australia. I'd love to go and see him. And I've got a grandson in Toronto, and people think nothing of flying back and forth from Toronto, as you must know. But for me, it's become a problem. Because I feel I shouldn't be contributing to the carbon.”*; *“Yeah I feel I shouldn't because I'm adding to the pollution. And I'm engaging in that whole lifestyle.”*; *“It's the knowledge that all those things that I enjoy, flying around and doing all those things, are polluting.”*

A couple of years ago, Dorothy was expressing sadness about this family tension and her fears for her children and grandchildren to her sister, who suggested she look into the Transition movement. *“Well, there's a little bit I haven't talked about very much and that's family. My grandchildren are very important, and there's a lot of stress in my life around them at the moment. I worry about them. And that's another reason I came to Transition. You want me to tell you about how I came to that?”*; *“Well, talking 'bout family brought this up. 'Cause my sister was here from England. And she lives... still lives... four of my siblings still live in exactly the same area we all grew up in. One sibling is in Australia. He's colonial. My sister, who I've always got on the best with, two years younger than me, came here on a trip round the world to see all her family. Probably the last. She visited P. in Australia. At home she's always been involved in growing food, quite a bit more than I have. She's taken courses and things like, just how to grow and at home. She does it in a bigger way than I do. Her husband is very into it*

too. She saw that I was worrying, and she heard that these people were coming from Totnes in England. This was November 2008, and they had a workshop here. That's when I first got involved with Transition Towns."

The movement was just getting started in North America, with a tour of specialists from Transition Totnes, and Dorothy attended a workshop to learn more on behalf of her community. *"There was myself and K., who were sponsored by our neighbourhood for half the fee for this workshop, because we both wanted to go and our neighbourhood association agreed to pay half. It was 200 dollars each. So they paid 200 dollars, and we put up the other 100 dollars to attend the workshop. Otherwise I wouldn't have been able to go. Nor would K. probably, 'cause he's low income too. Well, low by Canadian standards."* A group of people from Victoria who attended the workshop reunited in early 2009 and initiated Transition Victoria.

Since initiation, Dorothy has been heavily involved in TVic. She attends meetings of Inner Transition (formerly Heart & Soul) and facilitates the Reskilling group, as well as various events. She has attended numerous meetings, and has also been responsible for sending out messages and announcements, and maintaining information on the TVic 'ning' website. *"I've been at tables. I've gone to a lot of meetings. Done all that. Written a lot of e-mails and added stuff to the ning."; "The reskilling, I'm facilitator of, so I've been keeping up the ning."*

Her favourite activities are outreach events and meetings, as she derives enjoyment from providing information about Transition to the public, and feels rewarded when people show interest in this movement. *"Lot of talking about those things. Doing presentations. I quite enjoy those once I get going. Once I'm up there. But I'm nerve-*

wracked. It's being on stage.”; “I love showing The Power of Community, because every time I show it people are almost grateful for having seen it. And it always stimulates good conversation, good discussion.” She particularly enjoys talking to people who are less familiar with the Transition movement and ideas around sustainability. *“I enjoy talking to people about it, but at the beginning level.”*

Many of the groups and activities she is passionate about are related to those values of intergenerational equity and preserving resources for future generations, to help them have a good quality of life. Reskilling is the process of learning, sharing, and documenting skills that are useful to community self-reliance. Dorothy has coordinated and participated in many skill-sharing events, such as workshops where people can learn to repair small appliances, maintain tools, or knit.

The Linen Project is something that Dorothy has worked on with a small number of community members; they are re-learning how to grow and process this fiber resource, and re-discovering the necessary tools. *“Charles told me how he was interested in growing linen, growing flax to make linen. It spoke to me because I've often been interested in fiber and fabric.”; “Last year, I did my first public flax event, was the fiber festival at Saxe Point Park. I'd put up a display, and it was probably better because it was my first. I was much more fussy about it. I didn't have all the tools going. Didn't have all the processes. It was mostly a display, and samples. And that was very heart-warming. 'Cause, all those fiber people were interested, and lot of connections were made there. I had the Transition banner, and some Transition material to say 'why am I doing this'.”*

Another project she has been actively involved in, which gives her pride, is the Capital Nut Tree Project that aims to build up the resource of communal nut trees. *“The other thing I’m personally involved in is the capital nut project. I’ve propagated three sweet chestnuts, and one pine nut tree, this spring. They’re now beginning to find places. A sweet chestnut and a hazel.”*; *“A hazel and the sweet chestnut is going to Banfield, over in Vic West. There’s a community garden there. A public garden, commons garden. For anybody. And they’re going up, they went there yesterday. I gave them to them yesterday, so they’re on their way. So, we’re learning about propagating. Finding partners. Trying to get nut trees into public places so they belong to the commons. And, investigating what’s viable here. My latest thought are olive trees.”*; *“It is quite challenging. But there’s rewards too. Great rewards. Growing the nut trees are my big reward. I’m so proud of my little pine nut tree, I can’t believe it. It’s so cute. Having fun.”*

Besides being rewarding in themselves, the reskilling, the linen project, and the nut tree project are connected with Dorothy’s drive to preserve physical and intellectual resources for future generations. Of reskilling, she said, *“I’m doing it because I want to maintain the skills. I wanna make sure they’re here in this place. If there’s any chance of doing it.”*; *“I see economics very closely tied with reskilling. Because if we’re telling young people, you know, they say the jobs we have in the industrial growth model are just not gonna be there. You might want to grab the last remaining wheelwright, and learn how to make wooden wheels. It might be a better job.”*; *“And it’s an investment for the future generations. I recently went to a talk by Nicole Foss. She was very interested. And one of the things she says to prepare for the future to build resilience and, which I don’t*

think is quite the same word as sustainability. That's part of the adaption. One of the things we can do, she had a list of jobs."

The nut trees, along with documentation on the propagation process, she likewise sees as a commons as well as a resource for future generations living in Victoria. *"And again, all that nut tree stuff is definitely legacy. It's intergenerational wealth. Not money, not houses, but basics. And we've produced a couple, a few documents. I've got a reskilling document on it."*

She feels excitement and enthusiasm for this work, and finds it rewarding when she can get others excited as well, but reflects that some of her excitement may come from a sense of urgency and personal responsibility to see these activities be successful. *"The tables we've been on, even in the freezing cold in Centennial Square, there's the odd person who is interested. Talking about the flax usually gets people going. Others have observed that I get excited, talking about the flax. But some of it's kind of panic. I don't know if I can keep it going. The workshops I've had, and I've done most of the organizing for them, have been very rewarding, because a few people come and enjoy themselves."*

Along with her obvious investment in and commitment to these activities, Dorothy comes across as hard on herself. It seems that she feels a very strong sense of personal responsibility to take action on fostering sustainability and resilience in the community, and she appears to have very high standards for success in these endeavours. *"There's a certain conflict for me about being a facilitator because the I.C. [Initiating Committee], or some members of the I.C., produced a document, which we all accepted about working groups, and how they should go. How we'd like to see them go.";* "I've

always felt that I haven't followed the... there's a working group primer document. Beautiful document. With the first thing I did for Transition Victoria, right on the front, which is the shuffle bus, the cardboard shuffle bus. I always feel I've failed that document because I haven't been able to manage working... I haven't been able to attract people to regular meetings. We have meetings every now and then, but there's about four of us again. We've had certain things that have happened nevertheless. We've had active gatherings."

At times Dorothy has been disappointed with the turn out at some TVic meetings and events, seeing far few people there in person than are subscribed to the website. However, she also thinks that it is her role as an older, retired person who has more time, to act as an anchor point in this work, supporting young people with more commitments to work, family, or education to participate as they are able. *"The personnel, the people that are actually involved, particularly the young people, sort of come and go. I've noticed that from the start. It's sort of our job as the older people, we have the time and the money; not necessarily the expertise, to do this."*

Dorothy has begun to recognize the stress of taking on so much responsibility and its toll on her, and so is trying to temper her personal involvement. *"I'm learning to say 'No' to myself. I'm having to learn to say that. And to stand up for myself a little more. I readily feel that I should do things. Enough people are telling me that I should do things. Then I get a bit resentful. And, maybe they're not. Maybe I am. So I need to say 'No'."*; *"I feel like I started this thing, Transition Victoria, so I have some responsibility to see that... it has a good name, for one. For something else, I'm still involved in presentations."*

Being so busy with sustainable living and community action on sustainability and resilience, Dorothy has had to sacrifice some of her needs and desires in the interest of what she sees as very important work that she feels a responsibility to complete. She reflected that, even as she was taking action for resilience in the community, her own personal resilience was compromised, along with her ability to practice sustainability in her own life, in a way that is desirable to her. *“I’m not very resilient, emotionally. I can easily be squished right down. I also have been quite stressed recently. ‘Cause the excitement of starting Transition led me into all sorts of areas, all sorts of meetings, all sorts of e-mails. I couldn’t do my sustainable living.”*; *“I can’t even do the things I want, because I was part of the Water Watch Coalition, and I was down on the table at Moss Street Market several time. When I first retired, that was one of the things I got into. I’ve since, because of Transition, I’m no longer very involved. Because I’ve got all these other things to do too. Including my own workshops on Saturdays. I haven’t gotten down to Moss Street Market yet. It’s somewhere I wanna buy my food. That’s something I notice that has happened with this busyness that I have now with Transition, lot of which is unavoidable. My food shopping has become haphazard. I’m dashing out for things, rather than having that shopping list and getting refills of everything at once. I wanna get back to that. I think that I will go down to Moss Street, and shop there. I still shop ethically.”*

Dorothy was motivated to join TVic out of the grief she felt in her relationship with her son in Ontario and not feeling right about the impact of flying frequently to visit him, but other son lives in town and so she does get to see him and her three grandchildren about once a week. However, in this case her commitments to TVic and

other groups sometimes gets in the way of spending time with her family nearby. *“I got too busy. Things like hanging laundry on the line was done in a rush, but that’s actually one thing I always did. But the garden gets neglected. Maybe even my grandchildren, my family. We do see the grandchildren once a week. But I’ve often not been able to accept an invitation because I’ve got a meeting at that time, and sometimes those meetings were the Inner Transition meetings, the heart and soul meetings, that were helping me sustain myself. That’s an interesting conflict. This busyness.”* There is a complex tension between Dorothy’s needs: to take action on sustainability for her descendents and future generations, to be with her family, and to take care of herself.

Dorothy disclosed her recent health issues, surrounding hypertension. Although it is not advisable for someone with this condition to be overly busy and stressed, she has been slow to draw back from her commitments to various groups and activities. *“I should be honest about this, I’ve recently had a spike in my hypertension. High blood pressure. Partly it is to do with too much involvement, too much busyness, too much trying to do everything. I procrastinate a bit. There’s this mass of stuff always waiting. So, that’s one of the reasons I’ve taken a leave from the initiating committee, and I dropped out of the economics group, but I can’t keep my nose out of it. And I haven’t joined some of the other things.”*; *“Yeah, it’s no good me having a stroke, right? Which is what hypertension implies. I once took medication for hypertension, when I was teaching. I managed to get off it. Because I was calm. I must’ve been relaxed or something. But I know I have evidence of it. You can tell on the back of your eyeball, I have tissue. Because it’s just blood pressuring against your veins and your arteries. So, I was quite disappointed to discover I had out of this world high blood pressure for awhile. I have*

gone back on diuretics, and I hope they do it for me. Because they just, well I'm sure they have other effects, but their main purpose is just to reduce the amount of blood, 'cause they take the water away, out. Seems like your blood is thicker. Anyway, I don't know if that's good or bad. I just saw the doctor this morning, and it's not down low enough. Gotta get it down more. But I am feeling better, 'cause I'm having diuretics. I can't quite feel the tension like I was."

In addition to medical intervention, this health concern has led Dorothy to draw back a bit from some of her commitments to Transition Victoria, although she is still very much interested and involved. She has also pursued meditation as a way to address her stress, although this raises another tension in her mind, in that she is hesitant to take actions that only benefit her personally, because she has tended to interpret them as selfish. *"I got involved in a meditation class, and I've resisted meditation in my life, 'cause I don't wanna slow down. I'm not very good at reflecting. I've been meeting a lot of people who have been doing work on themselves a long time. The way I considered that, in the past, I've considered that selfish. I don't deserve it worked on. It's like those commercials, for the hair dye, you know. 'Oh, you deserve it.' I never felt... maybe I felt I didn't have time. Maybe it's the same thing as saying that. I did also feel like, maybe I thought I was so alright I didn't need any work on myself. It was insulting to even question myself. Who knows."*

Dorothy more easily identified art and culture as a need she has, and although she has had some opportunities to engage in art through TVic, she would like more opportunities for this, perhaps incorporating an arts and culture working group. Dorothy expressed a lot of interest in art and creativity, as something that would be satisfying to

her personally, and as something that she sees as an effective or interesting way to start conversations about sustainability in the community. She made reference to one Victoria woman's public conversation in the form of a 'garbage-art' installation outside her house. *"I met this really neat woman who's an artist. She volunteers at Sundance School, and does the mosaics that are showing up on the side of schools. She did the one, helped the school community provide one for Quadra School, and started one at Sundance. And she's got an art installation in her front yard right on Hillside. It's a conversation piece about trash, garbage, throw away stuff. Anyway, she's incredibly neat. I want her to lead a resilience arts and culture group. Possibly a working group for Transition, 'cause I really think it's something that's missing in our group. We have a lot of working groups. And we don't have an arts [group]."* One community-involving art project Dorothy headlined, inspired by similar projects elsewhere, was a cardboard 'shuffle bus', which could be 'driven' by groups of people walking, and was used in public outreach to raise awareness of Transition and its ideas.

Participating with the Inner Transition group helps Dorothy with the emotions related to her resilience activism. She thinks that the Transition model is somewhat unique in presenting a structure that includes emotional support to help people feel 'okay' through skill sharing and other caring activities, in contrast to other environmental organizations that might focus purely on external actions and environmental impacts. *"It's all to do with resilience and sustainability. All those skills. Which I think most movements or organizations don't get into. Like the Sierra Club doesn't get into helping people feel okay about this change. That's the uniqueness of Transition."*; *"I've read the Transition Handbook by Rob Hopkins. It just seemed... made a lot of sense, you know?"*

And it allowed, the unique thing I thought was that it allowed for the grief that can come. It provides support. It attempts to provide support for the grief that can come when you kind of get it, you know. That our behaviours need to change, really need to change, if there's going to be a future for the human race. I mean, I think the planet can carry on, but I have descendants." This group provides a place where people can share their feelings and concerns and receive emotional support from people of a similar mind-set and situation. *"Somebody said to me, 'It's just great to talk to like-minded people. And to be with like-minded people.' So people who've got it that something needs to definitely happen. We have to make some changes to our behaviour, and we're feeling sad about it, you know?"* Here Dorothy can connect with people who are more understanding and accepting of their common lifestyle, and its associated challenges. *"Those things are tough, and for those I belong to the Inner Transition group. We have two or three mandates really. One is to help ourselves, because it's like putting on your oxygen mask on the plane. You can't help the other people unless you're alive yourself. So you have to take care, you have to do a certain taking care. And also to bring awareness. And, that there are solutions. There are ways to get through it. There is a community. And to help the wider community face that; Transition Members and the even wider community, which is a huge job, right? So as to sort of help myself, we have what we call home groups. Which is groups of people who are involved, who want to form a small group. Just to be a safe place for any stress, grief, guilt. Get support. Not necessarily advice. Just, people who you know you can say anything. You can cry, you can swear probably. Yeah, we do swear. That's right. Show anger. And it's a safe place."* Inner Transition, and Transition Victoria and the sustainable living community more widely offer support

for the grief of sustainability activism, as well as a community with which to share positive feelings and achievements. *“Yeah, the support from the start of the Initiating Committee. Being with people, like-minded people. Just having freedom to talk about the fears in ways, as well as the challenges. As well as the feeling of, ‘Yeah, we did it.’”*

Dorothy also appreciates the opportunity to have met new people and learn about them. *“I like the people I’ve met. And, I enjoy their company and hearing what they’re doing.”*

After almost two years, Dorothy can reflect on how Transition Victoria has unfolded. Due to her position of being an initiating member, and participating in numerous working groups, Dorothy was able to offer valuable perspectives not only on her own experience, but also on the happenings of Transition Victoria and the local resilience movement more widely. She reflected on the challenges of adapting the Transition model to a different context from the one in which it was developed, Victoria being a more spread out city than Totnes, with less of the history of craftsmanship.

“We’ve been going for nearly, well, two and a half years. Still early days. We very much modeled ourselves after Transition Totnes, and all that has happened there. But we’re a very different situation. We’re much bigger than Totnes. Those market towns in England, and I come from one, their size and their history kind of makes them very suited to it, because not so long ago they had all the crafts that provided for a local sustainable economy. I don’t know. I mean, Victoria had some of them, but we’re so spread out. Much bigger. So, we struggled. How do we do it? How do you do it in a city? And we’re still struggling with that.” She explained how organizers associated with TVic have tried to address this discrepancy by starting more localized iterations, such as Transition Fernwood, and some Transition Streets are getting started as well.

This point highlights another tension in the manifestation of the Transition movement in Victoria, in that there are other groups already doing some of the sorts of work that Transition recognizes as important to pursue, and thus it is a puzzle to figure out how Transition can fit into this situation. *“I think we’ve got Transition Fernwood started up. But Fernwood already has two community associations. That sometime creates hard feelings. I’m not sure of the wisdom of that.”*; *“It is the, as people keep reminding me, it is the dangling fruit. You know, the ones that can be picked.”*

Besides Transition Victoria, Dorothy has been very involved in a range of local sustainability and resilience activities and groups. She sees these activities as the same sort of work, even though not under the official banner of Transition and with people who are not interested in associating themselves officially with the Transition movement. *“I’m finding that I’m working a lot with people who aren’t signed up on the thing. Probably never will be, and never will be official members of Transition. But they’re doing these things.”*

“That’s separate from Transition Victoria, within your neighbourhood?”, I asked.

“Well, I can’t separate the two, but it’s not under the banner of Transition, and I think that’s fine. I think there are so many neat things that are part of the transition. We can’t claim them. We don’t want them all for ourselves. We don’t really. What has happened is that our food group, which there are the most people involved in it already. There’s all kinds of food groups, community groups, boulevard gardens starting. Food sustainability is big already. So, I sometimes question the starting or having it. Why do we need a Transition food group? Can we help them? And that’s indeed what’s

happened. The Transition food group has taken over, has become responsible for Springridge Commons. With the cooperation of the Neighbourhood Resource Group in Fernwood.”

“We have to think, are we any use as a separate group? We don’t have a water group on the ning, a working group in Transition. In a way that’s fine, because we have the Greater Victoria Water Watch Coalition. But we want to work with them, help them, promote it. Kind of see it through the Transition lens of resilience and adaptation. All that stuff. We don’t need to reinvent the wheel. And I think that’s partly what’s been stressing me out. There’s so many ways to go.”

Although she is clearly an ardent supporter of Transition, and is an active member of Transition Victoria, Dorothy is most interested in the promotion of all sorts of activities and groups that build local resilience. *“I’m not really interested in the promotion of Transition. I’m really interested in the promotion of the idea of building resilience, and that comes through, in my mind, from localization. And learning how to be with people. How to listen. And to communicate in a way that is peaceful.”* Some examples of other activities she does to this end are opening her kitchen up to a local school for workshops on fermenting, and participating in the creation of a skill-sharing document amongst her neighbours to record who has what skills they can share or barter with.

Although she has taken her health, and her relationships with her family into consideration, and as a result has drawn back somewhat from her TVic commitments, I get the impression that Dorothy will choose to continue to be involved in these sustainability activities for as long as she can into the future. Her commitment to

underlying values of intergenerational equity, and her deep concern and compassion for both her own family, and for other people, suggests that she will continue to feel responsible to take action on these resilience issues.

Conclusion

These six accounts of participants' engagement in sustainable living practices - the stories shared with me by Geoff, Vivian, John, Tanis, Charles, and Dorothy – represent six unique, subjective experiences with the practice of a sustainable lifestyle. These stories illustrate a range of different approaches to sustainable living, diverse biographical features and motivational factors influencing practice, and incorporate the appearance of unique satisfactions and frustrations that arise from the individualized practices. In the following chapter, I examine these phenomena: of practices, experiences of satisfaction and frustration, attributions of meaning and satisfaction, and how they appear to interact with, influence, or are influenced by participants' approaches to a sustainable lifestyle.

4

Themes of Practice, Needing, Satisfaction and Frustration

At the outset of this work, I discussed the importance of learning more about how people practicing sustainable lifestyles experience satisfaction in association with these practices. This knowledge is meaningful for two main reasons. Firstly, it is recognized that, while needs are thought to be relatively universal, satisfiers for those needs can take many culturally-specific and personally meaningful forms (Maiteny, 2000; Max-Neef, 1991). Maiteny, Jackson, and others identified satisfaction attributed to environmentally-impacting practices as a cultural cause of unsustainable conditions. Secondly, in recognition of the motivational function of satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Maslow, 1970), and the need for truly sustainable lifestyles to preserve well-being (CSD, 2004), it is important to know if and how sustainable lifestyles may be able to provide satisfaction. Understanding what people (particularly those currently practicing sustainable living) would subjectively experience as satisfying, along with knowing what sorts of satisfactions and frustrations people are experiencing in association with their practices, could help to better understand what motivates them and provides them with well-being. This understanding, in turn, could point towards barriers and opportunities for supporting sustainable practices that are congruous with personal satisfaction.

The process of constructing the narrative data into the stories presented in the previous chapter allowed me to become familiar with the data, and start to get a sense of connections and patterns in how participants practice sustainable living, and how they attribute and experience satisfaction in relation to these practices. Returning to the interview data in the form of transcripts, I identified passages referring to attributions and experiences of satisfaction and frustration. I identified these passages by looking for

evaluative language, emotion, discussions of real versus ideal situations, subjective reasons for action, attitudes, values, frequency of mention, etc. I then sorted these passages into emergent themes of attribution of meaning or satisfaction, informed but not constrained by the types of needs discussed in the needs theories (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Maslow, 1970; Max-Neef, 1991), using a qualitative thematic analysis approach.

First, I briefly discuss findings on the types of sustainable lifestyle practices the participants engaged in with regard to how these practices relate to objective environmental impact, suggesting that these participants are, indeed, practicing objectively sustainable lifestyles. Next, I describe my findings in the form of emergent categories of ‘needs’ or attributions of satisfaction and meaning, as communicated in participants’ accounts. I describe these themes also with reference to accounts of experienced satisfaction or frustration, and how these attributions and experiences seem to relate to sustainable lifestyle practices. Description of these themes is followed by a discussion of apparent gender and age patterns in whether and how these ‘needs’ appear in participants’ accounts; then, a discussion of how themes of tension and sacrifice appear in the accounts. The chapter is concluded with a discussion of how findings of this study compare to and extend the theoretical speculation and preliminary findings of past studies with regard to how the practice of sustainable lifestyles could grant satisfaction for human needs.

Objective Sustainability of Lifestyle Practices

Considering how to support and promote sustainable lifestyle practices is worthy of attention because of how such practices could contribute to reducing impacts of human behaviour on environmental systems. While the objective impact on the environment of

participants' sustainable lifestyle practices was not measured in this study, a review of their self-reported practices suggests that they are indeed practicing actions recognized to have implications for reducing household-level environmental impacts (see Table 3). Activities and choices in the domains of housing, food, transportation, and consumption are analyzed to have the potential to significantly influence overall environmental impact at the household level (CSD, 2004; Lorek & Spangenberg, 2000). Table 4 shows which impact-reducing activities were engaged by each participant. Indicators used in this analysis were adapted from Lorek and Spangenberg (2000). While this analysis cannot be used to make claims about the quantitative, objective impact of participants' lifestyles on the environment, it does indicate that each participant in this study reported engaging in many of the types of behaviours recognized to have implications for environmental impact, suggesting that their self-defined sustainable lifestyles are objectively 'sustainable' to some degree.

Table 3 Participants' environmental impact-reducing practices

Domain	Practices
Housing and Energy	choosing a house with a small footprint, sharing housing, modifying for energy efficiency, alternative energy/solar panels, wood heating, line drying laundry, tried building a cob house
Food	growing food, keeping chickens, eating a vegan or vegetarian diet, eating only more sustainable seafood, choosing energetically less expensive meat, eating ethical animal products, foraging, keeping bees, buying local and organic food, belonging to a food co-op
Transportation	walking, bicycling, taking the bus, not owning a car, belonging to a car co-op, reducing car use, not flying, vacationing locally, traveling long distances by train, turning down work that would require flying, choosing to live close by to amenities
Consumption	recycling, reusing, shopping second-hand, salvaging useful materials, using up, repairing rather than replacing, conscious waste reduction, composting

Table 4 Impact-reducing practices engaged in by each participant

	Geoff	Vivian	John	Tanis	Charles	Dorothy
Housing						
alternative energy; energy efficiency	?	✓	✓	✓	?	✓
smaller living space per person	?	✓	?	?	✓	?
Food						
reduced meat consumption	?	?	✓	✓	×	?
more organic food	?	✓	✓	✓	?	✓
more local food (incl. gardening, etc.)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transportation						
shorter distance to amenities	?	✓	✓	✓	?	✓
used alternative modes of transportation	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓
gave up car ownership	×	✓	✓	✓	?	✓
stopped holiday flights	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓
Consumption						
second-hand and ethical clothing	?	✓	✓	✓	?	✓
second-hand and long-term use of domestic durables	?	?	✓	✓	✓	✓
efficient or reduced use of household appliances	?	?	?	?	?	✓
reduce, reuse, recycle, compost	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

✓ = participant does engage in this practice

× = participant does not engage in this practice

? = it is not known whether participant engages in this practice

Besides practices with recognized implications for environmental impacts, participants identified other elements of their self-defined sustainable lifestyles. These practices, without direct implications for impact reduction, were about living in line with the qualitative values of sustainability and related ethics. Practices that do not fit in with the domains of household-level impact reduction identified above, but nevertheless were included by participants in their conceptualization of their sustainable lifestyle include activities and choices in categories of: volunteering in the community, doing outreach and education, employment activities, socializing, learning, thinking, preparing resources for resilience, and some other sorts of general conduct. Participants' sustainable lifestyle

practices without direct implications for reducing environmental impact are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5 Participants' other sustainable lifestyle practices

Domain	Practices
Voluntary Community Participation	showing up at sustainability events, attending discussion groups, volunteering with social service/emergency preparedness/environmental organizations, participating in social justice/peace/harm reduction movements, participating in TVic, facilitating working groups, initiating new groups, joining co-ops, doing administrative tasks for groups
Outreach and Education	acting as an example to others, talking to people, staffing information tables, facilitating public awareness events, demonstration projects, sharing knowledge and skills, convening re-skilling events
Employment	advocating for energy efficient design through home design business; contributing to watershed restoration as a biologist; researching renewable energy as a PhD student; roto-tilling small plot urban agriculture; tree planting
Socializing	inviting people over to experience vegan food, urban food foraging with friends
Learning	environmental studies courses and university degrees, academic research on environmental topics, taking courses in sustainable design, reading environmental blogs, reading books, keeping informed on world issues, learning practical skills (e.g. food preservation, composting), attending training workshop for Transition Initiatives, experimentation, figuring out how to build things, cultivating more rare skills
Intellectual Work	making lists of things that need to be done to secure a resilient community; thinking about how to motivate people to act, possibilities of alternative economies; thinking about personal values
Preparing Resources for Resilience	re-learning and re-skilling, documenting knowledge, learning what works, gathering tools and materials, planting nut trees
General Conduct	taking personal responsibility for acting, spending more money on some things, minimizing impact/footprint, tried living off the land, practicing simple living, working part time, practicing self-reliance, not condemning others' choices

Although these other lifestyle practices have less clear implications for reducing environmental impact, such practices could have some effect by encouraging and supporting others to engage in sustainable practices, or by reducing impacts beyond participants' households - such as through their career activities. These practices may

also be important for how they address other dimensions of sustainable development, such as by improving social conditions. Finally, these practices are a part of participants' holistic approaches to practicing a sustainable lifestyle, and thus cannot be separated from those actions with more direct implications for sustainability of environmental impact.

Needs and Attributions of Satisfaction and Meaning

Moving from the more holistic stories of sustainable lifestyle experience to considering patterns and themes of phenomena, I conducted a qualitative thematic analysis of interview data. This analysis is meant to complement and be complemented by my narrative understanding of participants' experiences gained through conducting the narrative analyses presented in the previous chapter. As mentioned earlier, in the methods chapter, writing the narratives helped me to see how events and evaluations are connected in each participant's experience, and conducting the thematic analysis helped me to interpret common patterns of meaningful phenomena to which participants attributed and experienced satisfaction and meaning. This analysis brings greater focus to the description of the phenomena to which participants subjectively attribute satisfaction and possible motivational importance in their sustainable lifestyles.

Returning to the transcripts, I divided participants' responses into segments each containing approximately one idea, event, or topic. I was looking particularly for segments signalling importance, meaning, satisfaction, and dissatisfaction, and noticed these segments for their use of evaluative and emotional language: something being seen as 'good' or 'bad', being 'important', wanting something to be different than it was, and so on. Guided by a general social science method for thematic analysis (Creswell, 2009,

Figure 9.1), I sorted these segments into themes of subjective ‘need’ that gradually took shape as more segments were incorporated. First I sorted the segments drawn from participants’ responses to interview question two – asking them to identify their needs. Then, I incorporated the segments from their responses to interview question seven, about what their engagement with Transition Victoria gave them that was satisfying to their self-identified needs; finally I incorporated segments from the remainder of interview data. In the end, I sorted segments of interview data into twenty-six emergent categories of phenomena to which participants seemed to attribute needing, meaning, and anticipated or experienced satisfaction and frustration. In Figure 1, I briefly describe these twenty-six themes of ‘needing’. The brackets are meant to represent the complex connections between these various phenomena, connecting sustainable living and subjective satisfaction for these participants. Ensuing longer descriptions of each theme will more clearly illustrate the apparent connections between themes. As brief examples, many of the ‘intention’ needs, describing participants’ felt needs to live in integrity with certain personally-important values, often seem to come about from gaining knowledge – itself an important need for many participants; the manifestation of ‘legitimacy’ may be signaled by receiving recognition from others or money for one’s work.

I further organized these twenty-six themes into three larger, emergent categories, to sort the emergent needs based on whether they seem to be most representative of: an intentional stance participants take towards their sustainable living, a process or facilitating context associated with the actual practice of sustainable living, or an outcome of sustainable living and its associated practices and contexts. Organizing the emergent ‘needs’ themes in this way helps to facilitate understanding this complex

system of important phenomena, by breaking the twenty-six themes into smaller groups. This arrangement also helps highlight potential areas for policy intervention, by grouping together intentions or values participants hold that could be targeted in framing of an intervention; by identifying the role contexts play, and the practices and processes participants find more meaningful; and by offering a reminder of outcomes participants may need to receive as satisfiers in order to endure in pursuing a way of life.

Below, I describe each theme, supported with evidence drawn from interview transcripts and observed in the narratives, and reference connections with other themes.

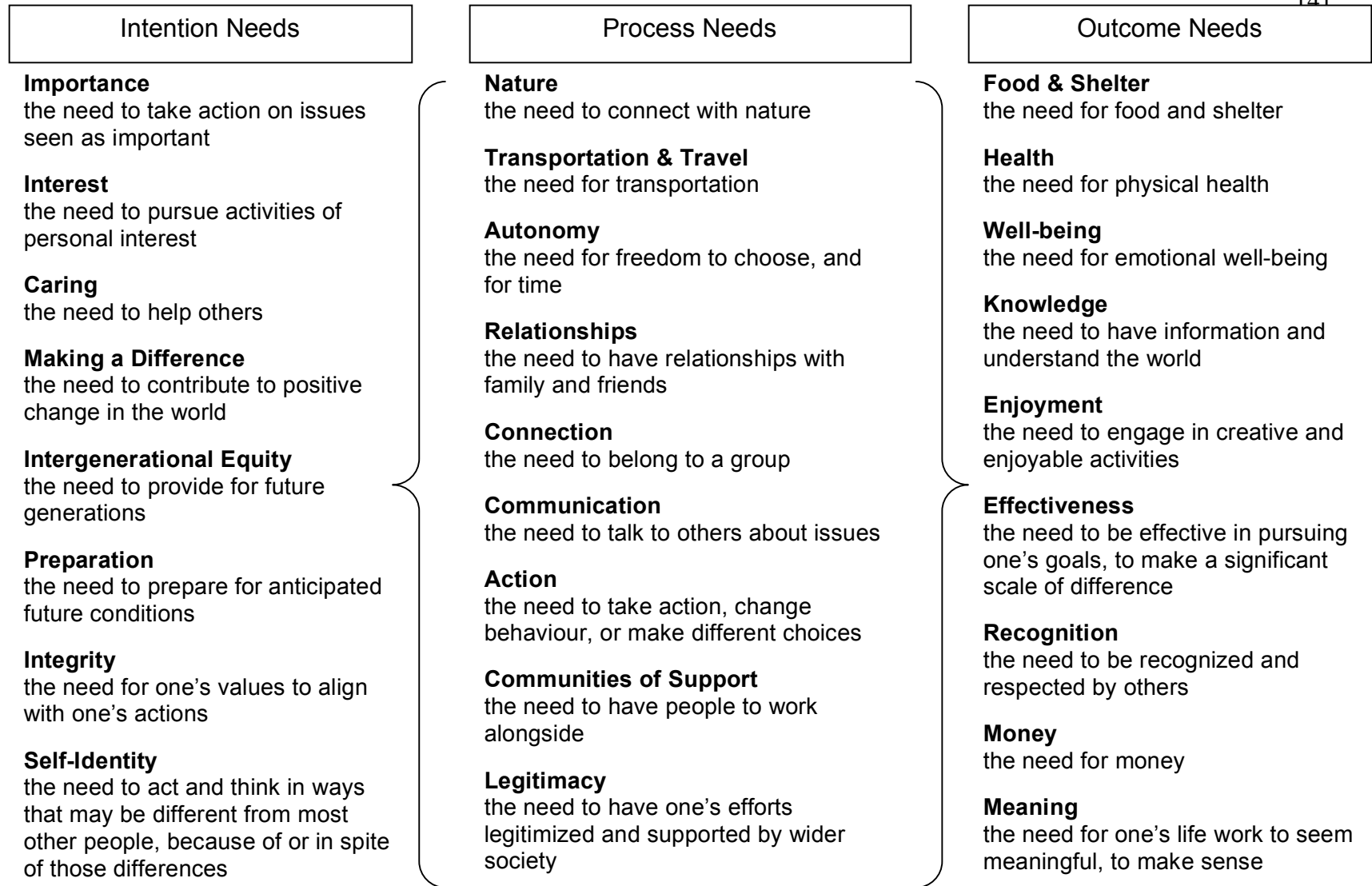


Figure 1 Themes of 'needs', satisfaction, and meaning in participants' accounts

Unlike in the needs theories discussed in the literature review, the term ‘needs’ here refers not to universal categories of needs, but to specific attributions of needing, importance, or meaning subjectively ascribed by these six participants. While these attributions may be related to underlying universal needs, at this point I can only say that they may be more accurately thought of as the personally- and culturally-specific satisfiers potentially responding to universal, unconscious, underlying needs, as described by Max-Neef (1991), and to a lesser extent Maslow (1970). I cannot say whether the themes identified here are tied to common human needs, or are even essential needs for the participants – that is to say, whether these attributions indicate objects and states essential and irreplaceable if well-being is to be maintained. Rather, these themes represent the mix of participants’ self-identified specific needs, desires, and other attributions of explicitly expressed importance to them, in their sustainable lifestyle practices, and their overall lifestyle in general.

Intention Needs

Intention needs are those values, ethics, and identity characteristics that are essential in guiding participants in their sustainable lifestyle pursuits. On the topic of their sustainable lifestyle efforts, participants spoke at length about their intention needs, describing the reasons and intentions behind their actions. These abstract needs seem to be related to motivation; participants are motivated by their needs to be guided by certain intentions, to act in ways they find personally important or meaningful. These are not outcomes to be achieved, but are values that they ‘need’ to strive for, through their actions. The intention needs I interpret as those more abstract needs capturing values held

as important by the participants in how they conduct their lifestyles. These values can, in turn, apparently be influenced by some of the outcome needs, such as having knowledge.

Importance

Some participants attributed meaning to their need to contribute to change seen as ‘important’. Geoff decided to change his career course from health to sustainability, partially motivated by the sense that sustainability was more important and its promotion could make a greater difference to more people’s lives. In particular, he thinks sustainability pursuits, especially energy, are important, because of the negative implications of things like climate change and pollution. He also attributed greater importance to his academic career, as an explanation for why he chose to focus his energies more on making change in that way, rather than through continued volunteer involvement in the community. A sense of importance was meaningful to Charles, in that he focused his energies on work that fewer people were doing, and thus it was important for him to make sure these things – figuring out the mechanics of a post-carbon society – got done. Dorothy, because she attributes importance to pressing environmental and social issues, has been moved to take action through her lifestyle. Both Vivian and John had experiences in which they came into contact with ideas that resonated as important to them. Interpretations of importance could be influenced by the outcome of pursuing and gaining knowledge, as some participants noted that their awareness of important issues, and their desire to take action, changed after gaining knowledge. In this way, attributions of importance were related to the motivation to take action.

Interest

Besides being guided by perception of importance, participants also attributed meaning and satisfaction to being able to pursue activities and topics of personal interest. Geoff was drawn to renewable partly by his interest in the topic. Working with TVic's green energy group allowed him to take action on projects of personal interest, with the support of others. Vivian was able to pursue her interests in local economies and making connections, through how she became involved with TVic's working groups. Personal interest influenced Tanis to choose to specialize in biology in her university studies; an interest-based choice that would later lead her to a career in restoration biology. Conversely, a lack of interest can inhibit people from being involved with sustainability in certain ways. Tanis positions the lack of projects that are personally interesting to her as one reason she has not gotten more involved with action through TVic. For Charles and Dorothy, not only do they see their reskilling and preparing activities as important for a variety of other reasons and values, but they also have a personal interest in learning these skills. Charles' interest in different mechanical possibilities is one reason that he pursues these experiments. It could be that attributions of interest are motivated by evaluations of importance. Given that many of the participants also expressed values and identities related to helping others, preparing, and taking action in a certain way, it could be that some are drawn to and genuinely interested in activities that could help them enact these other values. For example, Charles noted that he did not grow up with an interest in mechanical skills, but developed an interest as he got involved in the sustainable lifestyle movement. This illustrates that it is difficult if not impossible to isolate any one need, attribution or meaning, or motivation for sustainable living from any other need. Interest could also be tied to the need for identity. For Charles, his

interest in some of these mechanical things is connected with the idea of pursuing something that is challenging, that not many people are doing. He is also a person who values his autonomy, and his identity as someone who speaks up and takes action regardless of whether it is possible, so it could be that his interest in these challenging activities is also somehow related to his identity as independent and independently-minded. Dorothy is interested in a variety of activities to do with sustainable living: skills such as making things by hand, gardening, and learning other skills. It is unclear whether – or whether it can even be said – if her interest in these activities led her into sustainable living, or her value of sustainable living led to her interest in these activities, or a combination of both in a positive feedback loop of growing interest.

Caring

In their accounts, most of the participants mentioned socio-centric values and ethics that were important to them, and that guided their behaviours with regard to sustainable living. Some were motivated by a sense of compassion; a need to help or care for others. Vivian identified the value of ‘compassion’ and used “the term taking responsibility for that”, as one reason behind her action on sustainability and her decision to get involved with TVic. Dorothy was another participant who expressed a sense of wanting to help others, supporting the well-being of others in her community, as well as distant and future generations.

Making a Difference

Beyond the need to be compassionately caring, many participants expressed a need or drive to more generally make a positive contribution in the world, through their sustainable lifestyles and actions. John listed “making a difference” as one of his essential

needs. For Tanis, once her daughter was old enough, she returned to getting around by bicycle, partly for the simple reason that, in her words, “I think that makes a difference.” The desire to make a difference, while potentially contributing to an objectively more sustainable outcome, also includes subjective dimensions in how participants can actually, personally, and meaningful ‘make a difference’. Tanis defined her intention to live sustainably as based on an understanding of the ‘footprint’ values of different choices, but she also introduced subjectivity in recognizing that she cannot “shrink [her] impact to zero”, but instead focuses on “how [she] can make a difference. And, try to figure out what [her] unique contribution can be”. John is motivated by a sense of justice, although he does not use terms of ‘compassion’ or ‘intergenerational equity’. For him, justice, and making a positive contribution, includes “not using more than our share”, and this is a value on which he acts and by which he measures his successes, even though he recognizes that such calculations may not be objectively known. Contributing is also tied to the need for effectiveness; to be successful in achieving what one has set out to do. Participants may feel effective at contributing when, by their own definition, they have made some sort of difference. It is not enough to act, but to be cognizant of the perceived outcomes of one’s actions. When he was in his thirties, busy building his career and raising a young family, John felt frustrated that he could not contribute as much energy and time to trying to make a difference, and was limited in actualizing that need. For the ways in which he would like to contribute but cannot, such as the fact that for all their sustainable choices their rental home is still not very energy-efficient, John experienced frustration in the form of feeling “gross and unfortunate”. On the other hand, with the

domains in which he and Tanis have been able to take action and make changes, John expressed satisfaction at “feeling like [they are] getting there”.

Intergenerational Equity

Another more specific form that this drive to caring and contributing could take was in an inclination towards contributing to intergenerational equity. Dorothy in particular mentioned a couple of times that she was motivated by the drive to leave wealth, skills, and resources of knowledge – as well as physical resources like nut trees – for future generations, so that they may be able to live with a certain quality of life.

Preparation

As per their connection with Transition Victoria, which is somewhat of an “anticipatory organization”²¹ aimed at building resilience in anticipation of future conditions resulting from climate change and peak oil, many of the interview participants had something to say on their need to take action to prepare for an anticipated future. Vivian noted emergency preparedness as a theme in her life and interests. Motivated by the need to help others, as well as herself, survive in a potentially dire future, she wanted to contribute by planning, organizing, and preparing now so that once a crisis arises, she has made something to ‘offer them’. Charles spoke extensively of the future he anticipated, and how the work he is doing – with figuring out how to build various machines, how to grow some things, how to keep chickens and bees, and how to organize others to take on additional preparatory tasks – responds to a latent desire to help humanity survive and do well in such a future. He also devoted some effort to salvaging materials – like mirrors and steel pipes – that can be used, now and in the future. Charles

²¹ Charles, pers. comm.

saw it particularly important to prepare, and to be more successful at building up the sustainability and resilience movement, because he now believes that mainstream societal systems are going to collapse – a ‘void about to form’, and there will be an urgent opportunity to provide the majority of the population with an alternative once this happens. He said, “If there’s an organization, it will make a huge difference”. He would like to see a more organized movement that is visibly preparing, by “assembl[ing] the tools and skills and so forth”. Dorothy likewise thought it important to build resilience, through the work she does with TVic and in the community, and particularly through reskilling – to “maintain the skills [...] in this place”.

Integrity

Somewhat related with the above needs, participants expressed a need to act in a certain way, or take certain sorts of actions, in order to act in line with their values and actualize personal integrity. This desire for integrity motivated participants to pursue actions that are in line with their values as expressed through the previously described intention needs. In this way, integrity is a sort of meta-intention, in that participants who attribute meaning to the intention to act in integrity derive meaning from the intention to act on caring, contributing, and intergenerational equity. For John, he stated that it is important that there be: “alignment between my actions and my values. Between what I do for a living and how I spend my time, and what my values are”. While studying architecture, John became disenchanted with its mainstream practice because he recognized its incongruence with “the social and environmental context of life”, a characteristic that he needed of his actions in order to experience personal integrity. Tanis was motivated in some of her choices by an ethic of animal rights. She kept chickens

because she wanted to know that her eggs were coming from chickens that were treated well. She also emphasized the importance she attributed to taking personal responsibility and living in line with her values, regardless of how other people choose to live. Dorothy likewise attributed meaning to the values she holds, and found it important to try to live in line with them, even if she did not always succeed.

Self-Identity

Some participants attributed special meaning to the ways in which they were different from others. These differences were sometimes a source of frustration and alienation, but nevertheless were not abandoned to pursue greater satisfaction in other domains, suggesting that the differences themselves were tied to an essential need. Vivian identified the tension of, on the one hand, being rebellious, wanting to push herself, and being different, with, on the other hand, the difficulty of feeling different and sometimes not having people to relate to. Vivian harnessed her drive to be a pioneer in the action she took to talk about important issues and prepare for the future, even though not everyone was on board with these changes and worldviews seen as essential to address environmental issues. However, she still needed and benefited from the support of others in this work, even if they do not constitute the mainstream. Charles likewise described a tension between his strongly-felt desire to be himself, to continue to embrace the role as – in his words – “a natural outsider” and critical thinker, to say and do what he saw as important even if he does this alone; and the possibilities to be accepted by and respected by others. He positioned his ‘outsider-ness’ as uniquely preparing him to think critically and then communicate his observations to others even if this makes him unpopular. While he would not compromise this aspect of his identity and what he sees as important

to fit in, still he yearned for others like himself who could support him in this important work. Despite these difficulties faced, he took pride and pleasure in his independent intellectual skills, facilitated in his perception by his outsider identity.

Process Needs

Some of the emergent themes could be interpreted as process needs; those needs that are related to the process participants take to actualize their intention needs. Process needs call for certain actions, contexts, and relationships, encountered in the course of pursuing a sustainable lifestyle. I interpret process needs as those needs describing both the action the participants benefit from engaging in, as well as the societal factors that facilitate these actions and also influence what sorts of outcomes are possible. Process needs describe actions that participants have a ‘need’ to take, and contexts they have ‘needs’ to inhabit, as well as social and societal contexts that enhance and facilitate the desired outcomes of these processes.

Nature

Some of the participants attributed satisfaction and meaning to being able to connect with nature. While connecting with and spending time in nature may not be directly related with many sustainable lifestyle practices (but could be related to other needs – such as that for well-being), research suggests that connecting with nature and valuing this connection appears to be correlated with ecologically responsible behaviour (Nisbet, Zelenski, & Murphy, 2009); needing and valuing a connection with nature could indicate greater engagement with sustainable lifestyle practices. John and Geoff both attributed satisfaction – enjoyment, and a more transcendent sense of connection – to the act of spending time in nature. Charles valued his home on Vancouver Island, and in his

particular neighbourhood, for its natural setting that included Garry oaks and bird song. Dorothy expressed a desire for her Inner Transition group to spend some of their meetings outdoors, and referenced past workshops (separate from Transition) that included exercises to connect with nature, as a source of meaning and enjoyment for her.

Transportation & Travel

A few participants mentioned a need for, or satisfaction derived from transportation and travel. This was also a domain in which many participants made sacrifices of enjoyment in the interest of sustainability. In this way, transportation is another domain in which participants could choose more sustainable options. Most participants chose alternative forms of transportation, such as biking, public transit, or car sharing. Some discovered that while being able to get around in their community was a need, a car was not something they needed. Vivian (and her husband), upon moving to Victoria, decided to see that they could live without needing a car, and found that they could. Transportation seemed especially meaningful to Geoff, not only for subsistence, but also for leisure. In his intention to live sustainably and concern for environmental impact, and tied up with other commitments and constraints at present, Geoff had sacrificed to some extent his desire to travel for the pleasure of exploration. He was satisfied with a more local lifestyle, but also wished he had more sustainable options for long-distance travel, such as an electric car. For now, he fulfills his need for exploring the world through viewing photos and videos. Both John and Tanis expressed that, while they could still enjoy travel if not for its negative impacts, they made an intentional decision to forego future air travel for pleasure and for work, motivated by their environmental concerns and commitment. For Dorothy, the desire and need to travel, for

enjoyment, and to visit family, was sacrificed out of concern for the negative impacts, and this sacrifice had led to some tension in her relationships, particularly with family.

Autonomy

The satisfaction of ‘autonomy’ was identified by a number of participants in a couple different ways. Vivian listed “alone time” as one of her needs. Dorothy mentioned making the choice of where to live based partly on the desire for “anonymity”, and the ability to choose her connections. Tanis, asked about her needs, stated autonomy as one, and described how her ecological restoration job has let her choose which projects she works on and how she schedules her time. Geoff prized autonomy, in that he appreciated being able to choose how to spend his time in an additional year of undergraduate studies. He also anticipated, of a planned alternative energy installation he would invest in - in conjunction with industry, that he could have more control, not having to wait for the support or assent of volunteers. Independent-minded Charles spoke of the pleasure of having “control over [his] own experience”. He valued, and has experienced the satisfaction of doing things for himself using his mechanical skills, and of not having to depend on money, others, or consumer society to satisfy some of his needs. For him, autonomy was also related to the satisfaction of gaining knowledge, of learning how to do new things himself. In contrast, he noted, he may have sacrificed conventional success, money, and material accumulation as a condition of this autonomy, but to him it appears to have been worth it.

Relationships

In their accounts, participants described important and meaningful relationships with family, friends, and other people in their lives. Relationships with a spouse could

provide support; particularly in household choices one makes – food, housing, transportation, purchases – to practices sustainability. Vivian’s relationship with her husband, and John and Tanis’ relationship, supported each to make meaningful, sustainable choices in these household domains. For John especially, his relationship with Tanis went beyond practical support in household choices; he recounted his sense that they are “on a parallel course”, inspiring each other and supporting each other to make their sustainable lifestyle visions a reality. Some participants recounted experiences of alienation in their family relationships. Tanis noted that she was different from her whole family of origin, and that her lifestyle did not make sense until she gained awareness that she could choose to act on environmental issues. Once she began to make such choices, Tanis’ actions elicited annoyance and judgment from her family, although this negative reaction seems not to have dissuaded her from her sustainable lifestyle. Growing up, Vivian felt different from her family, especially her mother, due to her greater desire to discuss what she saw as important issues. This alienation due to her personal intention needs has been alleviated somewhat now that Vivian has found people to talk to about such issues, through her Unitarian church democracy discussion group and through TVic. Important relationships pose a conflict in Dorothy’s story. On the one hand, family is very important to her. She would love to spend time with her sons, grandchildren, and many siblings and relatives. On the other hand, because many of them are far-flung, she hesitates to visit out of concern for the negative impacts of air travel, even as her concerns are motivated by the future well-being of her own and others’ descendants. Dorothy’s reluctance to travel to see family has caused some alienation from her family. At times, her busyness with meetings in the community, even those meetings that provide

her with emotional support to deal with the various sources of grief in her sustainable lifestyle, takes away some time that might be spent with her nearby son and grandchildren. Making sustainable lifestyle choices, such as not traveling or owning a car, has also led Dorothy to some alienation from friends and colleagues who do not understand her choices.

Connection

Besides relationships with family and friends, participants also expressed a need to experience a more general sense of connection with a community. A couple of participants – Geoff, Charles, and Dorothy – noted the opportunity to connect with a community of people as a need and a potential satisfaction. Charles expressed satisfaction about his encounter with the hippie movement decades ago, because that was a community that supported and encouraged critical thought and self-reliance, congruent with Charles' values, and gave him a community to feel connected with. Vivian experienced satisfaction from her connections with the community of people involved with the Unitarian discussion group, and with TVic, because she could 'share' and 'vent' with these people who 'have the same values' that she does. Vivian relates having this connection with her mental health needs, and also feels that being connected to such a community helps her feel supported in taking action, because she "can't do it alone". Dorothy experienced a sense of community through much of her work with TVic. Participating in the labour of cultivating and harvesting the flax for their linen project, and working with others on this, granted Dorothy a sense of community. Through the various committees, groups, and outreach events of TVic, she was satisfied being with 'like minded people'; people she could talk with about fears, challenges, and successes.

She liked meeting people, learning about them and what they are doing, getting to know them, and enjoying their company. Charles spoke of his satisfaction (and frustration) at being able to have a “connection to the future”. Through passing on his knowledge and skills to others, working with others, and contributing to a continuing culture, he thought he would gain the satisfaction of being part of something. Poignantly, he concluded a vignette about teaching others mechanical tricks that could help them in the future with the thought: “it offers a chance to connect to life beyond myself”. Although he would spend much of his life roaming, or ‘leaving’ various relationships, Charles still valued connecting with a community of other people.

Communication

For some, the need to communicate with others, about sustainability issues in particular, was significant. Dorothy and Vivian both described benefiting from being able to talk with others about environmental issues, and about their related worries and grief. They experienced greater mental well-being as a result of having people to talk with about these things. Vivian expressed a strong need to talk to people about issues she felt were important, a desire that emerged when she was younger, and has more often been thwarted. Now, with TVic, and with her Unitarian church democracy discussion group, she has experienced the satisfaction of being able to talk with others who ‘get it’ about important issues, or troubling things she had read in the news. Dorothy described getting a lot of enjoyment from giving presentations and talking to people about the Transition movement. Communication was also a way for these participants to take action on sustainability, by talking with others about issues, connecting with others who are like-

minded, and also perhaps persuading new people of the importance of sustainable living or community resilience.

Action

At the core of sustainable living is action, in that a lifestyle is constituted by activities, practices, and choices related to these. Participants expressed a need to, or satisfaction derived from, taking action guided by their values and intentions or generally aimed at their needed outcomes. Vivian took action on her values of sustainability and compassion to other beings, by choosing to live without a car, to live in a smaller house, to enhance the energy efficiency of that house, and to consume local and organic food and second-hand and ethical clothing. After experiencing an awakening to the fact that her actions were contributing to global environmental and social issues, she took action more seriously. In this way, action can be influenced by knowledge. Geoff was first drawn to TVic as a worthy cause to support, given that it was a “cause that was centered around action”; just as Vivian was drawn to TVic by the perception that “it was broadly based. And, it was about action. Actually doing something. And doing it locally.” Vivian experienced satisfaction from planning and then taking action with TVic, such as organizing an economy circle discussion with city council members. TVic also originally appealed to Tanis through its promise for action, but since then seems to have lost its momentum. The ways in which participants took action could be influenced by other needs and changing life situations. For Tanis, when chronic fatigue or other health issues afflicted her, she focused on taking action through her career. Dorothy, because of her commitment to community resilience and TVic, found she no longer had time to take action on sustainable living in her own life in the way that she would have liked. She was

very active in the community, attending meetings and facilitating workshops, but could not go to the market or spend as much time gardening, for example. Dorothy was frustrated at not having time to do as many of these preferred actions.

Communities of Support

Communities of support, and legitimacy, both facilitate other process needs, by supporting and facilitating participants to take meaningful action. Needs related to communities of support made up one of the largest categories in the thematic analysis. Perhaps due to the context in which participants were recruited to the study, through their association with an ostensible community of support – TVic – participants had much to say about what they needed and were getting or, more commonly, were not getting, from this potential community of support.

Participants expressed needs for more other people to take action like them. John identified community as an essential ingredient in sustainability, saying, “We can’t be sustainable if we’re all doing things on our own, for ourselves, and duplicating over and over and over”. Participants felt the work they were doing was important (as described above in the theme of ‘importance’), and so would have been satisfied to be joined and supported by others in this work. A common perception was that, while other people were mentally on board with the sorts of changes required of more widespread sustainable living, too few are actively on board and providing practical support by undertaking essential tasks for community sustainability and resilience. Tanis felt that the Transition movement had not yet reached its potential in Victoria. If it had, she said, “I think it would definitely meet a need I have to work together with others to improve conditions. You know, improve sustainability”. Charles expressed a need for more

community members to be “willing to learn to learn”, to take leadership on the many essential projects he perceives. He needed more people eager to receive the skills and knowledge he had accumulated. Importantly, such a community would “share [his] sense of what needs to be done”.

The lack of enough other people taking on what interviewees saw as important work has left these participants struggling to do as much as they can regardless, which has led to the frustrations of being too busy, of feeling like they are spreading themselves too thin. Participants felt that they were solely responsible for ensuring certain activities and groups continued, and had to put out too much energy to get little in return. Some found it ‘disheartening’ and ‘disappointing’ to have so little support. Nevertheless, their evaluation of the importance of this work was such that they would be hard-pressed to give it up.

Another difficulty faced in potential communities of support, besides a lack of people taking action, was the difficulty posed by people with challenging opinions and personalities, creating frustrating ‘group dynamics’ and ‘power struggles’. A couple of participants alluded to a past situation with TVic in which one or a few people exerted their opinions in a way that turned many people off of the organization. While that situation had passed, the associated feelings of dissatisfaction remained. Tanis, for example, expressed the need for a ‘healthier group dynamic’ as one condition for her to get involved with TVic again in the future.

Participants did express gratitude and satisfaction due to the few people who they felt were being proactive in their contributions to developing sustainability. Charles noted his ‘heroes’; people working independently, in much the same way he was, to take radical

actions towards making their lifestyles more sustainable. These people gave him hope and inspiration, even as he was frustrated that there were not many, many more like them.

Many participants expressed a need to always get more people involved in the work that they were doing and that they saw as so essential. John concluded with this thought: “But in terms of how it could support our efforts. I think just having an informed and excited populous, all around us. Of people who were into this stuff. [...] People in Victoria. People who are supporting alternative ways of doing things. And, giving up their cars, and buying more local food, and insulating their houses and putting solar panels up, and. All the stuff that Transition could be promoting. It would have a huge impact, on our day-to-day life and on my business. And, on just how it feels to live here.”

Legitimacy

Some participants expressed a need for legitimacy, for their approaches to sustainable action to be recognized and supported by wider society. Beyond the legitimacy granted by more people acting in this way and providing a community of support, legitimacy could be more substantially granted by institutions; for example, through governmental support, the backing of a respected academic institute, or the institutionalization of action on sustainability in a career meriting financial reward. Geoff introduced the term ‘legitimacy’ and spoke at length on how this property could facilitate sustainable living and also satisfy other personal needs to be effective, to receive recognition, to make a greater positive impact, and to receive money for one’s work. Vivian, John, Tanis, and Dorothy likewise identified legitimacy in the form of government support and group money as a factor that could help make voluntary action initiatives like TVic more successful and popular. John and Tanis mentioned that TVic’s

'grassroots' image, supported as it is by only a small contingent of volunteers, could be hindering legitimacy, failing to attract more people to the organization. TVic's struggle to convey legitimacy is perhaps implicated in the failure to providing participants with the needed community of support.

Outcome Needs

The final group into which participants' expressed needs seem to fit is that of outcome needs. Outcome 'needs' describe conditions and physical resources that participants need, and need to get from the actions and processes they engage in guided by their intentions. I interpret outcome needs as those things that participants need or would like to get out of their actions and choices, whether it be physical or intellectual resources, a subjective state of being, or social relationship.

Food & Shelter

Asked to describe their essential needs, many participants began by listing the most basic essential needs of food and shelter. All seemed to be satisfied with sufficient food and shelter. Having sufficient satisfaction for these basic needs, and the capacity to choose different options for satisfaction, participants used the domains of food and shelter as a place to make more sustainable choices, to actualize their intention and action needs. Tanis used her food choices (veganism, eating local and low on the food chain, gardening) as, at times, her primary action on sustainability values. Vivian chose to live in a small house with a "small footprint", where she could grow food, and to make changes to increase the energy efficiency of that house. Having money, and having a relationship with a partner who supported their food and housing choices, facilitated

these participants to act on sustainability through the satisfiers they chose for their food and shelter needs.

Health

Physical health appeared as a need in some participants' accounts, although it was not explicitly mentioned by as many participants as the other fundamental needs for food and shelter. Dorothy had recently experienced some health issues. Stress and busyness arising from her concerns about environmental issues and their potential effects on her family, and the actions she took as a response, may have exacerbated her health issues. Because of that tension, Dorothy had reluctantly drawn back from some of her voluntary community sustainability commitments. Health came into play in Tanis' approach to sustainable living. While once she had been a strict vegan, health issues and other physical changes associated with pregnancy led her to eat meat again, although she still did choose meat from lower-impact and ethical sources. Tanis also struggled with chronic fatigue, first when she started working, and more recently through pregnancy and parenting. These constraints on her energy led her to focus on creating sustainability through her household-level choices and through her career, and to limit her participation in voluntary community initiatives. Tanis was also concerned about her daughter's physical health in an environment where chemical exposure cannot be escaped. Her need to provide her daughter with a healthy, chemical-free environment remained unsatisfied.

Well-being

Besides the need of physical health, some participants also discussed needs and satisfiers for emotional well-being. Vivian and Dorothy, in particular, described needing, and gaining satisfaction from emotional support for the difficult emotions and

experiences that accompany concern for environmental issues. A significant part of this emotional support came through being able to communicate with other people, particularly those who 'got it'. Vivian recounted benefiting from her participation in discussion groups. As mentioned elsewhere, she had a need to talk about what is happening in the world, with like-minded people, and to plan and take action. Participating in discussion and working groups had been a satisfaction to her in that regard. Talking might enhance well-being by providing a sense of connection, giving participants a feeling that they belong to a community of like-minded others who understand them, and a sense that they are not alone in their pursuit of sustainability. Dorothy's emotional well-being seemed to be challenged by her deep concern for environmental issues, community resilience, and her family. These concerns led her to get involved with many community initiatives designed to take action on these issues, which added a lot of busyness to her life, causing her to remain stressed, and creating new conflicts with how she spent her time and in her relationships with family. Through this example, it is unclear whether taking action on sustainability could actually contribute to enhancing Dorothy's well-being, because it has led her into different practices in which one concern or source of stress is replaced with another. On the other hand, Dorothy described herself as emotionally not resilient, and was quick to take on responsibility for actions towards community sustainability and resilience, suggesting the stress she experienced could arise from the combination of sustainability action with her own personality idiosyncrasies. What did seem to help Dorothy experience greater well-being, according to her accounts, were emotional support groups and workshops, like TVic's Inner Transition (formerly Heart & Soul) working group, a Johanna Macy retreat,

and a meditation workshop. These places provided Dorothy a forum in which to air her concerns and worries related to her work promoting sustainability and resilience, and the general state of the world, and did help her to feel better and calmer.

Knowledge

All the participants were educated, having all attended some form of post-secondary education. They valued learning and knowing about things. Vivian, a self-described ‘information junkie’ valued opportunities to discuss what she saw as important issues, and to gain knowledge of locally available social services. Through volunteering with the James Bay community project, Vivian gained knowledge of social services in that area, while taking action on helping people in her community - another important value for her. Participating in a church discussion group and with TVic working groups provide Vivian with a context in which she could talk with people about ideas and issues, like news items and their implications for future economic conditions in BC. John came from an intellectual background (in which he pursued deep questions and read voraciously in order to form viewpoints on things he was observing), and positioned knowing what was going on in the world as a responsible choice facilitating personal awareness and encouraging informed action. Being informed was also described as a source of inspiration, “to make the harder and harder choices to do what’s right”. More practically, John and Tanis valued learning the skills associated with a sustainable lifestyle, such as how to preserve food. A strong drive for knowledge and critical thought set Charles apart from the others he grew up around. He wanted to learn about things, to learn how to do things like repair and build unique machinery, and was not content with the accepted answers to questions. Having knowledge seems to be a precursor to

intention needs in that gaining knowledge or awareness was sometimes seen to motivate the desire and intention to act in a certain way on sustainability. Geoff credited his science education with enabling him to understand environmental problems, and learning more about these problems led him to see them as one of the most important things he could be working on through his actions and his career. Reading a web log on environmental issues also oriented him more towards sustainability and helped him see where there were 'opportunities'. Geoff and others also derived satisfaction from pursuing and acquiring knowledge for its own sake. These are people who have a strong desire to know and to think about all sorts of topics and issues. Geoff mentioned a material satisfier – his computer – as an artifact that enabled him to pursue knowledge and conduct research.

Enjoyment

Many of the participants recounted the desire to engage in enjoyable activities. The sorts of things enjoyed varied by participant, likely motivated by their individual interests. Many described enjoying some of the practices they pursued as part of a sustainable lifestyle. Tanis expressed a need to garden. Dorothy also enjoyed gardening, and had fun and enjoyment from showing off seedlings she had grown for the Capital Nut Tree Project. For Geoff, 'sustainable' activities, like going cycling with friends and foraging for wild berries, were more appealing than going to a bar. Geoff, in his childhood, also derived enjoyment from time spent playing outdoors. Some participants identified a need to have more fun. Dorothy had gotten a lot of enjoyment from artistic and creative pursuits in her life, and would like more opportunities for artistic enjoyment through TVic. She had enjoyed some creative fun, for example with her project

constructing a cardboard ‘shuffle bus’ used at a TVic festival to promote walking. With Transition, Dorothy thought incorporating more fun could potentially help draw more people to this organization. Geoff also identified parties or other social occasions as a possible strategy to involve more people in a community of support.

Effectiveness

Related to their intention and action needs, participants described the need to experience effectiveness as a result of their actions, to achieve what they had set out to do. Participants not only needed to take action on their intentions, but also got satisfaction from being effective in their actions, or achieving what they set out to do, or experiencing some other positive result from their efforts. The desire to be effective was part of the reason Geoff chose to pursue an academic career on renewable energy, which he believed would allow him to take more effective action and to have a greater impact on improving the state of the world. Since Geoff decided he could have more effectiveness from this professional involvement, he was less inclined to continue his voluntary participation with TVic, which he saw as limited in effectiveness due to other factors such as legitimacy and the nature of the community of support. Effectiveness can be related to and influenced by other properties of process needs such as legitimacy, and outcome needs such as recognition. For Geoff’s work, the legitimacy of the academic institution, and the money associated with that, made this career more effective in a number of ways, both in what he wanted to do, the effect he wanted to have, and the support and financial benefit he could personally get out of it. For others, effectiveness has been associated with a sense of empowerment. For John, taking action by giving up his car allowed him to feel like he was “getting there” with regard to making changes in his lifestyle. At other

times, John felt frustrated with his limited effectiveness. In his thirties, when he was busy raising a family and establishing his career and financial basis, John felt like he “couldn’t change anything”. More recently, he felt effective in being able to promote sustainable design in his career as an architect, but on the other hand would like to be able to have a greater scale of impact through his work. Vivian experienced the satisfaction of effectiveness when she was involved in action that was successful, or a meeting that attracted lots of interested people. Dorothy felt personally responsible and disappointed that the working groups she facilitated had not gone the way she had hoped in terms of attracting a greater number of people to active participation. Sometimes, this desire for effectiveness was related to the size of the impact participants anticipated they were able (or unable) to make through their actions. Satisfaction of these needs seems to be very qualitative and subjective, based more on a personal sense of efficacy or imagining of what action might be doing ideally, rather than a hard fact of measurable impact.

Recognition

Besides just the process of taking action, or the self-experienced satisfaction of effectiveness and impact, participants also attributed meaning to receiving external recognition for their efforts. Geoff felt satisfied when his energy efficient design contest entries were well-received by peers and industry. Charles, although he preferred that others would cooperate and support him in the difficult work he was doing to prepare, acknowledged that he did get some satisfaction from others explicitly recognizing him as someone who does a lot of effortful work. This need is also related to legitimacy, in that activities and outcomes seen as legitimate by society are more likely to be appreciated and recognized by others. Recognition from ‘legitimate’ others – such as professionals –

may have more significance. Having a community of support, and connections with community members could also increase visibility of one's efforts and opportunities for positive feedback.

Money

Sustainable lifestyle practitioners are not beyond material concerns, even though sustainable lifestyles are often less materially intensive. Money was still valued. Besides meeting their basic needs, participants could use money to purchase more sustainable, often more expensive, goods. John and Tanis spent more on good quality organic food, and Vivian also noted money as a factor that allowed her to buy local, organic produce. Dorothy spent money to install a solar system on her house. Having sufficient money could be a condition for being able to take other sorts of actions. John described a time in his thirties, when he was getting started in his career and starting a family, and was "too poor", as well as too busy, to make change. Money also symbolizes societal support and legitimacy. For Dorothy, her involvement in the community provided her with the financial support of having her neighbourhood association pay part of the fee to enable her to attend the initial North American Transition training workshop. For Geoff, money appeared to be a significant motivator. Money was a deciding factor in where he went to undertake a graduate degree, and also in his decision to pursue a career in renewable energy. Having his work legitimized by society, and being able to pursue it as a viable career, he anticipated, would provide him with the satisfaction of financial security. Renewable energy itself appealed to Geoff partly through its nature as a 'free resource', almost 'like gold', in that it can be tapped with a turbine – a minimal investment – to yield a substantial financial return. Even Charles, a sometimes 'revolutionary' who spent

his life salvaging and fixing things rather than pursuing material success, mentioned money – and particularly well-paying careers – as a benefit, and one that he wished he had pursued more fully.

Meaning

Some participants expressed a need for meaning. For them, this subjective experience of meaning seemed to be related to other values, like integrity, or feeling like their life make sense, or their actions were relevant to the present situation. John stated a need to “feel that life is meaningful”. For him, this meant living with integrity in relation to values. He also mentioned “benefit[ing] from a practice of gratitude”, perhaps imbuing his life experiences with greater meaning by being grateful for them. Geoff attributed a focused sense of purpose to his planned career path as a renewable energy researcher – as though he has found his calling – in that he thought this would allow him to make a more substantial difference, while also being congruent with some of his other personal needs. Tanis described her life growing up as ‘not making sense’. When she first became aware of her ability to engage in environmental issues and learned that she could act differently and make a difference, presumably life started to make more sense to her. Meaning may also be related to the evaluation of importance. These participants strove to make their life’s efforts meaningful in relation to their recognition of the importance of various environmental and social justice issues. Meaning could be related to the need for effectiveness, as both are tied to participants’ perceptions of how well they had achieved personally meaningful goals. Charles, regardless of his identity as an ‘outsider’, outside conventional society, needed to feel like his “life is relevant to the times [he’s] in, to the crises of [his] time”. For him, this was related to the work he did to prepare for the dire

future he perceived, in order to help other people. Contributing to a culture made up of people striving to prepare and survive in the future is something that made his life feel meaningful, so that his efforts were not futile but have the potential to make a difference in the lives of others after he is gone. He mentioned wanting an opportunity to pass on his skills and knowledge, now that he is getting towards the latter part of his life, as a way to leave a legacy and “make sense of [his] life”, and noted that he found meaning in the possibility to contribute to a “more profound and long-lived [...] culture”. It was an ‘immense frustration’ to Charles that he had not found a substantial community to which he could contribute in this way.

Discussion of Findings

Gender and Age Patterns

Considering how these needs themes appear in participants’ accounts allows me to make observations of patterns associated with gender and age - for this sample. Given the size and nature of the sample, and the semi-structured approach to interviewing, these observations are not statistically significant, but nevertheless suggest some patterns of possible of interest. Gender themes were identified by considering whether one gender more than the other was represented in the excerpts constituting each theme. Themes related to age were identified by returning to the data and isolating those segments that referred to age characteristics, life events and stages (e.g. pregnancy, career, retirement), and values that could be seen to be related to life-stage (e.g. figuring out life purpose, leaving a legacy).

Themes that appeared more salient in women’s accounts were health, well-being, communication, caring, and intergenerational equity. Personal health and health concerns were only mentioned by women. Only the two older women – Dorothy and Vivian –

talked about emotional well-being as a need and source of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The need to talk with others, about sustainability issues and associated emotions, was mentioned exclusively by women (Dorothy and Vivian). Women were also the only ones to mention intention needs for caring and intergenerational equity (Dorothy and Vivian), although all participants attributed meaning to the intention to make a difference. Themes that appeared more salient in the men's accounts were recognition, meaning, money, and nature. Charles and Geoff were the only participants to describe satisfaction attributed to receiving recognition for their efforts. These men attributed meaning to having someone else comment on or laud their work, whereas Dorothy and Vivian attributed success and effectiveness to bringing people together, meeting new people, and talking with others. Needs for meaning and to think about the wider philosophical significance of their life's work was most often identified by men. Geoff and Charles most saliently recounted the satisfaction and reward of money, specifically, earning a high wage through career or work. Geoff, John, and Charles described an affinity for the natural environment that was mostly absent from the women's accounts. These gender patterns suggest needs and attributions of satisfaction and meaning that may be more salient to participants of one gender over the other.

Interviewing participants of a range of ages – from late twenties to mid sixties – and having access to the parts of participants' life stories related to their present sustainable living, allows me to discuss some possible patterns associated with age or life-stage. All participants became aware of sustainability and related issues, and interested in taking action, by the time they were young adults (mid-twenties/end of university at the latest), and their awareness, intention to act, and actions have continued

to change throughout their lives. Geoff, the youngest interview participant, spoke at length about his budding career in researching renewable energy. He talked of, first, being too busy with school and making money to take notice of sustainability issues. Once he became aware of environmental issues, he spent time figuring out how to act before realizing that a career in renewable energy could focus his intention to take action on sustainability. Focusing his activism mainly through his career seemed especially relevant to Geoff at this time in his life. Not only does researching renewable energy provide him with a perceived way to make more ‘tangible’ and ‘impactful’ change, it also provides him with a career he can grow in to, and a source of income; considerations that are on Geoff’s mind as he transitions from school into career and looks to make a life for himself. Besides impact, money, and career, a theme that seemed particularly salient in Geoff’s account was transportation and travel. He expressed a certain amount of wanderlust, noting that he would love to be able to travel and explore more, if only this were not so unsustainable. He expressed wonder for the natural world and the amazing things that could be seen by traveling, but also noted that – in addition to considering the sustainability of travel – he was occupied with other things; working and research, at this time, and maybe in the future he will be able to travel more widely. John, though now middle-aged, recounted his youth, and how it was a time in which his awareness and values were developing, facilitated by certain books, university courses, and the context provided by a job planting trees. Tanis noted the fourth year of her undergraduate studies as the time when she first really gained awareness of her ability to take action in response to environmental issues. Through watching a presentation put on by another group in one of the courses she was taking, she realized that she could give up eating meat, for one

thing. From that first realization, she went on to make other changes in her lifestyle. Themes of exploration and discovery, and acts of setting out on a career path or life course, seem relevant to younger sustainable lifestyle practitioners.

Midlife comes with its own set of unique challenges to undertaking a sustainable lifestyle, as people have many demands on their time, energy, and money: developing a career, buying a house, cultivating a relationship, pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting. When John was with his first family, he “got involved with having a baby and starting a business and kind of focused just on life and building a house and that kind of thing” and all his time was spent on parenting and building his career. As a result of this scarcity of time, John expressed feeling that he “couldn’t change anything”, but nevertheless focused on making a difference by promoting sustainable home designs through his business. In his second family with Tanis, and with the recent birth of their baby, John was unable to put time and energy into TVic for a while, and was disappointed to find that no one else was willing to take up the slack in his absence. John wondered if perhaps retired people, or others with more time, would be good candidates to contribute the time and energy that is scarce for people of his age. Even though he was committed to this community action on sustainable living, and contributed how he was able, John noted, “it’s very hard to do with a family and a business”. Tanis likewise has experienced changes in her enthusiasm for and action on sustainable living, especially in the wider community, due to her pregnancy and parenting commitments. One reason she gave for never really getting involved with TVic was that she was pregnant and experiencing a difficult time when TVic was first getting started (her un-involvement persisted due to other factors, such as group personalities). Having a young child could also affect on how sustainable

living can be practiced. When their daughter was a baby, John and Tanis still owned a car, which they used to get around and take their baby places. When their baby was a bit older, Tanis could transport her by bicycle, allowing the family to get by without owning a car. Middle age seems to be an interesting place beyond the openness of youth, but with years ahead in which to choose how to live. John and Tanis both described having enjoyed traveling in the past, but presently felt that they would be able to stay close to home and be content, to reduce their impact. Looking to the future, they spoke of “training for [their] ultimate situation”, in which they could grow most of their own food and live a more sustainable and self-sufficient lifestyle. Although they may fall short on some measures now with regard to how they would ideally like to practice sustainable living, they still have time in which to realize their sustainable lifestyle vision. Middle-aged sustainable lifestyle practitioners may face special challenges in the form of limited time and energy, due to other life commitments, to engage in the range of sustainable practices. They may have a clearer idea of their priorities, and these priorities may lie elsewhere – besides sustainable activism, but they also still have time in which to take further action on pursuing a sustainable lifestyle.

Participants who were in the latter part of their lives expressed slightly different needs, satisfactions, and frustrations related to their sustainable living. Being retired could give one more time to do activities that are enjoyable, meaningful, or important, as Vivian found when she retired and had time to walk. She also had time to volunteer and participate with a couple different organizations in the community. Retirement could also mark a life transition providing a good time for the implementation of a sustainable lifestyle choice. Vivian and her husband had intended to build a straw bale house to

inhabit in their retirement (although the building did not work out). The life transition of retirement could also highlight the ways in which a sustainable lifestyle may differ from more conventional lifestyles. Dorothy found some alienation and misunderstanding from her peers. They were using their retirement as an opportunity to travel, and could not understand why she was not traveling, motivated as she was by concerns about emissions. Dorothy's decision not to fly brought her added dissatisfaction at this time in her life, as she was expecting another grandchild on the other side of the country. Not being able to easily be there for her son and his family was a source of grief for her. Dorothy and Charles, both in their sixties, spoke of leaving a legacy or having a connection to the future. Charles was frustrated with the absence of a community working on the preparation he sees as important – cultivating skills and relocalizing production. Such a community would be especially meaningful for him due to his life stage. At sixty Charles had accumulated a lifetime of knowledge, which he would have liked to pass on, as a way to “make sense of [his] life”, to ‘connect to the future’, to “life beyond [him]self”, and to contribute to an enduring culture, but time is running out. Dorothy took the actions she did out of concern for the future well-being of her, and others’, descendents. As an older person, she believed it was her role to use her spare time and money to make a better world for future generations. Many of the activities she participated in, from reskilling to planting nut trees, were an act of leaving a legacy, of knowledge as well as physical resources. Advanced age introduces its own set of constraints. Even though Charles had cultivated a mature ‘confidence’ to become more proactive with his projects for community preparation, he noted that it would take the “rest of [his] life to do half of them”. Dorothy identified the need to get more young

people involved because, while she was eager to participate in the work, labour-intensive activities like flax processing are harder for an older body. Charles expressed an interest in forming an alliance with be because, as a ‘young’ person (late-twenties), he thought I would have ‘more (free) energy’, a ‘fresh approach’, and be less cynical. Older sustainable lifestyle practitioners may have more free time in which to take action. Having spent a life cultivating their values and identity, they may be more certain about how they want to act, but they may also be more physically limited, and are temporally limited by the years they have left. Being in the latter part of their life, or having grandchildren causing them to prioritize the future, older sustainable lifestyle practitioners need opportunities to draw their life’s work to a conclusion, leaving a legacy, making a difference, or connecting to the future.

Themes of Accepted Frustration, Sacrifice, and Tension

Another set of themes that appeared in relation to how participants talked about their needs in sustainable living are accepted levels of frustration, sacrifice, and tension. The themes of tension and sacrifice were developed by isolating those segments of interview data that illustrated a tension between two or more needs such that it appeared that both could not be satisfied, or that referred to sustainable living being related to giving something up, or being perceived as difficult or sad.

Although Jackson’s and other (e.g. Jackson et al., 2004; Maiteny, 2000) discussions of the possibilities for satisfying sustainable lifestyles suggests that more sustainable sources of satisfaction might be substituted for less sustainable satisfiers, preserving satisfaction, sustainable living in practice is not without some accepted level of frustration. John spoke of making “harder and harder choices to do what’s right”.

Dorothy said, “we have to make some changes to our behaviour, and we’re feeling sad about it”. While sustainable living may offer many opportunities for well-being and satisfaction, tailored to individuals’ attribution of satisfaction to more sustainable options, sustainable living is not intended to be without frustration, and practitioners have still identified valued sustainable practices as ‘hard’ and ‘sad’, indicating that sustainable living is not, and need not be, unwaveringly satisfying in order to have value and be pursued.

Analysis suggests that participants gave up some potential satisfactions in the interest of their practice of a sustainable lifestyle. A common desire for participants to sacrifice was travel. Geoff, John, Tanis, and Dorothy all spoke of sacrificing long-distance and air travel that they may have enjoyed in the past or would like to partake of in the future, because of their concerns about emissions. Charles sacrificed the conventional success of accumulating material wealth in order to actualize his desire to learn how to fix and build things. Dorothy seemed to make some sacrifices with regard to her preferred sustainable living practices, her preferred way of relating with her family, and her health. Although she would love to travel, and to go visit far-flung family members, including one son, she felt she should refrain due to concerns about the environmental and intergenerational impacts of air travel. Her hesitation to travel led to tension in her relationship with her son who wanted to see her more. Being busy with her various sustainable living and resilient community actions led Dorothy to feel stressed, which she believed exacerbated an issue with high blood pressure. While she had drawn back from some of her commitments due to this health concern, she was still quite involved and still felt there were things that needed to be done by her, thus calling into

question whether she had sacrificed some of her sustainable living activism in the interest of her health, or had sacrificed some of her health for being involved in sustainability activism. These examples demonstrate things that participants have knowingly and willingly sacrificed in order to practice a sustainable lifestyle according to their values.

Besides the above sacrifices made in the interest of satisfying their intention and outcome needs for sustainable living, some participants' recounted apparent tensions between two or more needs. For some reason, the participants for whom tensions between needs were most salient were the three oldest participants: Dorothy, Charles, and Vivian. The other three: John, Tanis, and Geoff, seem to have come down on one side or the other, either sacrificing something they could give up like travel, or giving up certain ways of practicing sustainable living for other needs such as health, or career and family commitments. In Charles' account, the irreconcilable tension is between being accepted, respected, and acknowledged by other people; and saying and doing what he believes is right, and potentially being supported in this. In Vivian's story, the tension is between being rebellious, being a pioneer, and pushing herself; and the challenge and alienation of being different. She identified wanting to be a pioneer then suffering from the challenge of being different as a theme that has reoccurred throughout her life, and noted that it has gotten easier for her to be different. While once she had been frustrated at not being able to talk with close others – such as her mother – about personally important issues, now Vivian has found a community, in TVic, and at her Unitarian church, where she can talk about those issues that make her different, while also belonging to a group of similarly different people. Dorothy's tension is between her commitment to various practices of sustainable living and her commitment to acting on community resilience; and needs that

contribute to her personal well-being, including her relationships with her children, and her health. As illustrated in her story, she has experienced quite a bit of stress and sadness in relation to the ways in which her relationship with her children and grandchildren has been challenged by her commitment to sustainable living practices, particularly those that restrict her from flying or that take up much of her time. The large commitment of time she made to community action on resilience restricted her from participating in the household and individual-level sustainable living practices she had enjoyed, such as shopping for food at the market or taking time to hang laundry on the line. This busyness and time conflict between different practices and relationships she values has hindered Dorothy's well-being, leaving her feeling stressed and emotionally un-resilient. Negotiating the challenging personalities faced in the public forum that is TVic has also left her feeling criticized.

These details illustrate how satisfaction in a sustainable lifestyle is not clear-cut. Even as practitioners pursue one value or need, another may be unavoidably thwarted. These tensions also suggest that some dissatisfaction, arising from a practice of sustainable living, may be unavoidable, and thus may not constitute a reason to not engage in sustainable practices. By these characteristics, sustainable living is no different from any lifestyle in including opportunities both for satisfaction and for frustration. Perhaps the interaction of satisfaction with the ability and willingness to practice sustainable living is a matter of degree of satisfaction relative to frustration, and the specific qualitative nature of the satisfaction and frustration, rather than requiring the maximization of satisfaction and elimination of frustration for such lifestyles to be pursued.

How can engagement in a sustainable lifestyle practice satisfy needs?

Recall, from the literature review, that sustainable lifestyles were thought to have implications for the satisfaction of various essential human needs. Psychological studies (Brown & Kasser, 2005; DeYoung, 1990) have found that pro-environmental behaviour and subjective well-being are significantly correlated. Grounded in needs theories, researchers have speculated about *how* pro-environmental behaviours might serve to grant well-being by satisfying essential human needs. A lifestyle including pro-environmental behaviours was thought to be able to provide satisfaction for social needs, by bringing practitioners into contact with like-minded others, or simply by causing them to be more active in the community (Kasser, 2009). It was also thought that sustainable living could frustrate social needs by alienating practitioners from others (Elgin, 1981; Evans & Jackson, 2008; Jackson, 2007). Some analyses highlighted the symbolic, social roles of material goods as a possible barrier to finding satisfaction in a less materially-intensive, more sustainable lifestyle (Evans & Jackson, 2007; 2008). Sustainable lifestyle practices were speculated to satisfy the need for autonomy, insofar as people were allowed to choose how to construct their lifestyle (Kasser, 2009). Evans and Jackson (2007) discussed the possibility that practicing a sustainable lifestyle could allow people to experience the satisfaction of meaning, through this practice allowing them to experience self-actualization, or to feel like they were contributing to important issues. Kasser (2009) thought that taking up new practices as part of a sustainable lifestyle could initially frustrate people's need for competence, but in time as individuals gained competence they could experience greater satisfaction from their mastery and autonomy of action. Kasser (2009) also speculated that pro-environmental behaviours could help satisfy needs for subsistence and security, by addressing the sustainability and resilience

of ecological systems that provide for human physiological needs (e.g. food, water, air, other resources). A review of empirical studies conducted with people practicing sustainable lifestyles suggested that sustainable practices may be relevant to satisfying needs for subsistence, security, belonging, acceptance, support, participation, leisure, identity, meaning and self actualization (Black & Cherrier, 2010; Evans, 2010; Stagl & O'Hara, 2001). As well, sustainable practices were sometimes generally experienced as satisfying, "pleasurable and self-fulfilling" (Black & Cherrier, 2010, p. 438).

Furthermore, findings of these past empirical studies suggested that needs related to identity, and other individual values and perceptions, influenced how sustainable living was practiced (Black & Cherrier, 2010).

The present study was conducted with the intention to provide a closer, systematic analysis of how practitioners of sustainable living may derive satisfaction from their practices, but also became an examination of how these participants attribute satisfaction and meaning, and how all influences practice. In the sections above, on themes of needs/attributions, and then higher-level themes related to age, gender, and themes of challenge, sacrifice and tension, I have attempted to show how these six participants attribute meaning and satisfaction and how this has influenced and interacted with their practices. Now, I will compare the findings of the present study regarding experienced satisfaction and frustration of certain essential needs, with the speculative and empirical framework of how sustainable lifestyles have been hypothesized to grant satisfaction. I have intuitively correlated the emergent themes, identified in this study, with the common categories of needs described by the needs theories (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Maslow, 1970; Max-Neef, 1991; see Ch. 1). I did this by considering each emergent 'need' against each

need category provided by the theory, asking for example, “When participants were able to pursue activities of interest, might this influence whether their need for autonomy is satisfied?” At this point, I am departing from participants’ expressed meanings, and introducing more of my own interpretation. For example, I might interpret that a participant who experienced the ability to pursue activities of interest would experience satisfaction of the essential human need for autonomy, but this may not be a satisfaction they themselves had recognized. It is necessary to introduce researcher interpretation at this point, in order to make sense of participants’ accounts in terms of their wider usefulness to understanding how the practice of a sustainable lifestyle might be found to contribute to satisfying essential human needs. See Appendix B for a table illustrating my interpretation of the correlation between the emergent needs themes and the theory-based needs categories.

Satisfaction of Subsistence and Security Needs

Kasser (2009) speculated, and the results of some empirical studies suggested, that certain sustainable lifestyle practices could yield satisfaction for the needs of subsistence and security. This was thought to be possible through engaging in practices contributing the sustainability and resilience of ecological systems, to provide access to and secure these resources and services (Kasser, 2009). Practices could also contribute by granting financial security through conservation (Black & Cherrier, 2010; Stagl & O’Hara, 2001).

Emergent themes from the present analysis that seem to be related to the need for subsistence are the needs for food and shelter, for transportation, and for health. All participants seemed to be satisfied in their most basic needs for food and shelter. Kasser

(2009) mentions that sustainable practices could help meet subsistence needs by protecting ecosystem services and resources, but none of the participants in this study described seeing these benefits yet in an obvious way. Engaging in a sustainable lifestyle does seem to have implications for the types of food and shelter practitioners might choose, by allowing them to make sustainable choices in these domains. In other words, while sustainable living might not influence *whether* these particular participants can meet their needs for food and shelter, practicing a sustainable lifestyle does have important implications for *how* people might meet these needs. Insofar as transportation could provide access to resources needed for subsistence, all participants seemed sufficiently satisfied in this need as well. All participants seemed to be satisfied in their health needs, except for Dorothy – who suffered from high blood pressure, and Tanis – who struggled with low energy. Although her sustainable living did not cause Dorothy's health issue, it may have been exacerbated by the associated busyness. Overall, the ways in which these six participants practiced sustainable living generally did not seem to interfere with their needs for subsistence, although their sustainable lifestyles also did not appear to make unique contributions to the satisfaction of these needs, aside from influencing how they preferred and chose to satisfy these needs by choosing more sustainable options. While apparently satisfiers for subsistence needs, I think these preferences respond more to participants' needs to make a difference, take action, be effective, act in line with values of social justice and intergenerational equity, rather than to meet their basic needs for food and shelter.

Themes that seem to be related to the need for security are the needs for health, well-being, communication, knowledge, money, communities of support, and

preparation. As mentioned, participants were generally in good health, with Dorothy's health perhaps being slightly compromised due to the stress associated with her engagement with sustainable living. Tanis, concerned about her and her daughter's health due to the prevalence of chemicals in the environment, was not successful in addressing this concern through her lifestyle choices. Communicating with others about sustainability issues and receiving general emotional support provided the satisfaction of well-being. Dorothy's personal perspective and approach to sustainable living tended to conflict with her well-being, as she was often busy, stressed, and grieved. Having access to knowledge and information, and being able to cultivate practical skills through their various sustainable lifestyle activities allowed all participants to experience the satisfaction of security provided by knowledge. Participants seemed to have enough money to meet their basic needs. Geoff's specific approach to sustainable living – pursuing a career in renewable energy research – promised financial security. Charles on the other hand accumulated knowledge rather than financial security. Taking action guided by the intention to prepare for anticipated future conditions could allow participants to experience security, in that they were doing something to address potential future security conditions. Interestingly, two participants (Vivian and Charles) mentioned the idea of preparing, organizing differently, and caring for others, in order to avert a potential security crisis wherein one neighbourhood or community would attack another over resources. Not having a sufficient community-of-support for their sustainable actions could frustrate participants' security needs, as they were not assured of being supported to continue preparatory and sustainability-cultivating activities. Lack of support, and challenging group dynamics, could cause people to feel socially insecure in

trying to cultivate sustainability. Being aware of others out there, working in isolation sometimes to take necessary action, might reassure people that all is not lost, even if the future security of their local system is in question. Sustainable lifestyle activities that brought participants into contact with people they could talk to, that made them aware of others out there working on sustainability, that allowed them to acquire knowledge and skills, that allowed them to get paid for their work, and that allowed them to prepare for anticipated resource shortages, all seem to contribute to satisfying the essential need for security. Becoming committed to sustainable activism but finding a lacking community of support to help realize this vision, feeling too busy with this work, or lacking control over environmental conditions that could affect one's health seem to be ways in which pursuing a sustainable lifestyle can lead to dissatisfaction of the need for security.

Satisfaction of Social Needs

It was speculated that sustainable lifestyle practices could satisfy social needs by bringing people into contact with like-minded others, and generally bring them into closer contact with local social systems (Kasser, 2009). However, it was also thought that sustainable living could frustrate social needs by alienating practitioners from others (Elgin, 1981; Evans & Jackson, 2008; Jackson, 2007).

Emergent themes that appear to be relevant to the social needs for relationships, and for belonging or participation in a community are relationships, connection, communication, communities of support, caring, and making a difference. Participants seemed to be generally satisfied with meaningful relationships. Charles had experienced frustration in belonging from a young age, but this was not caused by his approach to sustainable living. Some experienced alienation from their family members due to their

sustainable practices or attitudes (Tanis, Dorothy, Vivian). Sustainable lifestyle practices have brought some of them into relationships and connections, perhaps alleviating some of the frustration of alienation. Within the wider community of sustainable living practitioners, hippies, people who 'get it' and share their values, participants have found a sense of human connection to a movement they can relate to. Dorothy and Vivian, having like-minded others to talk with, was a satisfaction and helped them to not feel alone. Action aimed at making a difference and a positive contribution in the world, and acting in ways that are compassionate and supportive to others could facilitate human relationships, relying on the human bond of pro-social behaviour. While some participants have experienced some alienation as a result of their sustainable lifestyle practices, a seemingly bigger concern and frustration with regard to relationships is not in participants experiencing acceptance for their practices, but in having a 'community of support', or others who not only accept the participants' approaches but also join them in said approaches. Not having a sufficient community was a salient source of frustration for social and effectiveness needs. This frustration was tied to the frustration of acting alone. Participants reported a need to act with others, and being frustrated at having to act more 'alone' than they would like. This alone-ness and lack of support is related to feeling 'disheartened' and 'disappointed'. Being aware of others taking action could help participants feel less alone in their efforts, but this is a need that was insufficiently satisfied, in that most participants noted that they would like, or needed more direct support from a community of practice. In the practice groups of community organizations, group dynamics could frustrate social needs, as being in these ostensibly cooperative contexts could introduce more interpersonal conflict into participants' lives.

Sustainable lifestyle activities, such as talking with others in an organization, or taking action in the interest of pro-social values, could contribute to satisfying practitioners' needs to relate to others and belong to a group. Changing one's lifestyle choices and differentiating oneself from family and friends, or finding few others who are organizing and participating in sustainability endeavours in the community, or encountering challenging personalities and group dynamics in community sustainability organizations, can lead to frustration of social needs to be accepted, to belong, and to not feel alone in pursuing sustainable living.

Emergent needs themes that seem to be connected to the need for esteem are the themes of effectiveness, recognition, and legitimacy. Feeling effective may be equated with self-esteem, with how participants evaluate themselves and their effectiveness of action. Participants have felt effective through their actions, but also sometimes frustrated with the limited scope of their effects. Dorothy, John, and Geoff had all experienced the frustration at not being able to encourage their groups to be more active. At times, John has been frustrated with the scale of impact of his efforts towards cultivating sustainability. Recognition may grant people the esteem of others. Participants such as Geoff and Charles noted experiencing some satisfaction from external recognition for their efforts. No one reported frustration with the amount of recognition they received. Geoff experienced the satisfaction of his ways of practicing sustainability being legitimate within wider society. For most, legitimacy of their own efforts was not at issue, but the legitimacy of the organizations with which they participated was in question; nevertheless this was not directly related with their own esteem. Undertaking sustainable living activities, and achieving the desired effect, such as getting people

involved or completing a project one had set out to do, as well as receiving recognition from others for one's successful actions, could allow people to feel esteem of effectiveness. Undertaking sustainable living activities that are unsuccessful could lead people to feel frustration of their need for esteem.

Satisfaction of Self-Actualizing Needs

It was speculated that practicing a sustainable lifestyle could satisfy self-actualizing needs, by allowing participants to act and live freely and in line with their values and preferences, and allowing the specific satisfaction of having control over their own experience by doing more things themselves with the skills and practices associated with a sustainable lifestyle (Kasser, 2009). Other needs included within the category of self-actualizing needs (those needs that are related to individual intellectual desires and pursuits), are the needs for knowledge, competence, creativity, meaning, aesthetics, and self-actualization. Kasser (2009) speculated that taking up a sustainable lifestyle practice could initially conflict with the need for competence, before giving way to a sense of autonomy and mastery. Evans and Jackson (2007) analyzed that sustainable living could grant a sense of meaning to one's experience and efforts, also incorporating experiences of meaning and self-actualization. The mechanisms by which sustainable lifestyles might satisfy or frustrate the needs for knowledge and creativity have not previously been explored.

'Autonomy' itself appeared as an emergent theme of needing and satisfaction in participants' accounts (although this need might be more accurately described using the term agency or freedom), and other emergent themes that seem to be related are the needs for interest, action, and self-identity. The ways in which participants practiced

sustainable living seemed generally compatible with satisfying their needs for autonomy or individual freedom²². Through choosing how to practice, choosing what job to have, and pursuing actions that they had control over, participants reported experiencing the satisfaction of autonomy. In addition, a particular sort of autonomy specifically available from sustainable life practices was the freedom of doing things for oneself, through skills of self-reliance. Insofar as sustainability may be practiced by cultivating skills – like learning how to grow food, how to repair things, etc. – such practices can satisfy participants’ needs for autonomy by giving them freedom and ‘control over their experience’. Opportunities for unique approaches to practicing sustainable living could allow participants to pursue activities and experiences guided by personal interest, accommodating experiences of agency. Flexibility in how participants may engage in sustainable living is relevant to granting the satisfaction of expressing agency, by allowing practitioners to pursue skills and activities of personal interest. As sustainable lifestyles are based on action, having the freedom to take action in a personally meaningful way is likely to satisfy the need for expressing agency. Participants generally seemed free to practice sustainable living in a way that they preferred, and so likely experienced the satisfaction of freedom in association with their sustainable practices. Dorothy has been frustrated in her autonomy, as she has committed herself to action with community groups (e.g. TVic) in a way that constrains her personal freedom of action regarding the practices she does, and has time to do, in her own life. While sustainable living appeared to allow individuals with a strong sustainability-related self-identity to experience the freedom of being themselves, this was a complicated conflict, because

²² I use the terms ‘autonomy’, ‘individual freedom’, and (expressions of) ‘agency’ somewhat interchangeably in this section.

their self-identity and satisfaction of autonomy seemed to conflict with the potential satisfaction of belongingness. However, it is not necessarily a property of sustainable living that belonging must be frustrated as the cost of autonomy, but a property of the individual experience in which difference and similarity are mutually exclusive, and differentiating characteristics are personally valued above assimilating characteristics. I will discuss the phenomenon of agency in sustainable lifestyles, and the satisfaction available through expressing agency, more in the section on Meaning, below.

Emergent themes that seem to be related to the need for leisure are interest, travel, enjoyment, and communities of support. Having time and autonomy to pursue activities of personal interest, at a leisurely pace, may facilitate leisure. Practicing sustainable living allowed participants to engage in activities that are personally interesting and enjoyable, and to pursue these at leisure in their free time. Travel is a form of leisure that most participants have given up, out of sustainability concerns, but they have pursued leisure in other ways. Participants seemed to take enjoyment from some of their sustainable practices and their related effects, for example: gardening, crafts and hand-skills, foraging, experimenting, socializing, and getting to know people. Communities of support, or lack thereof, conflict with leisure, as many of the participants find they are spending maybe more time than they would like on their sustainable activities, due to a lack of support by other participants to contribute to actions they see as important. Not having a sufficient community of support to contribute to these important actions frustrates their needs for leisure of time. Related to leisure is the need to be creative. An emergent theme that seems to be related to the need for creation is enjoyment. Participants recounted being able to participate in some enjoyable, creative practices,

such as gardening, culture and art, as well as the autonomy of doing some things by hand. Dorothy reported needing more freedom - of time, and opportunity - to engage in creative pursuits.

Besides the emergent theme of knowledge, one other emergent theme that seems to be related to the theoretical need for knowledge is communication. Participants seemed satisfied in obtaining sufficient knowledge. Sustainable lifestyle practices such as volunteering with a community group, or communicating with others about environmental issues, or informing oneself by reading or experimenting, could facilitate knowledge acquisition. Emergent themes that seem to be related to the need for competence are knowledge, action, and effectiveness. Being able to gain knowledge and skills through sustainable lifestyle practices could provide participants with the satisfaction of competence. Charles was satisfied to learn how to do things effectively, like make and repair mechanical things. Pursuing information and education related to sustainable practices could allow participants to feel competent in their skills. Being able to take valued action on sustainability issues could satisfy participants to feel like they were competent. Effectiveness also facilitates this competence, as being effective at what one sets out to achieve is perhaps the definition of competence. Feeling ineffective in one's actions, such as not being able to get a working group going actively, could conflict with satisfaction for the need to feel competent. Having success in one's sustainable pursuits, such as Geoff with his career, could facilitate satisfaction of competence.

Emergent themes that seem to be related to the need for aesthetic are nature, travel, action, and effectiveness. Being free to live in the place of their choice, and having free time to connect with nature, satisfied participants' needs to connect with nature.

John, busy with his family and career as well as with sustainable living, did not have the time to connect with nature in the way he would have liked. Sustainable practices like biking rather than driving provided participants a way to enjoy and connect with nature in their daily lives. Related to this aesthetic pleasure of connecting with nature, Geoff attributed satisfaction to the wonder that could be experienced through travel; however, this is a satisfaction he has sacrificed because it is not sustainable, replacing long-distance travel with local travel and exploring virtually through photos and television. Aesthetic needs are defined as those needs for completeness or rightness, in addition to beauty. Taking action in line with one's values for sustainable living could grant aesthetic satisfaction if this action felt 'right' or 'complete'. Charles described his actions in his younger years as motivated more by an aesthetic preference. As aesthetic is related to rightness and completeness, presumably action must be completed by having the desired effect in order to have a positive impact on aesthetic satisfaction. At times sustainable living yielded the desired effect for participants as a result of their actions, while at other times, it did not.

Meaning

Evans and Jackson (2007) speculated that sustainable lifestyle practices could provide an alternative source of meaning, with decreased environmental impact compared to materially-intensive, consumer lifestyles. They anticipated that sustainable lifestyle practitioners could experience meaning from their lifestyle being a self-actualizing 'life project', or from the perceived contribution of their acts to the greater good of the environment or community. Meaning was not included as an essential need in the three needs theories (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Maslow, 1970; Max-Neef, 1991) which

provide the theoretical psychological context for this study; however, meaning could be seen to be related to other ‘higher’ essential needs, such as self-actualization, identity, understanding, and perhaps aesthetics.

Many of the emergent themes I interpreted in the category of ‘intention needs’ make the most sense as satisfiers for the need for meaning. Participants told of their needs to act in line with certain values, such as intergenerational equity or social justice; to make a difference, prepare, or contribute to culture; and to act in integrity with their values. These emergent needs are less clearly connected with participants’ needs to have or receive material commodities like food and shelter, or social commodities like acceptance and esteem, or even intellectual commodities like knowledge and freedom. Rather, these intention needs ascribe what participants need to give, or how they need to be.

This difference between meaning and other sorts of needs seems to make it difficult to describe the extent to which sustainable lifestyle activities contribute to satisfying participants’ needs for meaning. Experiencing meaning seems to be more about the subjective perspective one takes on life, rather than a subjective experience of receiving or not receiving something (whether material, relationship, intellectual) to satisfy one’s needs. Certainly, what people receive can influence their satisfaction in relation to meaning. If someone needs to make a difference, and a lack of support inhibits them from taking action to make a difference, this could frustrate their need for that meaning; but, perhaps, this frustration may be more aptly related to the need for effectiveness or competence. Conceivably, even a frustrated need to take action in a certain way could satisfy a need for meaning, as practitioners continue to struggle to

enact something they believe in, to which they attribute meaning, regardless of effectiveness. Perhaps continual frustration in effectiveness at taking meaningful action could cause a loss of meaning over time.

If the opportunity to strive to enact values through one's lifestyle (whether or not this striving actually leads to action and success) allows for practitioners to experience meaning, then the results of this study suggest that participants are able to attribute and experience meaning from a range of values they associate with their sustainable lifestyles. Besides the emergent theme, in participants' accounts, of the need for meaning, other emergent themes that I interpret as related to the needs for meaning and self-actualization are importance, interest, caring, making a difference, intergenerational equity, integrity, self-identity, connection, and action. Satisfiers for meaning were mostly related to internal evaluations of one's life and actions. Meaning seemed to be about perceiving a wider significance or purpose to one's life and works. Taking successful action on issues seen as important, through a sustainable lifestyle practice, allowed practitioners to feel that their actions and life were meaningful. Being able to take action deemed subjectively 'important' by practitioners allowed them to experience the satisfaction of meaning, of contributing to something meaningful, perhaps to make a difference in other's lives or in the world. The meaning of importance may have been enhanced when participants were among few who did such work, as it was important for someone to do this work. Being able to make such contributions gave participants a sense of meaning and purpose to their life's work, or their life in general. Working in a way that allowed them to connect with a community could have enhanced meaning, by connecting participants with a wider movement. Being able to, through sustainable

lifestyle practices such as skill sharing, contribute to the continuous culture also imbued participants' efforts with significance and meaning, with a greater effect beyond their individual life or life span. This source of meaning is congruent with Evans and Jackson's (2007) theory that sustainable lifestyles could provide meaning by giving practitioners focus to enact a coherent life project.

Sustainable lifestyle activities, such as pursuing an environmentally-relevant career, or practicing other activities of interest, insofar as such activities allowed participants to explore and act in ways they felt 'called' to, could be implicated in satisfying the need for meaning, and particularly for self-actualization. Holding a strong sense of identity, and having this relate to whether and how one took action on sustainable living, could also satisfy the need for self-actualization. Having a self-identity as an 'outsider' or 'pioneer' or 'radical' could be more congruent with practicing a sustainable lifestyle, especially as many approaches to sustainable living are still considered to be outside the mainstream of society, and thus may necessitate someone who is comfortable with, or even 'needs' to take different action to actualize their identity.

It is unclear what would frustrate the need for meaning, except perhaps a similarly subjective state of hopelessness or depression, which I speculate could be brought about by the continual frustration of needs to be effective in taking action on one's meaningful values. Participants' needs to pursue meaningful action were dissatisfied when they lacked the contexts that could allow them to draw significance and meaning from the effects of their practices; when they felt a lack of effectiveness in the actions they were

trying to undertake, or when they lacked other people who were willing to receive their shared skills.

Material Satisfiers

One last theme I will discuss is how material satisfiers appear (or do not appear) in these accounts. As discussed in the literature review, one concern theorists have about the possibilities for satisfying and sustainable lifestyles, was that material satisfiers could not be replaced by less materially-intensive satisfiers without a loss of satisfaction associated with the symbolic function of materials to help satisfy various social and self-actualizing needs (Jackson, 2005).

If sustainable living necessitates some sacrifice in pursuing material satisfiers, in order to reduce the environmental impacts associated with said materials, one might assume that sustainable lifestyle practitioners have somehow transcended the attachment of meaning to material satisfiers, and rely more on non-material satisfiers for their essential needs. Obviously humans have a basic level of material need, but are the material needs of sustainable lifestyle practitioners less?

The sustainable living practitioners interviewed for this study are not beyond material concerns. They mentioned money as something that was important and useful to have, although most also acknowledged that they did not need a lot of money. It is interesting to note, however, that material satisfiers were not overt in the accounts of participants in this study. Rather than recounting alienation or conflict arising from a refusal to participate in material exchange, participants described social tensions emerging as a result of differing values (for example, what to eat, what to talk about), or inability to engage in meaningful social practices (for example, visiting). Material

satisfiers were, in fact, rarely salient in participants' accounts. Geoff's account has probably the most salient identification of possible material satisfiers, in that he speaks at length about wanting an electric car to be able to travel in a more sustainable way, and he is also concerned with making money. While materials are mentioned in others' accounts, they are not extremely salient (a bicycle, clothing, books, a gift of a baby's first sweater, etc.), but rather if their satisfiers meaningful to attributions of meaning and satisfaction could be said to take a form, they would be mostly in relationships with other people, the social fabric of the community, their own actions, and others' actions (or non-actions?), as well as abstract commodities like time and opportunity and information. Participants' internal felt conditions were important. Did they feel supported or alone? Did they feel like they were doing what they had set out to do? When participants experienced alienation from others, it was not due to their refusal to use material goods in the same way to cement relationships or communicate status, but rather emerged primarily due to differences in values, and secondarily through inability to participate in a desired physical relationship (e.g. Dorothy not being able to travel to see her sons – She was still willing to relate in a material communication way, knitting garments for her new grandchild). The majority of the attributions of satisfaction and meaning, described above, relate to abstract and subjective, internal intentions for how participants want to act, what pro-environmental and pro-social outcomes they want to produce, and the relationships and social contexts they want to have support their efforts.

Conclusion

In summary, findings of this study show that participants reported engaging in a range of practices that would make their lifestyles objectively more sustainable.

Participants' accounts refer to attributions of needing, meaning, and satisfaction that could be interpreted into twenty-six categories of satisfying phenomena that interact with their sustainable lifestyle practice. These twenty six categories are intention needs for: importance, interest, caring, making a difference, intergenerational equity, preparation, integrity, and self-identity; process needs for: nature, transportation and travel, autonomy, relationships, connection, communication, action, communities of support, and legitimacy; and outcome needs for: food and shelter, health, well-being, knowledge, enjoyment, effectiveness, recognition, money, and meaning. Each participant reported a unique subjective orientation to these themes of needs, and there seem to be some gender and age differences in which attributions participants experience and communicate more saliently. Needs and satisfactions of health, well-being, communication, caring, and intergenerational equity, were more salient in the accounts of female participants, while needs and satisfactions related to recognition, meaning, money, and nature, were more salient in male participants' accounts. While there are too few participants to draw strong conclusions about the effect of age on needs, satisfaction, and sustainable living, youth seemed to be a time when people were figuring out what direction to take in their life, middle age a time when people were busy with building a career, marriage and family, and post-middle age a time when people had more time, and were also thinking about their descendents and future generations. As such, age likewise influenced which needs were most salient, interacting with sustainable lifestyle practices.

Sustainable lifestyles were not straightforwardly satisfying (or dissatisfying), but were undertaken with some willing sacrifice and accepted challenge. For some,

sustainable living highlighted complex tensions between different needs that could not be mutually satisfied.

The findings of this study suggest that the practice of a sustainable lifestyle has implications for satisfying essential human needs for: security, belonging, esteem, autonomy, leisure, creation, knowledge, competence, aesthetic needs, self-actualization, and meaning, but also for frustrating needs for: security, belonging, acceptance, esteem, leisure, and competence. Major essential human needs that seem to be generally satisfied, and not frustrated, in these participants' accounts of sustainable living, are needs for freedom, knowledge, self-actualization, and meaning.²³ Material satisfiers were not overt in participants' accounts, and many of their attributions of meaning and satisfaction were instead related to communities of support and internal evaluations about their circumstances and agency.

In the next and final chapter, I will conclude this thesis with a summary of findings and discussion of their distinctiveness; followed by speculative discussion of what the findings suggest for theory and practice related to the understanding, support, and promotion of sustainable lifestyles in light of subjective human needs; and finishing with comments on limitations of this study, and recommendations for future research.

²³ Needs and satisfaction for aesthetics and creation were less common in participants' accounts, and are not separately discussed in theories of how sustainable lifestyle practices could satisfy needs.

5 Final Discussion and Conclusions

I began this project with an interest in learning more about subjective experiences of people practicing a sustainable lifestyle, especially within the context of a supportive community group. I had a specific goal of learning more about how such practices and contexts provide satisfaction for practitioners' needs. Theorists (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Maslow, 1970; Max-Neef, 1991) have identified common categories of essential human needs, but also recognize that satisfaction may be attributed to various satisfiers depending on cultural and personal subjective perspectives. This flexibility of satisfiers led sustainable development theorists to speculate that sustainable lifestyles could be as satisfying as unsustainable lifestyles. Sustainable development theorists (Evans & Jackson, 2007; Kasser, 2009) speculated that sustainable lifestyles could satisfy by bringing people into contact with more of their community and with like-minded others, by allowing them to pursue self-actualizing life projects, by allowing them to contribute to the greater good, and to the sustainability of their local environmental resources. On the other hand, Kasser (2009) thought that sustainable living could compromise satisfaction of competence as people engage in unfamiliar practices, and compromise meaning as people sacrifice material satisfiers that offer symbolic meaning and help to satisfy other needs.

I set out to study the experiences of participants who self-identified as sustainable lifestyle practitioners, interviewing six people who were associated with the potentially supportive resilient community group: Transition Victoria. I was seeking to understand how engagement in a sustainable lifestyle practice (and with the potentially supportive

context of a community sustainability/sustainable lifestyle initiative) could satisfy practitioners' needs.

Two primary results of the narrative and thematic analysis were: 1) categorization of the needs, and sources of satisfaction, meaning, and importance expressed in participants' accounts into twenty-six themes, in three larger categories of intention, process, and outcome needs; and, 2) description and discussion of how, through their self-reported sustainable lifestyle practices, participants' experienced satisfaction and frustration of these needs. This second result represents more empirically-based findings of the ways in which elements of a sustainable lifestyle practice may contribute to satisfying and frustrating personal needs.

In addition to these two primary results documenting to what these six individuals attribute satisfaction and how they experienced satisfaction and frustration in relation to their practices, I presented some other interesting and potentially useful results. Through narrative analysis, I produced a set of six narrative case studies illustrating individuals' engagement with a sustainable lifestyle through a holistic narrative account of their life experience with an emphasis on sustainable living, needs, and outcomes of satisfaction and frustration. I showed that, for the practices participants reported engaging in, many are associated with reduced household-level environmental impacts. Other self-reported practices they associate with their sustainable lifestyles illustrate that obviously impact-reducing practices cannot be separated from meaningful 'sustainable' practices with less clear implications for impact reduction.

Theoretical Implications of Results

Participants' accounts highlighted various intention, process, and outcome needs they expressed with regard to their sustainable lifestyles. They expressed needs for food, shelter, transportation, health, psychological well-being, money, relationships, connection, communication, supportive community, recognition, legitimacy, effectiveness, autonomy, action, enjoyment, knowledge, interest, nature, meaning, and identity. They also expressed needs to pursue values of importance, intergenerational equity, caring, making a difference, preparing, and integrity.

Material satisfiers were less salient in participants' descriptions of their needs and experiences of satisfaction and frustration. It is interesting to note that most of participants' attributions of satisfaction were to experiences, relationships, personal evaluations, and inner senses. While material objects were mentioned, they were not at all central to participants' stories about experiencing satisfaction and frustration, not even by helping to satisfy 'higher' needs through their symbolic function. The participant who expressed the most attribution of satisfaction to materials is probably Geoff. He described the utilitarian value of his computer for knowledge, and his wish to have a more sustainable/low-impact car for travel and exploration. I did not notice any participants attributing symbolic value – such as communicating status or cementing relationships - to material satisfiers. I wonder whether participants placed less emphasis on material satisfiers because they were consciously aware of the conflict between sustainability and materialism. Perhaps they did not perceive material sacrifice and lifestyles of material simplicity as frustrating because they have bought into a less materialistic value system associated with sustainability.

Given that many of participants' expressed 'needs' are value-based, relationship-based, and context-based, it is unclear how material products could contribute to fulfilling these or underlying needs. In mainstream consumer societies, material products (energetically and resource expensive as they tend to be) are promoted to the public as a primary way to satisfy human needs and grant a good quality of life (although surely this is starting to be challenged more). Interestingly, even today, much of the research about sustainable lifestyles is still framed around sustainable consumption and figuring out how to market more sustainable choices to consumers. Some sustainable development theorists have critiqued approaches to well-being that rely on consumption as incongruous with human needs (Jackson et al., 2004), and others have critiqued such growth-capitalist approaches to sustainable development as likewise incongruous with the development of true (ecological and systemic) sustainability (Taylor, 1992). Max-Neef (1991) identified that humans need to be satisfied by 'being', 'having', 'doing' and 'interacting', while a consumption or material approach to satisfaction and sustainability is likely to rely heavily on satisfiers of 'having'. If consumer culture only allows sustainability interventions based on changes to consumption, and only considers satisfiers of 'having', this seems to drastically limit the possibilities both for sustainability and for satisfaction.

Meaning was a salient need in participants' accounts, despite not appearing in the three conventional needs theories (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Maslow, 1970; Max-Neef, 1991), and meaning seems to be fundamentally a different sort of need than the others in what it requires for satisfaction. When trying to categorize emergent needs from participants' accounts into the categories of essential needs supplied by the needs theories, at first I

was puzzled about how to categorize needs like: importance, caring, intergenerational equity, making a difference, and integrity. These needs seemed not to relate to what participants received or passively experienced, but instead emerged from their active intentions and associated sense of meaning. I am also not sure how I would apply Maslow's typology of 'being', 'having', 'doing', or 'interacting' to possible satisfiers for the need for meaning, although perhaps 'being' comes closest. It seems possible, from these observations that participants attribute more satisfaction to the meaning that lifestyle practices hold for them and less to material satisfiers, that the results of this study illustrate what Evans and Jackson (2007) describe. They theorized that sustainable lifestyles could offer a source of meaning to offset the meaning of self-expression traditionally pursued through a more materialistic lifestyle of consumerism. Considering the accounts of participants in this study, these six individuals seemed to emphasize the satisfaction of meaning derived from their lifestyles, from taking meaningful action, and living by meaningful values, and did not report deriving much satisfaction from material satisfiers. This concludes a summary of where participants attributed (believed they would find) satisfaction in their sustainable lifestyle practices. What follows is a summary of where they actually experienced satisfaction in their sustainable lifestyle practices.

Some ways in which participants in this study experienced satisfaction as a result of their sustainable lifestyle practice were:

- through their voluntary participation, connecting and communicating with like-minded others, and so receiving emotional support and experiencing satisfaction of belonging, knowledge, and security

- seeking knowledge on environmental and sustainability issues, and learning skills associated with sustainable living, experiencing satisfaction of knowledge and security
- pursuing an environmental career, and being rewarded with recognition and income; experiencing satisfaction of security and esteem
- taking some action and preparing for the future; experiencing satisfaction of competence and security
- taking action for the benefit of others and experiencing a sense of meaning
- becoming aware of others taking action, and experiencing a sense of belonging
- being free to practice as they choose and are able, and experiencing satisfaction of autonomy
- doing and making things for themselves, and experiencing satisfaction of autonomy, competence, creativity, and security
- pursuing enjoyable and interesting activities, and experiencing leisure and creativity

Interestingly, sustainable living seemed more relevant for satisfying the ‘higher’ social and self-actualizing needs. There did not seem to be many implications of sustainable lifestyle practices in this study for whether participants could satisfy their basic needs, like those for food, but only in how participants preferred to satisfy these needs by choosing more sustainable options. Perhaps these ‘lower’ needs were less salient or less of a concern for these participants, as all seemed to be reasonably well-off such that they had sufficient food, shelter, and transportation, and so were less concerned with whether they could specifically obtain these things through sustainable living.

Where satisfiers for subsistence needs appeared in their accounts, the sustainable nature of these satisfiers and the possibility to choose satisfiers having these sustainable characteristics is perhaps more accurately positioned as satisfying intention and process needs – allowing participants to express their values and pro-social and pro-environmental intentions – rather than saliently satisfying their subsistence needs. The possibility to enhance subsistence and security through preserving environmental resources through ones actions (mentioned by Kasser [2009]) was only briefly implied, when some participants talked about building resilience and preparing for the future. Much of the intended outcome of this preparation was meant to help others, but two participants did mention the security concerns of a future in which resources are scarce.

It is interesting also that the sustainable living practices that were most salient in participants' accounts of experienced satisfaction were not those practices most directly implicated in environmental impact reduction, like choices in food and housing. Instead, participants seemed to derive more meaning and satisfaction (as well as frustration) in relation to their participation in groups, from learning, expressing themselves, making a difference to a wider community, and so on. Evans and Jackson's (2007) theoretical work predicted this, when they argued that it could be difficult to motivate sustainable lifestyles purely based on ethical but "boring, and mundane" practices such as "installing energy efficient lightbulbs and remembering to make sure that the television is not left on standby", without the appeal of 'playfully' "fashioning and performing an identity" traditionally offered by consumption activities (Evans & Jackson, 2007, p. 13). While obvious impact-reducing practices are important to objectively making a difference, satisfaction seems to come through subjectively attributing satisfaction and meaning to

one's practices that are thought to have implications for impact reduction, and also through engaging in a complex lifestyle that includes opportunities for action, association with others, and actualization of meaningful values, identity, and autonomy.

Some ways in which participants in this study were frustrated by their sustainable lifestyles were:

- gaining knowledge but not control over environmental and sustainability issues, and thus being frustrated in their needs for health, security, and autonomy
- giving their time and efforts to sustainable living, and especially the promotion of sustainability in the community, often without adequate support but feeling a responsibility to continue, and becoming busy, stressed, and discouraged; frustrating needs for health and well-being, security, belonging, autonomy, and leisure
- bringing them into contact with 'difficult people' who are difficult to work with on goals of community sustainability, frustrating their needs for esteem, belonging, and competence
- holding different values and participating in different practices that could alienate them from family and friends, frustrating social needs for belonging and esteem.
- trying to take action but being unsuccessful (by their definition), and experiencing the frustration of esteem and competence

Although it is speculated that being able to present sustainable living as personally satisfying and meaningful may aid in its promotion, findings here indicate that sustainable lifestyles are not unwaveringly satisfying. Complete satisfaction, without

frustration, is not necessary to encourage continued practice of a sustainable lifestyle.

While it has been deemed theoretically important to possibly be able to promote sustainable lifestyles as more satisfying or not requiring excessive sacrifice relative to conventional lifestyles (Brown & Kasser, 2005; Jackson, 2005; Jackson et al., 2004), the results of this study illustrate a complex relationship between dissatisfaction and sustainable living. Some participants accepted some frustration in their sustainable lifestyle practices. For example, travel was commonly sacrificed in order to reduce one's impact on the environment. A couple participants described sustainable living as 'hard' and causing them to 'feel sad'.

The accounts of some participants illustrated tensions between the needs for autonomy and belonging, or between subsistence and meaning, where both sorts of needs could not be simultaneously, adequately satisfied. I wonder whether this tension is a manifestation of the modern tension between structure and agency, or between the comfort of conformity and the need for agency and striving to change the way things are. This seemed to be an important striving for most or all of the study participants. Perhaps there are other hidden tensions between needs, and frustration is the result of trade-offs between needs. In instances where participants accept some sacrifice and frustration in their lifestyles, maybe this is to ensure greater satisfaction with regard to their needs to take action, or make a meaningful difference. Other frustrations are a result of the context in which participants act. Participants value taking action on sustainability, and while they strive to act on their values (to actualize the satisfaction of meaning) they come up against external constraints on this action, imposed by the wider context and community; for example, not having the resources or opportunity to make their house more energy

efficient, or not having enough community support to be effective in making change. One imagines there must be thresholds for frustration, beyond which additional frustration would discourage further pursuit of sustainable lifestyle practices.

It is interesting to note that many of the emergent frustrations were about what participants wanted to experience or accomplish, particularly in their community sustainability involvement, rather than about their household-level efforts. A common complaint was about lacking an adequate community of support for their sustainability activism, to be able to be able to take effective action on what was seen as important. However, it is possible that this emphasis on community action could have emerged from the research design, in which the emphasis was on participants' connections with, and satisfactions and frustrations from the community initiative of Transition Victoria. Participants may have been primed by the interview questions' focus on whether and how their needs were satisfied through their engagement with Transition Victoria to respond with more commentary on this community element, encouraging them to focus in their responses on characteristics of this community. If this is the case, this could imply that the study design introduced the emphasis on and salience of community-related complaints in participants' accounts, and also that there could be more to know about satisfaction and frustration in more individualized and household-level sustainable activities. As described later, in a section on limitations of the study design, it is advisable to conduct future research explicitly asking participants about satisfaction and frustration with sustainable living in general, rather than specifically in relation to engagement in a sustainability community initiative – as was done in this study.

Implications for Practice

Results of this study suggest some possible implications for practice, for those who endeavour to support and encourage sustainable lifestyle practitioners by being attentive to their needs and satisfaction.

The results of the thematic analysis, which described to what participants attributed satisfaction and meaning in their accounts, allow for consideration of what sustainable lifestyle practitioners more generally could find satisfying and meaningful. Within the thematic analysis, categories were organized into three super-categories, each containing different types of needs, and which therefore suggest different possibilities for supporting satisfaction. The process needs include properties and contexts that could be provided by a society or organization to facilitate sustainable living practices; for example, legitimizing and recognizing people's practices, providing opportunities for relationships and communication, ensuring ample support for the activities people want to undertake. Intention needs are very subjective to the person, as they tend to represent deeply held values, but these needs could still be engaged by highlighting these important values in an intervention; for example, by identifying how a certain movement or action responds to the values of social justice or intergenerational equity. Outcome needs include some of the most basic needs, such as for food and shelter, and some of the other needs commonly identified in the needs theories. It is already recognized that people require satisfaction of their basic needs for food and shelter before they can consider taking pro-environmental action.

Although I had a small sample size to work with and can make only speculative or preliminary recommendations, there appeared to be some patterns in what participants needed, how they were satisfied, and how they practiced sustainable living tied to their

age or life stage and gender. Women tended to communicate more saliently about needs for health and well-being, for communication and receiving emotional support, and for taking care of others, while needs for meaning, money, and connection with nature were primarily emphasized by men. Should an organization or program wish to attract or support practitioners of one gender over the other, they might consider designing their policies to cater to these gender-salient needs. For example, offering discussion groups could be used to attract more women to a sustainable development program, while offering a chance to work in nature, or to receive an income could attract more men to pro-environmental action.

Other needs, satisfactions, and possibilities for action seemed more salient for participants at different life stages. Again, I do not have a sufficient sample size or rigorous design to be able to make strong conclusions, but can offer some speculative recommendations for practice. The youngest participant, and participants talking about their youth, more saliently described needs for income, and to figure out a coherent way to act on their values. Institutionalizing pro-environmental action in career positions could be especially appealing to young people who are entering the work force. Youth also seems to be a time in which people want to gain knowledge and develop their opinions, so an intervention wishing to target youth could provide thought-provoking information. Middle-aged participants identified myriad other demands on their time: family, work, house, and sometimes health. Someone wishing to encourage middle-aged people to take pro-environmental action could provide support allowing them to take part in meaningful actions that do not require much time commitment, and do not conflict with their work and family commitments. The middle-aged participants in this study

suggested, specifically with regard to the success of Transition Victoria, to incorporate a paid staff person or some other means of ensuring ample personnel support. That way, when participants get called away by other life commitments, they can be assured the organization will continue without relying solely on their participation, and they could return to involvement when able. The older participants emphasized the importance of leaving a legacy to make sense and meaning out of their life, and to leave resources for the well-being of their descendents and other members of future generations. If one wishes to engage older people in sustainable lifestyle interventions or pro-environmental actions, it makes sense to emphasize how such practices could help them to leave a legacy or to take care of their grandchildren. Opportunities to interact with young people, and to share their knowledge could be especially meaningful.

The flexibility needed at different life stages also brings to mind flexibility more generally as a property that could help support and encourage sustainable lifestyle practitioners. It should be obvious by now that even among these six participants all drawn from the same organization, different needs are more salient than others, and sustainability is practiced in diverse ways. Previous research has found that sustainable lifestyle practitioners become frustrated with attempts to prescribe or constrain their practices (Hobson, 2002). I would argue that, as the findings of this study show that participants' needs may change over time and that one participant's needs differ from those of another participant, any program or group seeking to support and encourage sustainable lifestyle practices must allow for flexibility in when and how practices are engaged.

Perhaps because I approached these participants through their participation with a potential source of community support – the group known as Transition Victoria – and was initially interested in how engagement and participation with this organization satisfied their needs, needs for communities of support were among the most salient and frequent in their accounts, and the lack of a suitable ‘community of support’ to support their efforts at personal and community sustainability was one of the most salient frustrations. Participants offered many critiques of how the existing community falls short in providing adequate support for their efforts, and these are documented in the descriptions of emergent themes of needs in Chapter 4, and incorporated into the recommendations for practice summarized in an Executive Summary provided in Appendix C.

It is interesting to note that sustainable lifestyle practices undertaken in the community, rather than in ones individual lifestyle, appear as more salient sources of frustration, despite sustainable lifestyles not necessarily requiring engagement outside the home if one considers only impact-reducing actions like food, shelter, energy, waste, and consumption choices. At the same time, it is almost impossible to separate the individual actions of social humans from social actions with implications for their individual sustainable lifestyle. Suitable communities of support seem to be influential in the qualitative, subjective experience of a sustainable lifestyle practice. It could be that, as explored in the previous section, these ‘other’ elements of sustainable lifestyles, not strictly limited to ‘mundane’, household-level, impact reducing practices, offer greater opportunities for both satisfaction and frustration because they contain more room for meaningful self-expression and agency in general (Evans & Jackson, 2007). It is not the

realm of ethical, impact-reducing practices forming the basis of the ‘sustainability’ of lifestyles that is meaningful, satisfying, or frustrating, but rather those associated practices and contexts that allow for and allow attribution of greater self-expression. If this is so, then this reinforces a conclusion that ‘sustainable’ impact-reducing practices cannot or should not be separated from other ‘subjectively meaningful’ lifestyle practices and elements, for this space of subjective meaning is where satisfaction and frustration, and presumably motivation, are experienced (Figure 2).

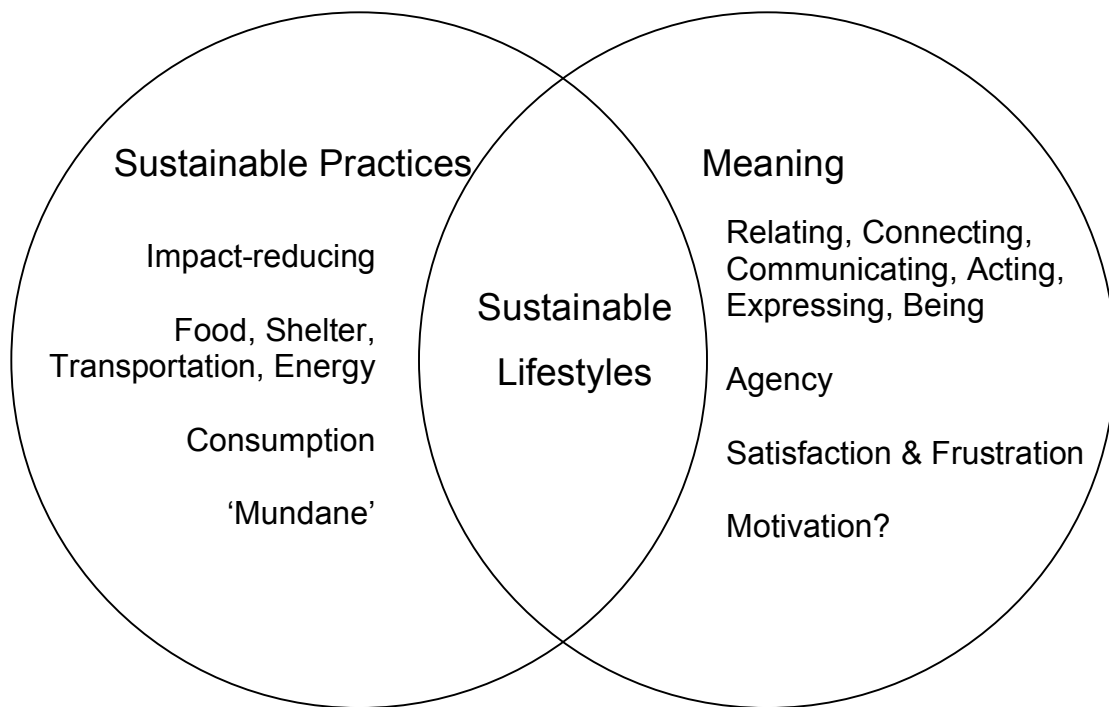


Figure 2 Sustainable lifestyles include both objectively sustainable and subjectively meaningful elements

It would be a mistake to try to encourage impact-reducing practices without considering practices of uncertain impact that likewise constitute a subjectively self-defined lifestyle. Past studies have found that participants become frustrated with

interventions that try to rationalize or fragment approaches to sustainable living, as these interventions do not respect how participants understand and derive meaning from their lifestyles (Hobson, 2002). Participants in this study include a range of practices, those with clear and with less clear implications for impact reduction, in their self-defined sustainable lifestyles. Results of this study suggest that participants attribute and derive more satisfaction from these other sorts of practices. Taking certain actions in the domains of food, shelter, transportation, energy and consumption are almost meaningless except for the contributions they make to allowing participants to take action, be effective, or make a difference, and most of the satisfaction participants attributed and experienced came from how they were involved in the community, and the values they worked towards through their actions.

Although this thesis presents exploratory research conducted with a small number of participants and thus requires further study to confirm findings, I nevertheless suggest some things to consider for organizations or policy-makers who want to support and encourage sustainable lifestyle practitioners by enhancing satisfaction of their needs (see Appendix C for an executive summary).

Limitations, Distinctiveness, and Recommendations for Future Research

Like any study, this one has been constrained in how it could provide an answer to the research question. The research paradigm, exploratory nature of the research approach, size and nature of the sample, the study design and interview questions, timing, and the iterative process of knowledge development introduced limitations.

This study was undertaken in the reform paradigm of social science research. Rather than producing statistically significant, generalizable results, it has used

qualitative methods to produce specific results on the subjective experiences of a small number of sustainable lifestyle practitioners. I felt it necessary to conduct this research under this paradigm because I saw the need for an exploratory study that could describe the specific details of how people practicing sustainable lifestyles attribute and experience satisfaction in relation to their lifestyles. To do this, I needed to conduct semi-structured interviews with a small number of participants (allowing for depth of description in each experience rather than breadth of sample size). These interviews were guided by a narrative inquiry approach, to yield participants' subjective stories and perceptions about their lives and experiences. Narrative research "privileges positionality and subjectivity" (Riessman, 2003, p. 332). Because I was interested in how engagement in the practices and contexts of a sustainable lifestyle could satisfy practitioners' subjective needs, it was necessary to take such an approach that highlighted subjective perspectives rather than assuming common underlying experiences or needs would be salient to such participants. Taking a narrative inquiry approach, and asking about how things happened in participants' lives and sustainable lifestyles, provided me with substantial, somewhat-candid material, such that I could look outside direct responses to questions about needs and satisfactions, to make inferences about what seemed, from their stories, to be meaningful and important to them. In this way, I was slightly less constrained by a rigid research design that would only allow for certain kinds of answers grounded in theory, or that cut off the participant's story and explanation around phenomena. There must be irreducible qualitative complexity in the interpretation of the data, and in the answer to the research question. Narrative knowledge is valuable for understanding human experience and motivation, because how participants communicate

about themselves represents the subjective ‘truth’ of their experiences. Furthermore sound interpretation of narrative data does not provide the ‘right’ answer to the question, nor the only one, nor an objective answer untouched by the researcher’s subjective perspectives. Rather, an appropriate interpretation is one for which the explanation is supported by reasonable evidence from the data, always with the acknowledgement that there may be other possibilities (Polkinghorne, 1995).

Positivistic research has been conducted before on this topic, such as the psychological studies that showed a correlation between pro-environmental behaviour and well-being. As described in the literature review, all the other research explicating how sustainable lifestyles could provide satisfaction or frustration were either speculation based on theory, or else were side-points of studies that took other foci to the empirical qualitative study of sustainable lifestyle practitioners. Because so little was empirically known about the mechanisms by which a sustainable lifestyle practice might be able to grant satisfaction, I felt it necessary to conduct this exploratory research, which required an initial qualitative and small-scale study. In time, should patterns seem to emerge in how a wide range of people experience certain satisfactions from sustainable lifestyle practices, it could be possible to pursue a larger study seeking to test whether there is a significant correlation or incidence of these satisfactions in a sample representative of the wider population.

Some notable short-comings in the study design were: the size and nature of the studied sample, the lack of a comparison group and of an objective measurement of the sustainability of participants’ practices, the focus in the interview questions on satisfactions from Transition Victoria rather than from lifestyle more generally, and the

inability to follow up with participants on emergent themes of interest from the analysis. These shortcomings came about due to limitations of time and experience.

First of all, I analyzed the interviews of only six participants, who volunteered to participate. While there was a range of ages and equal representation of genders, participants were all from the same community, seemed to be of a similar ‘middle-class’ socioeconomic status, and were ethnically homogeneous. Further studies sampling more, and more diverse, participants would be beneficial to extending the usefulness and applicability of findings beyond this one specific sample. Likewise, I interviewed only people who self-identified as sustainable lifestyle practitioners, and did not seek to interview those practicing ‘unsustainable’ lifestyles. There was so little known about how those practicing sustainable living attributed and derived satisfaction that I felt it important to start with explicating this. That of course limits the applicability of these findings such that it cannot be said whether those not identified with sustainable living cannot be even speculated to attribute or derive similar sorts of satisfaction to that expressed by participants in this study. I would be interested to see future research conducted with other groups: of different demographics, from different communities, involved with different organizations, and identifying with different sorts of lifestyles – sustainable and unsustainable – to further explore how other types of people might attribute or experience satisfaction in relation to sustainable lifestyle practices and pro-environmental behaviours.

Considering my interview framework, the one question I would certainly change (or supplement) if doing this research again, would be to ask more explicitly about how participants’ sustainable living practices and associated contexts and outcomes satisfied

their needs in general, widening the scope from the focus on how Transition Victoria satisfied their needs. I was originally interested in how a potentially socially supportive context could provide satisfaction that might encourage the practice of a sustainable lifestyle, but soon learned that participants were engaged with TVic in vastly different ways, and that they experienced many possible sources of satisfaction from their sustainable lifestyle that were of interest and not all were related to TVic. Regardless of how I did ask my question, participants still took the liberty of telling me many things about what is important, satisfying and frustrating in their sustainable lifestyle practice, both explicitly and, I believe, implicitly in how they emphasized different things that were important or meaningful to them, and how their lifestyle, context, and practices did or did not provide them with these sources of satisfaction. While I was able to implicitly derive an understanding of a range of participants' needs, satisfactions and frustrations from the narrative interview data, it could have been beneficial to explicitly ask about possible sources of satisfaction more generally within their lifestyles.

Another shortcoming of this study was in not attempting an objective measurement of participants' lifestyle impacts on the environment. While I have shown that participants reported engaging in practices commonly believed to have implications for impact, I have not provided sufficient data between satisfaction experienced in a sustainable lifestyle and the objective sustainability of that lifestyle. I assume that participants' lifestyles are making some difference with regard to impact reduction, but I cannot be certain. Since it is important to discover possibilities for people to practice lifestyles that are both objectively sustainable and subjectively satisfying, more research

must be done to measure the objective sustainability of subjectively satisfying lifestyles²⁴. It would also be useful to attempt to measure the potential improvement to environmental impact associated with other practices associated with a sustainable lifestyle: learning, teaching, socializing, work, etc. as these practices were among the most meaningful and potentially satisfying or frustrating to participants in this study. If such practices offer the greatest source of meaning and encouragement for an all-around sustainable lifestyle, it would be useful to know how they contribute to objective sustainability.

One reason it was difficult to implement improvements on these limitations during the study was the time-limited nature of a Master's project. For a project that is ideally completed in one or two years, there is not time to recruit, interview, and conduct in-depth analysis on the accounts of more than a few participants. It is difficult to return to participants to follow up on points of potential interest that were not fully explored in the initial interview, both due to the limited time allotted to a Master's project and due to the wish not to demand excessive commitment of time from participants or risk attrition from the sample. People's lives and perspectives are so interesting and complex that surely if they were willing and I had time, I could have spent much more time asking them about the many details of their experiences or interviewing many more practitioners from different contexts, but at some point data collection must be truncated.

In presenting a summary of the satisfiers experienced, and communicated about, by the participants in this study, this is not exhaustive of all possible satisfiers and ways of deriving satisfaction from the practice of a sustainable lifestyle by any person, nor

²⁴ One possible model for exploring the correlation of objective sustainability with subjective satisfaction is demonstrated in Stagl and O'Hara's (2001) study, in which they used such an approach to correlate sustainability and satisfaction for consumption of community supported agriculture. Perhaps their model could be adapted to examine other sorts of sustainable lifestyle choices.

even exhaustive of these participants' experiences of satisfactions. I am sure there must be so many more interesting people out there, with unique and valuable perspectives on how their unique sustainable living practices have interacted with their needs for satisfaction. In providing a summary of the satisfiers these participants experienced, I describe mere examples of some of the ways in which satisfiers for various needs may emerge through the practice of sustainable living.

Future studies will always be more informed, as both individual researchers and the collective body of research gain knowledge over time, with each new study. Things that I could not know or did not realize before undertaking the study, talking to participants, or analyzing the data influence how I would change the study design if doing it again. As I was analyzing participants' accounts, I questioned whether I had asked the right questions, whether I should have followed up here or there in what they were mentioning. Although semi-structured is challenging in this way, because it is difficult to know beforehand what will arise, and at the time what to follow up on and what to leave. Not knowing how participants will answer also creates a problem in getting what is needed to answering the research question(s), or indeed whether the specific questions change with more information. Through the process of completing this study, I have learned many specific and general things about this topic, and about conducting research, that would inform future undertakings to understand this topic.

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Appendix A

Consent Form



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Participant Consent Form

Inner Sustainability: Exploring the subjective experiences of participants in a community sustainable lifestyle initiative

You are invited to participate in a study entitled "Inner Sustainability: Exploring the subjective experiences of participants in a community sustainable lifestyle initiative" that is being conducted by Anna Melnik.

Anna Melnik is a Graduate Student in the School of Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by e-mail (amelnik@uvic.ca) or phone (250-532-9119). As a Graduate Student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Environmental Studies. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Kara Shaw.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to study the subjective experiences of people attempting to live sustainable lifestyles and who are also engaged with a group effort on community sustainability. Of particular interest are participants' subjective experiences of needs satisfaction related to their participation with the community initiative.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because understanding the experiences of people currently trying to live sustainable lifestyles in the context of a community initiative will contribute to defining sustainable lifestyles, and understanding how they operate. With this study, I hope to contribute knowledge on how engagement with a community sustainable lifestyle initiative might contribute to participants' personal satisfaction and fulfillment.

Participant Selection

You are being invited to participate because of your involvement with Transition Victoria – a community initiative with implications for sustainable living. As a participant in this context, you can provide unique perspectives on your subjective experiences.

What is involved

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a one-on-one interview with the researcher. This interview will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes, and will be scheduled at a mutually agreed upon time, at a location of your choice relevant to your sustainable lifestyle activities. During the interviews, you will be audio-recorded. A transcript of the recording will be returned to you and you will be invited to attend a follow-up interview. This would be an opportunity for clarification, or to add or change details, but this second interview is optional. The recordings will be analyzed to answer the research question, and select passages will be quoted in the resulting thesis paper.

Inconvenience & Risks

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you in terms of the time you give to be interviewed. There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include the opportunity for you to share your unique perspectives and stories of your involvement with sustainable lifestyle activities and with Transition Victoria. As well, this research may benefit the state of knowledge by contributing to a better understanding of the experiences of those engaged in sustainable lifestyle activities in the context of participation with a community initiative. Advancing this knowledge may contribute to a better understanding of how to facilitate sustainable living, which could benefit society by contributing to social and environmental change for sustainability.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be used only with your written permission. If you choose not to grant this permission, your data will not be used and will be destroyed.

On-going Consent

If you choose to participate in a follow-up interview, I will ask you to initial and date the bottom of this form to signal your ongoing consent.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity, participants will not be anonymous to the researcher due to the need for signed consent and communicating about scheduling. Participants will be anonymous in the collected data and in the dissemination of results. Anonymity will be protected through the use of pseudonyms, and potentially identifying personal characteristics will not be reported. Limited personal and demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, age, occupation), may be reported, but only if relevant to the analysis and when doing so is not expected to pose significant risk that a participant could be identified.

Confidentiality

There are limits to confidentiality due to the population of interest. Potential participants will be drawn from those who are engaged with Transition Victoria, and as such participants may be known to each other, and thus may be able to guess at the identity of a participant. However, it is unlikely that anyone unfamiliar with you or Transition Victoria could determine your identity.

In addition to the measures described above to protect anonymity, your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by storing hard copies and paper records in a locked desk in the researcher's office, and electronic recordings will be kept in a password-protected file on the researcher's laptop, before being burned to CD and kept in the locked desk.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: in a thesis presentation, and electronically on the internet through publication of the resulting thesis on UVic's D-Space. In addition, results may be disseminated in a published article, in a class presentation, and in presentation at a scholarly meeting. Participants will be provided with a summary of research results by request.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of two years after the completion of the study. At this time remaining electronic data will be deleted; hard copies of data will be shredded or otherwise destroyed.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include:
 Anna Melnik (researcher): amelnik@uvic.ca or 250-532-9119.
 Dr. Kara Shaw (supervisor): shawk@uvic.ca or 250-721-7353.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix C Executive Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

for

Inner Sustainability: Exploring experiences of needs, satisfaction, and frustration in sustainable lifestyle practices

In the summer of 2011, individuals associated with Transition Victoria (TVic) participated in a study on sustainable living, needs, and satisfaction. Although these participants were interviewed as individuals and not as representatives of TVic, the results of this study suggest some considerations and recommendations for both individual sustainable lifestyle practitioners and groups wishing to support such practitioners. This document summarizes the background knowledge, methods, results and findings of this study, exploring how engagement with a sustainable lifestyle practice can satisfy practitioners' needs.

Background

Sustainable development theorists have speculated on how practicing a sustainable lifestyle might satisfy or dissatisfy practitioners' needs, leading to experiences of satisfaction and frustration, with implications for the motivation of such practices as well as the subjective well-being of practitioners. However, there remains a lack of knowledge, particularly that developed from the empirical study of subjective experiences of participants themselves, to answer the question of *how* sustainable lifestyle practices might give rise to experiences of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This question calls for an examination of both what participants experience as needs, as well as how they feel these needs are satisfied or not satisfied in relation to their personalized approach to pursuing sustainability through their lifestyle practices.

Methods

In June 2011, I conducted interviews with seven people who volunteered themselves as pursuing a sustainable lifestyle, and who were also associated with the community resilience initiative of Transition Victoria. All interviews were conducted

one-on-one, except in the case two participants who were partners and chose to be interviewed together. Interviews took place either in public locations such as a coffee shop, or in the participant's home.

Interviews were guided by a semi-structured framework inspired by narrative inquiry, and involved asking questions about participants' lives in general, needs, stories of interest and involvement in sustainable living and in TVic, satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) of needs through this involvement, and thoughts on future practices. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed, with a transcript returned to the participant for verification. One participant withdrew from the study after the interview, so interview data from six participants was analyzed, using first a narrative synthesis, followed by thematic analysis, and discussion.

Results

Participants reported engaging in a range of practices commonly associated with reduced environmental impacts, including more sustainable choices in: food (local, organic, vegetarian, home-grown, keeping laying hens), housing (smaller, energy efficient, alternative energy), transportation (walking, bicycle, public transit, local vacations, limiting flying), and consumption (buying second-hand, repairing, salvaging, recycling, reusing, reducing, composting).

Participants also included a range of other practices in their self-defined sustainable lifestyles, with less clear implications for direct impact reductions but nevertheless meaningful in their action on sustainability and other related values. These other practices included: voluntary community participation (events, discussion groups, community organizations, movements, TVic, working groups, co-ops), outreach and education, employment and work in the environmental sector, incorporating sustainability in social activities (sharing a vegan meal, urban food foraging), learning and intellectual work (post-secondary education, reading, re-skilling, attending training, experimenting and figuring out how to do things, planning, thinking), preparing (re-skilling, documenting knowledge, gathering tools and materials, planting nut trees), and generally living with certain intentions (personal responsibility, impact reduction, simple living, self-reliance).

Results of a thematic analysis uncovered twenty-six themes of needs that participants found to be meaningful, important, and potentially satisfying in their practice of a sustainable lifestyle. These were needs for: food, shelter, health, well-being, knowledge, enjoyment, effectiveness, recognition, money, meaning, nature, transportation, travel, autonomy (or freedom), relationships, connection, communication, action, community support, legitimacy; as well as needs to take action based in: importance, interest, caring, making a difference, intergenerational equity, preparation, integrity, and self-identity. There also seemed to be some patterns in needs that were more salient among participants of one gender over the other, or participants of a specific age or life-stage.

Considering these themes of needs in the context of participants' narrative experiences, some of the ways in which sustainable lifestyle practices can offer satisfaction for needs are as follows:

- through their voluntary participation, connecting and communicating with like-minded others, and so receiving emotional support and experiencing satisfaction of belonging, knowledge, and security
- seeking knowledge on environmental and sustainability issues, and learning skills associated with sustainable living, experiencing satisfaction of knowledge and security
- pursuing an environmental career, and being rewarded with recognition and income; experiencing satisfaction of security and esteem
- taking some action and preparing for the future; experiencing satisfaction of competence and security
- taking action for the benefit of others and experiencing a sense of meaning
- becoming aware of others taking action, and experiencing a sense of belonging
- being free to practice as they choose and are able, and experiencing satisfaction of autonomy
- doing and making things for themselves, and experiencing satisfaction of autonomy, competence, creativity, and security
- pursuing enjoyable and interesting activities, and experiencing leisure and creativity

Some ways in which sustainable lifestyle practices may be associated with dissatisfaction of needs or frustration include:

- gaining knowledge but not control over environmental and sustainability issues, and thus being frustrated in their needs for health, security, and autonomy
- giving their time and efforts to sustainable living, and especially the promotion of sustainability in the community, often without adequate support but feeling a responsibility to continue, and becoming busy, stressed, and discouraged; frustrating needs for health and well-being, security, belonging, autonomy, and leisure
- bringing them into contact with ‘difficult people’ who are difficult to work with on goals of community sustainability, frustrating their needs for esteem, belonging, and competence
- holding different values and participating in different practices that could alienate them from family and friends, frustrating social needs for belonging and esteem.
- trying to take action but being unsuccessful (by their definition), and experiencing the frustration of esteem and competence

Implications for Practitioners

Since the audience for this executive summary is primarily the research participants’ and others involved with the organization Transition Victoria, I focus here on drawing implications and recommendations from this work that I think would be most relevant to these readers. Practitioners may also be interested in the following section on how groups might attract and support other sustainable lifestyle practitioners, considering needs and satisfaction.

Interestingly, although sustainable lifestyles have been questioned in the literature for their possibility to enhance satisfaction – with the worry that they would not be appealing if not sufficiently satisfying – participants in this study noted satisfying experiences, but also experiences of accepted frustration or dissatisfaction associated with their sustainable lifestyle. Many participants consciously chose to limit or cease air-travel out of concern for the environmental and social impacts, despite their satisfaction

with traveling for leisure or to be able to visit family. Often, although they might express dissatisfaction with some of the elements of pursuing a sustainable lifestyle – such as not receiving adequate community support – participants tended to persist in some form of sustainable living in spite of these difficulties because they so valued sustainability that they felt it worthy of pursuing even in the face of some frustration. (At other times, an incompatibility between needs and sustainable lifestyle practices – including those in the community – led participants to change how they practiced sustainable living.) This finding suggests that, while it would be nice for sustainable living to be utopian in its satisfying possibilities, there are many people practicing sustainability in ways that are sometimes hard, challenging, or frustrating. Therefore, I would recommend that practitioners take courage, and continue to pursue the practices that they find meaningful and relevant to their personal needs.

Recommendations for Groups

Overall, this project seems to have produced some knowledge potentially useful for groups or programs that wish to support or attract sustainable lifestyle practitioners by considering their needs and satisfaction. Satisfaction has important motivational implications, so this subjective dimension merits consideration when contemplating how to promote sustainable living as well as sustainable development. I conclude with recommendations for groups wishing to support sustainable lifestyle practitioners by being mindful of their subjective experience and need satisfaction:

1. Consider how to respond to needs, enhance satisfaction, and minimize frustration of sustainable lifestyle practitioners, to support them in pursuing these lifestyles.
2. Learn more about the needs of the sustainable lifestyle practitioners you wish to support, by asking them about their needs, satisfactions, and frustrations.
3. Consider how to provide support in the form of satisfiers for practitioners' needs related to the process of practicing sustainable living. For example, participants may experience satisfaction from feeling that their practices are legitimized by others or society, from being able to engage in positive

relationships and connections with others through their practices, or from being supported so they can pursue preferred activities.

4. To draw possible participants to an activity or a group, speak to their needs to act in line with certain values. For example, highlight how sustainable practices can respond to social justice issues, or intergenerational equity, if these are causes that they deem worthy.
5. Ensure that sustainable activities allow participants to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, health, security – including financial and social, commitments to their families and other relationships, etc.
6. Groups wishing to attract or support participants of a certain gender or age could consider how these personal factors may influence what sorts of needs and satisfactions practitioners might find most relevant. For example, findings of this study suggest that women may be more likely to find satisfaction in opportunities to connect and communicate with others, and to receive emotional support. Men may be more likely to be satisfied by opportunities for legitimacy, recognition, and conventional financial success. Older people may be drawn to and satisfied by opportunities to pass on their lifetime of knowledge and leave a positive legacy.
7. Consider how practitioners' needs change over time as their lives change. For example, as they get busy with raising a family or establishing a career. If possible, offer administrative support to minimize unsatisfying demands on people's time to facilitate their engagement in more personally satisfying and meaningful sustainable lifestyle practices.
8. Generally allow for flexibility to adapt to participants unique needs and interests.
9. Respect practitioners' self-defined 'sustainable' practices and lifestyle elements, rather than focusing only on simple pro-environmental practices having obvious sustainable impacts. Results of this study, along with review of past studies and literature, suggest that much of the meaning and possible satisfaction in a sustainable lifestyle comes not through the mundane, impact-reducing practices, but through the meaning given these practices by a context

of relationships, valued actions, opportunities to enact values, and so on. Enforcing strict adherence to only those most ‘sustainable’ elements of practice could risk losing those practitioners who find this framing irrelevant to their subjectively experienced, meaningful lifestyle.

10. A lack of sufficient practical communities of support was among the most salient dissatisfied needs expressed by participants. While they generally acknowledged attitudinal support – in that others thought their sustainable efforts were worthwhile – there was a lack of enough other people actually taking action in the same sorts of ways, such that participants could belong to a supportive community rather than acting more alone. Knowing how to recruit people to action and engagement in pro-environmental behaviour seems to be a major, enduring problem in the field of sustainable development, and this study does not have much to add to a solution to this problem. Therefore, I wish to repeat that recruiting more new people to actual engagement in sustainable behaviours – rather than merely valuing these in theory – is a concern meriting further research, and that this problem is not only an issue for sustainable development, but also for supporting those individuals who are already engaged in sustainable practices, so that they are not acting alone and are facilitated by a context of practically supportive community.

Further Reading

The thesis summarized in this executive summary, entitled *Inner Sustainability: Exploring experiences of needs, satisfaction, and frustration in sustainable lifestyle practices*, may be accessed from UVicSpace through the University of Victoria’s library website.

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