An Exploration of the Next Generation of Sustainability Leadership:

A Case Study of Current Youth Sustainability Leaders (YSL)

by

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carry the torch for a small walk in this life, and then to fully pass it over to them with the hope that we have instilled in them the sense to be strong, wise and courageous. They are the cutting edge of our dreams and prayers for a sane and just world. It is with them, that I remain hopeful for the continuation of all species on this planet.

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Though my mother is gone over 10 years now, I hold her lovely in my thoughts. She always told me that I could grow up to be whoever and whatever I wanted. She never made me feel I have to live up to someone else’s standards or constructs. It was her gentle way of unconditionally loving me, which gave me the heart and courage to find pivotal ways to heal this planet. She is sorely missed but her spirit and her kindness will always run through my veins. This thesis is lovingly dedicated to her.

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ABSTRACT

As evidence that we are surpassing the earth’s limited capacity to support life, this is a call to institutions of higher education, corporations and organizations, to join efforts to educate the youth about environmental concerns and especially environmental leadership. We stand to lose too much, but we are also positioned to save a lot of valuable life still left on this planet should we choose to engage the next generation into stepping into positions of power. Ultimately we are in a race against time, yet ironically it is a race against ourselves. We must find and implement the mechanisms that make civilizations strong yet responsible and wise. To do that, we can create a new generation of leaders with different values, concerns and skills.

My research explores two basic questions: What are the foundations/characteristics of youth sustainability leaders? And how does one create more of them?

I researched what it meant to be a leader in higher education and business. And I found that these leaders have special skills and qualities. A study of 73 profit and nonprofit organizations say that sustainability leaders are eco-centric, have strong self-transcendence, are motivated to promote the welfare of others and nature, and that they have a high level of openness to change which is a strong indicator of innovation. In the academic setting, based on a study of 18 colleges, the data shows that on each campus ONE person started the chain of events to sustainability. People are not equal. One leader can in fact make a big difference.

In my interviews with successful youth sustainability leaders, I asked them what the
commonalities of sustainability leadership are, they said—this type of leadership has a strong moral and ethical code, one has a deep respect and compassion for others and nature, the leader is exceptional at creating trust/bonding and the leader leads based on cooperation.

Warren Bennis is referenced in the thesis, one of the leading authorities on good leadership, guiding us on key principles or pillars of a leader, such as leaders learn throughout their entire life, and leaders master the context they are in. In scope I covered a lot of ground. I hope in the end you will agree that we indeed need to create more leaders. For leaders are made and not born, according to Bennis.

So if we are to succeed at sustainability we have to create the sustainability leaders that will create that change..

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I. Introduction

This exploration has two parts. Predominately my research will be an exploration into the next generation of leaders, hoping to add to the research on youth sustainability leadership. This will be a qualitative research project into the minds and the hearts of the next generation of youth to see why they are showing up, what do they intend to do, and what characteristics do they have that makes them empowered? The ultimate goal, the bottom-line, is to find how to generate more valuable youth like them. Secondly, after I have explored what other leaders are doing to change the world, I will explore my own personal contribution- how I have had a hand in the changing of the trajectory of our collective future.

First I will review the literature that covers the area of sustainability leadership in academic and business settings. Leaders involved in the area of supporting eco-friendly initiative, or implementing sustainability projects in an institutional setting, do contain overarching characteristics. Leaders working at companies supporting eco-friendly initiatives, score high in areas of transcendence which corresponds with the values of benevolence and universalism. These types of leaders were also very motivated to support and promote the welfare of others and of nature. These leaders were extremely open to change. Likewise, leaders that were involved in an institutional setting, focus on making changes in the area of sustainability, had an astute ability to learn quickly in dynamic situations; they had the capacity to bring people together in a ways that change could be concocted in a safe and moderated environment. Creating this safe vessel to formulate change was ranked as the leaders most beneficial skill. When change happened in an institutional setting, it was usually started by one person, with later on gaining (crucial) support from the upper levels of administration. This person was most successful when
enlisting troops from all levels and sectors of the institution.

II. Literature Review:

Part 1 – Introduction, State of the World, Roles and Responsibilities of Colleges

Roles and Responsibilities of Colleges and Universities

Sustainability has finally made it on the radar of most campuses. This commitment and interest from colleges and university can be seen by the hundreds of worldwide schools that have pledged themselves to make difference. They have signed – the Talloires Declaration, Swansea Declaration, Copemicus Charter, Lindberg declaration, and the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. As well, a lot of organizations that support sustainability initiatives at colleges have popped into existence as well, such as the Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future (ULSF) and the Association for the Advance of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). When one takes a preview of what colleges are doing to make a difference the list looks something like this: starting (or expanding) sustainability research programs, integrating sustainability throughout the curriculum, adopting sustainable operations, and building green facilities. These colleges are serving as living laboratories and role models for sustainability practices. And with hope, the literature references other times when colleges and universities played a large role for social change on our planet, in the case of diversity movement and the service learning movements. These movement were monumental from any angle but through the lense of the college community, they were significant, systematic and pervasive, requiring all levels of the institution to get on board, and that is what we need now with the sustainability movement.
Committed to sustainability is a big responsibility for colleges but that responsibility is not all uphill; it does come with advantages. There are lots of benefits to be gained by being a sustainable college, such as better relationships with the community, attracting students that increasingly want exposure to sustainability, access to government funding allocated for sustainability initiatives, energy conservation and waste reduction that leads to cost savings, philanthropic donors, and increased employment prospects for students because employers now look for the skill set of sustainability knowledge in their repertoire.

The downside of taking on sustainability is that it is a colossal task undertaking; it has aspects that are intangible, complex and at times can completely often overwhelm us. It can take huge doses of capital in order to get that long-term efficiency the college is looking for. But for now, on that journey, most campuses have made an effort to grab at the low hanging fruit that will lead to small and incremental progress. These initial “sustainability starts” on campus tend to be piecemeal, but that is fine, as long as something gets the ball rolling. But for those of us who have the ball rolling, we need our future efforts need to be stronger, coordinated, comprehensive and institutionalized. And there are other psycho-social challenges, such as getting the behavior and attitude of every single person within the institution, (including the faculty, staff and the students) to be operating with a sustainability mindset. Ultimately, whatever transformations we make for sustainability at the college, they have to alter the culture of the institution by changing the underlying assumptions and behaviors, processes and structures. The sustainability movement can not be a quick fix; it has to be a long-term, never to look back, systematic change. It's going to require skilled leadership, internal support, lots of buy-in, resources of time and money, and a well-coordinated communication process. This might feel
like raising the Phoenix, with all its complexity and enormity, but is laced and loaded, layer after layer, with deep purpose and meaning.

And thank goodness, it has all those perks because as McNamara (2008) points out, once you start looking closely at the barriers of infusing sustainability into the college, the troublesome list gets long, fast. To name a few:

- No easy answers to complex and controversial sustainability issues
- The answers that do exist can be controversial and complex
- The scientific validity of some of the issues is still being debated
- Most of the faculty members don’t have the knowledge necessary to teach their students about sustainability and they are ready burdened down with their own course material
- The technical personnel on campus are not trained or equipped to initiate or develop innovative technologies and techniques
- Financial budgets are already experiencing excessive strain

At least after the long list of “yikes!” McNamara remains hopeful because “the number of books and articles (about sustainability) written after 2000 is more than twice in the 1990s. This trend represents a hopeful and helpful development.” (McNamara, 2008, p.20) She notes though,
that most of those books are related to sustainability in business and not sustainability in higher education.

So what does the overall list of bare essentials look like for a college hoping to go green? Calder and Clugston (2003) give this list of essential elements of sustainability colleges and universities:

- **Curriculum** – issues of sustainability are incorporated into courses in a wide range of disciplines, with the intent of fostering interdisciplinary thinking and problem-solving skills
- **Research** – sustainability-oriented research is a major research and scholarly focus; initiatives are underway to bring social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences together into the research dimension
- **Faculty and staff development and rewards** – faculty and staff are encouraged to engage in sustainability-focused professional development and are rewarded for their scholarly and practical problem-solving contributions
- **Operations** – campuses are redesigning their operations based on eco-efficiency, waste reduction, and recycling, and supporting transportation initiatives that encourage mass transit, carpooling, bicycling, and alternative fuel vehicles
- **Student opportunities** – students are engaged in sustainability issues through curriculum, campus projects, and community outreach,
- **Outreach and service** – colleges and universities connect with their surrounding communities through student internships and service learning projects, offer on-campus
programs for community members and participate in project partnerships with businesses, governmental and nongovernmental agencies

- Institutional mission, structure, and planning – a commitment to sustainability is part of the stated mission, principles and policies of colleges and universities in sustainability initiatives are dressed in strategic and master plans

(See McNamara, 2008, p. 31)

From my perspective sustainability extends far beyond the university itself, and most researchers, if not all, will agree with this. At its most basic level, sustainability is about social change. Certainly sustainability could be picked apart in many ways, but this is the way that I'm picking it apart. According to Milbrath (1995) some of the deeply entrenched barriers towards sustainability are coming from deficits in societal knowledge, information, and consciousness. He says that we have faulty thinking processes and incorrect premises about the world; that the cultural structures that make up our belief systems think sustainability is not a priority. For Americans, we have dibs on the psychological investment of the status quo, and that is dangerously threatened by moving to a different mindset, especially one where individuality inst the golden chalice. Milbrath believes that the nature of this problem is not technical as much as it is a relearning- our thought processes, our value structures, our behavior patterns, and our institutional arrangements. He comments that with the intensity and complexity changing to a new primary mindset, people react with denial, apathy, and paralysis. They feel like the issue is too big to deal with and trying to change it is hopeless; so people see no point in trying. Milbrath interests in the overlay of value structures, leadership, and sustainability, relates directly to the work that I've been trying to do at the college with the leadership workshops. My leadership
workshops deal with helping people find themselves- their passions and strengths, their values, finding their highest calling and then teaching them how to get out the world and do something of service with that new knowledge. This also overlaps with my hope for the college to teach life skills, or good citizenship, which we now have as a course called success 101; I will be integrating the sustainability module into the course.

Part 2- Introduction to Sustainability Theory as it Relates to Changing the Current Paradigm

Throughout the last two decades there has been two theoretical approaches used on how to make sense of creating a sustainability movement at colleges and universities. The two approaches are leadership and strategy. Strategy theory and leadership theory do seem to intertwine, but overall, they each provide a lens for understanding how change in the system can be created. Part 3 and 4 will go into the theory in more detail.

Part 3 – Strategy Theory

A change model for the strategy theory was created by Doppelt (2003). This model specifically addresses the implementation of how to organize a sustainability initiative. The steps of the model are:

Step 1- Change the dominant mindset through the imperative of achieving sustainability

Step 2- Organized deep, wide and powerful sustainability teams

Step 3- Craft an ideal vision and guiding principles of sustainability
Step 4- Tiresomely communicate the need, vision, and strategies for achieving sustainability

Step 5- Restructure the rules of engagement of the system by adopting source-based strategies

Step 6- Correct feedback loops of the system by encouraging and rewarding learning and innovation

Step 7- Align systems and structures with sustainability

Step 8- Aligned governance and sustainability

(See McNamara, 2008, p. 6-7)

Strategy theory is not the focus point of this research, but I will include it so one can reference what other types of lenses can be used when trying to create sustainability. The predominant lens of this paper is leadership theory but strategy theory is certainly another way to look at how groups create change in institutions. Two models that utilize strategy theory are the Kotter Model and the Doppelt Model. The Kotter Model (1996) describes a general change management process while the Doppelt Model is a change management process directly related to sustainability efforts.
Here is an outline of the two models we just discussed:

Table 1: Comparison of Kotter & Doppelt Change Management Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kotter’s Model</th>
<th>Doppelt’s Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish a sense of urgency</td>
<td>Change the dominant mind-set through the imperative of achieving sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create the guiding coalition</td>
<td>Organize deep, wide and powerful sustainability teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a vision and strategy</td>
<td>Craft an ideal vision and guiding principles of sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate the change vision</td>
<td>Tirelessly communicate the need, vision, and strategies for achieving sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empower employees for broad-based action</td>
<td>Restructure the rules of engagement of the system by adopting source-based strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generate short-term wins</td>
<td>Correct feedback loops of system by encouraging and rewarding learning and innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidate gains and produce more Change</td>
<td>Align systems and structures with sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anchor new approaches in the culture</td>
<td>Align governance with sustainability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(see McNamara, 2008, p. 60)

The first step in the change process is to get the stakeholders to see that the initiative is valuable. The research suggests that you could use two perspectives – threat or opportunity. Threats to the organization could be things like lawsuits, impact of wastes or toxic products, fines from environmental regulators, or loss of students because they seek more progress or cutting-edge institutions. The opportunity perspective could include- increase revenues, tuition grants from these initiatives, decreased utility/resource/production costs, reduced risk, and a greater ability to attract and retain students/employees. The opportunity case could be framed as "The sustainability advantage."
The second step is to put together the right combination of leaders. Dopplet (2003) refers to this as his sustainability team and Kotter (1996) calls this the "guiding coalition."

This third step is to create a vision which will be the ideal state the organization wants to achieve. Both Dopplet and Kotter believe this vision should give people motivation, direction, a framework for pulling on followers, and in essence be a sort of map. It's advised that the vision be more positive than negative – building on hopes and benefits, rather than risk and despair.

Step four is to constantly and clearly communicate the benefits of this vision to the organization. Doppelt (2003) says that key characteristics of this message should be – carefully framed in an appealing way to the audience, uses catchy symbols and slogans, encourages communication, and appears transparent and honest.

Step five is empowerment. To create empowerment there should be a fostering teams, meaningful work, information available and encouraging participation; people need to be encouraged to get involved and to help them get past barriers and obstacles (such as lack of skills, inadequate information, inadequate personnel, resistance supervisors, and a limiting organizational structure). This research particularly points to changing operational strategies because that will change the way that information is shared and gathered, and how decisions are made, and how wealth will be distributed; it would ultimately change the power and authority structure of the system which has the potential to provide your organization with great benefits.
Step six is generating short-term wins. These wins serve the following purpose:

- Provide evidence that the sacrifices are worth it
- Reward change agents with a pat on the back
- Help fine-tune vision and strategies
- Undermine cynics and self-serving resistors
- Keep bosses on board
- Build momentum

(Kotter, 1996, p. 123)

Dopplet (2003) for step six emphasizes the need to build a learning organization that contains feedback loops that encourage learning and innovation. This feedback loop pushes the entire organization to become better thinkers, planners, which leads to high quality projects and top-notch outcomes.

Step seven is centered on building momentum. At this point all systems should be aligned with the sustainability initiative – procedures, policies, structures. The research says that there needs to be a push past the plateaus that usually occur. Everything about the organization needs to become a consistent and reinforcing construct for sustainability. Last step, is to anchor sustainability in the organization's culture. This would mean that people's views have been permanently altered. The research suggests that this could be done through possibly changing
key people in organization, through a lot of talk and through aligning the organizational
governance was sustainability.

**Part 4- Leadership Theory**

In this section, my intention is just to review general leadership theory, some of the material directly pertains to the work I've been doing and some of it is more peripheral but examining the overall perspectives and the logic behind those perspectives are helpful to me understanding how leadership creates change. This section will be one of the larger pieces of my literature review because leadership is my primary lense of inquiry.

I think Viederman says it best when he, briefly but bluntly, talks about the necessity (and definition of) leaders in our society today (See Forrant & Silka, 2006):

Higher education plays a role in shaping the vision and practice of a sustainable society for better or worse. It has a responsibility and obligation for the better. Its graduates will be leaders of countries, corporations, religious institutions, art thought, science, engineering – people of power. They will be citizens, great and small, asked to participate in decision-making for the Commonwealth. Its faculty will have access to the halls of power and will be called upon by society for assistance.

Sustainability change efforts are so complex and unique, and of such magnitude, it has been suggested that these efforts require a special kind of leadership. An Environmental Leadership Model was created by Berry and Gordon (1993). They defined the model as the
ability of an individual or cohort to guide positive change in the direction of a vision for a sustainable future. For the environment, the leadership model looks like a promising approach to change; it is an open, visible, and participatory approach; stressing cooperation, communication, and learning to develop sustainability practices.

This model works on giving an essential role to all members of the community which is important because to integrate sustainability across the campus requires a collaborative, interdisciplinary and communitywide effort. No single superhero could possibly manage all that territory. Leaders approaches the sustainability effort as a learning community, giving meaningful engagement to all its constituents, and identifying where the problems are then helping the community develop solutions for transformation. For instance faculty members can learn about the impacts of sustainability related to their field of specialty and try to figure out ways of integrating these issues and potential solutions into their curriculum. They can give students opportunities to explore and experience sustainability practices at home and on campus and help them become motivated to make these changes. Staff members are needed to adopt sustainable practices as they relate to operations in purchasing; and encourage them to invest in financial and organizational resources that will lead to sustainability. Outside community members such as business is government's and community members can partner with the college to provide input and learning opportunities. This model is an inclusive approach. But to clarify, this model deals more with group leadership, versus individual leadership.

Orr sees the necessity for leadership in how students learn about the environment. He thinks that we need to make a cohort of leaders for the long haul who can see long-range
solutions to our problems and he believes that giving students ecological literacy is the path to creating these leaders. Orr is not the only one to stress that our young leaders need environmental literacy. Many researchers advocate that the next generation needs environmental literacy because we will need them to understand why sustainability is important. These students will need to develop an awareness of the environment and be able to observe the stresses we put on environment. Some researchers went as far to say that it should be added to the list of competencies that college graduates are expected to master. The outcomes of environmental literacy would include: learning ecology and local natural history, connecting the dots between our personal daily routines and global political issues, being able to understand global climate change and how that affects biodiversity, species loss and habitat transformation, exploring the biosphere, and (and I stress this) contemplating the purpose and meaning of human action.

We need leaders that will have the task of taking us to a more sustainable tomorrow. These leaders will be face with difficult issues are large in scale and complexity, so it would be good to identify the broad range of abilities we will need from these leaders. This list is offered by Cortese, 2003. (see McNamara, 2008, P.27):

- Design technology and economic activities that sustain rather than degrade the natural environment and enhance human health and well-being
- Stabilized the human population level but increasing education and the social and economic status of women worldwide
- Develop timely and accurate economic and ecological indicators that signal the true well-being of society and the earth
• Provide the opportunity for all current and future generations to pursue meaningful work and live healthy and decent lives
• Build strong and culturally diverse communities that collaboratively participate with government

The Perrin Law says that "no college or university can move toward sustainability without the active support of at least two senior administrators." At some colleges the leaders controlled the political and financial resources which lead to the crucial flip to creating sustainability on campus. Colleges do not run like businesses, they are much more decentralized; there's more of a shared responsibility and joint effort with weight shifting to specific groups depending what the issues are under discussion. Success of the sustainability initiative is very dependent on having diverse stakeholders and support of top leaders, coordinating with them to create a spark on campus.

*Initiating change - through observing case studies, this is how change happens on campus:*

Barlett & Chase’s (2004) studied 18 different colleges regarding their sustainability initiatives from a leadership framework and discovered that sustainability initiatives were started by one individual on-campus – a leader. It appears without a leader the campus sustainability movement will not attract the resources and the support it needs to succeed. They found that these leaders came from all areas of the college, faculty from humanities, social sciences and natural sciences and students from a variety of student government positions, clubs, and programs. In some of the cases they reviewed the leader had been asked to develop a class,
attend a meeting, organized a task force, but in most of the cases the sustainability initiative that that leader took on was not part of their job description; as you follow the case, that one leader initiated getting the other people on board to join forces and was able to spark interest in other parts of the college. Once these informal groups formed, the initial event got supported by an educational program and at that point, progress became very rapid. Next the group inserted assessment activities and awareness activities into that program. Since this group was not comprised of sustainability experts they had to invest a lot of time and energy and becoming aware of current policies, procedures, how to take action, and gathering facts. After a while, they were able to develop some guiding principles in a variety of forms such as guidelines, performance standards, goals and mission statements, and in several this case studies those guiding principles were then adopted by the institution.

From their case studies, Barlett & Chase (2004) were able to gather some important lessons. They found that personal relationships were crucial and that trust was the underpinning in being able to create change. Another thing they learned was that the success of the initiative was not based on the number of people involved in the project or their position, but that it was based on the fact that leadership emerges from many different places. They also learned that the best leadership structure was relatively flat and fluid because people would leave projects and new people would join projects, hence the leadership would not stay fixed, and people were needed to move in and out of roles as necessitated by the projects. They found that there was not, once the process got rolling, one leader, but instead it was a group of leaders; meaning they led as an entire group. And these groups were composed of a variety of partnerships ranging from research teams to ad hoc committees to faculty and administrators, to students and community
members. It was noted that diverse representation allocates greater ambition and creativity when tackling sustainability problems. The diversity allows for different forms of knowledge to be brought to the table and lots of eyes to see this system for the first time, adding helpful perspectives. These groups had an easier time overcoming barriers when they had "an angel in administration." The best techniques when dealing with people seem to be to use persistence instead of insistence; other techniques that had the best results were acknowledging individual efforts, listening to concerns, demonstrating respect, using effective interpersonal communication skills, relationship building. Orr says that the only difference between success and failure is a refusal to fail in the face of huge odds – which is more a matter of will than of intellect.

*The Characteristics of Environmental Problems Calls Forth a Special Type of Leader:*

Researchers looking at case studies, find that the characteristics of environmental problems may call forth a special kind of leadership. Specific characteristics of these environmental problems contain elements such as: a need to integrate a wide variety of knowledge, a vast array of human attitudes and concerns, an emotionally charged context and long wait times till solutions. In the cohort they way they usually solve this problem is unique also, usually consisting of volunteers, part-timers, and amateurs, in loosely structured organizations. The framework is also scattered with there always being shift in priorities and activities, and operating within a variety of contexts. Because the traditional role of the leadership model focuses on adversarial principles, short term solutions and competitive strategies. Berry & Gordon, 1993, propose that environmental leadership uses very different
approaches based on these unique characteristics of environmental problems. (Berry & Gordon, 1993)

Characteristics of Leaders Who Work for Organizations with Environmental Initiatives:

This section will cover the characteristics of leaders that work for profit and nonprofit organizations that support environmental initiatives. Egri and Herman, 2000, interviewed 73 leaders of these types of organizations and found some common characteristics and values amongst the leaders. These leaders tend to be more eco-centric than the typical managers of standard profit and nonprofit organizations. Interestingly, they also found that these leaders were strong and self-transcendence, which is a characteristic that corresponds with the values of universalism and the benevolence. These leaders were motivated to promote the welfare of others and of nature. They had an extremely high level of openness to change, which is an indicator of a person motivated to pursue innovation.

Andersson and Bateman (2000) coined the term “championing” to identify specific individuals who through organizational roles or personal activism made an attempt to introduce or create change in a process, a product, or a message within an organization. These champions engage in three general behaviors – identifying, packaging, and selling. Identifications of the issues included behaviors such as – adopting, seeking out, generating, defined in, creating, and recognizing ideas and issues. Identification of the issues overall, resulted from a process of internal and external environmental observations. Packaging refers to the way in which sustainability issues are framed, for instance they can be framed as an opportunity or threat. Therefore packaging can create and enhance meaning and further emphasize the importance of
the urgency of the issue. Packaging is highly dependent on effective presentation style. Selling refers to influencing behavior change through various tactics such as rational persuasion, coalition building, consultation and inspirational appeals.

Researchers noted that the champions of sustainability were most effective in Getting attention and commitment when they presented their case using a formal business language, a logical approach, and frame the issues as financial opportunities, rather than using a dramatic appeal. Note that most of the research comes from the business sector, and not the educational sector. So to move this forward, let's now specifically look at research from the educational sector on sustainability leaders. The research of Corcoran and Wals, 2004, surmise that sustainability leaders in higher education are respected individuals because of how they conduct their existing roles and how they have historically undertaken previous campus initiatives. These leaders, utilize a number of the championing skills mentioned earlier but they also have a keen ability to keep the more radical sustainability advocates enlisted in their initiatives while also involving the help of a wide range of key people around campus. (Corcoran and Wals, 2004)

Heifetz (1994) also talks about special characteristics of these institutional sustainability leaders. He notes that these leaders have astute learning strategies that enhance their capacity to learn in difficult and complex situations that require adaptive work. He notes that leaders must challenge others to face these problems which have no painless, simple solution. He further goes on to say that the most valuable task of this leadership is to assist others in developing their learning capacity, helping them learn how to learn. So the champion leader provides space, the holding tank, the vessel, in which the crisis, the problems, the developmental steps occur. The
leader is providing protection and guidance and is regulating the stress generated by the environment. Sustainability leaders pledged to the premise that "learning as a Way of being." It is simply an ongoing process of job. In real time, these leaders are skilled at learning their way through the situation. These people can effectively and accurately experiment, and learning quickly from feedback. They've developed the ability and willingness to take risk, and by necessity, they also need to learn to enjoy the learning process because that is the "keys to the car." Leaders have a special skill for applying the learning approach to all aspects of the field, such as, and relational components, technical components, and relational components. They have a knack for being able to create dynamic groups and getting to know the individuals in them. They can keep abreast of rapidly changing technology and the ongoing changing mission statements/vision/strategies/objectives of the whole organization for the sustainability movement.

Even though leadership and well-being/values are my area of interest for sustainability, some research shows that there's not a strong correlation on that factor for change. Let me explain. Shriberg’s paper Sustainability in US Higher Education: Organizational Factors Influencing Campus Environmental Performance and Leadership looked at the variety of factors that affected the chances for success of sustainability initiatives. He did not find a strong correlation between the success of the initiatives and transformational leadership qualities, what he did find was that the positive relationships between potential change agents and allies within the organization or a major driver for campus sustainability.
Part 5- Personal Development on How to Become a Leader – Warren Bennis Does a Case Study that Becomes a Classic Book on Leadership.

The previous theory covered a lot on the special characteristics of leading groups and leaders, but there had to be some processing that individual did, at some point, to become clear on what they value. I believe Bennis has a good handle on what that process is. It is an interior shift. It is about finding what is true to one self, and then being will to stand in it.

So this section is about Warren Bennis’s amazing work. He has often been referred as the "leading authority on leadership" particularly by the Financial Times, the Economist and Business week. In his classic book, On Becoming a Leader, he writes:

My paradigm, then, is leaders, not theories about leaders, and leaders functioning in the real world, rather than in some artificial setting. I deliberately chose people who were not only accomplished, but multitalented: a writer who's the CEO, a scientist who heads the foundation, a lawyer who served in the cabinet, the young man is on his third career. They are all people whose lives have made a difference – thoughtful, articulate, and reflective. (Bennis, 1989,p. xxxiii)

Bennis says that leadership is a lot like beauty; its hard to define but you know it when you see it. He says there are some basic pillars to leadership: 1. Leaders are made not born, 2. People who end up being leaders only want to express themselves; they're not out to prove themselves; 3. They continue to grow and develop throughout life, 4. They must master the
content they are in and then they must overcome it. Bennis says that leaders must recognize the context for what it is – "a breaker, not a maker; a trap, not a launching pad; an end, not a beginning – and declare your independence." I think this is particularly exciting for those of us stuck in this unsustainable world; we must be encouraged not to stay glued to this trap; this context. Bennis comments that people are just "mere products of their context, lacking the will to change, to develop their potential. I also believe, however, that everyone, of whatever age and circumstance, is capable of self-transformation. Becoming the kind of person who's a leader is the ultimate act of free will…"

When Bennis speaks of leadership, he does not mean running your own Corporation, owning your own business, or being a top hog of anything, he means being a leader from your own view of self. He notes that sometimes it's easier to be successful by being docile in our society versus being authentically true. To the outer world genuine achievement can be of value than simplistic success. Bennis says that basically becoming a leader is synonymous with becoming yourself; it’s that easy and it's that hard. Bennis says, "I cannot stress too much the need for self invention. To be authentic is literally to be your own author (the words derived from the same Greek root), to discover your own native energies and desires, and find your own way of acting on them. When you've done that, you're not existing simply in order to live up to an image posited by the culture are by some authority or by a family tradition. When you write your own life, then no matter what happens, you have played the game that was natural for you to play… To become the leader, then, you must become yourself; become the maker of your own life." (Bennis, P.47)
One of the men that Bennis interviewed in his book was Norman Lear, an extremely successful long-term television producer. Norman Lear's advice to overcome context is: 1. Become expressive, 2. Listen to our inner voice, 3. Learn from the right mentors, and 4. Give yourself over to a guiding vision. Norman Lear discusses how when he was in high school he was highly influenced by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Lear says that leaders have an enormously strong inner voice and that idea really “clicked” for him, after he read the essay “Self-Reliance.” Lear recalls that powerful moment:

Emerson talks about listening to that inner voice and going with that, against all voices to the contrary. I don't know when I started to understand that there was something divine about that inner voice… To go with that – which I confess I don't do all the time – is the purest, truest thing we have. And when we forgot all our own thoughts and opinions, they end up coming back to us from the mouth of others. They come back with alien majesty… So the lesson is, you believe it. When I've been most effective, I've listen to that inner voice. (Bennis, 1989, p. 29)

Bennis’s interview with Norman Lear is very powerful and potent. Norman Lear advises us, "first and foremost, find out what it is you're about, and be that. Be what you are, don't lose it… It's very hard to be who we are, because it doesn't seem to be what anyone wants." But as successful people like Norman Lear have shown, it is the only way to launch. Leaders challenge and conquer the context and change it in a fundamental way but in order to do that one must refuse to be deployed by others; one must choose to deploy themself. What this says to me in terms of the work that I do: Are those of us on the environmental front seeing a better paradigm
must hear our own call; we must trust it, even though it is so different than the prevailing paradigm.

The pioneering psychologist William James also speaks about the importance of this inner voice, "I've often thought that the best way to divine a man's character is to seek out the particular mental or moral attitude in which, when they came upon him, he felt himself most deeply and intensely active and alive. At such moments, there is a voice inside which speaks and says, ‘this is the real me.’ “Leaders must cultivate their authentic self, which is one way to become a leader.

Bennis points out other characteristics of leaders, such as – integrity, speaking valuable truth no matter how hard that truth is to hear, creative collaboration, the ability to rally others, being an excellent speaker, they are excellent coaches, they know how to recognize the correct choices, they have contagious optimism, they know how to bring out the best in others, a strong gauge for fairness, they know to facilitate communication intermediate complex, they have an art for creating shared meaning, they can persuade others to follow their vision, extremely strong adaptive capacity, can act quickly and appropriately, know how to seize opportunities, they are endowed with empathy, and they create trust by genuine authenticity and integrity. They had a distinctive voice – it's a composite of a couple things – such as purpose, self-confidence, and a whole collage of things called emotional intelligence.
Not always true, but a lot of times leaders are often created after a crucible, which is some extremely stressful right of passage. Some people examples of people that became leaders this way is- Gandhi, Churchhill, Mandela, and FDR. For instance, the crucible for Mandela was all those years he spent in prison. That experience cut the wheat away from the chaff. Leaders emerge from situations like this stronger and unbroken. Paradoxically the cruel iron hand of fate, for these people, creates an individual that is more optimistic, more open to experience, and is not engulfed in bitterness and, amazingly, remains hopeful. I think this especially pertains to us because we are headed for increasingly difficult times. The world is getting destroyed at an extraordinary rate, food is becoming scarce, water is becoming scarce, lines of justice are being crossed because of these scarcities, the weather is erratic and causing difficulties, and the trajectory of our future is going to be a lot more of the same insanity but in bigger and stronger doses. We are, I believe, in our current location, on target to enter the crucible so I see this information as extremely relevant, and more importantly, extremely hopeful. We need leaders, in masse, and if difficulty will create them, so be it.

This idea can be clarified by using Abigail Adams words. Abigail Adams wrote a letter to Quincy Adams in 1718, that hard times are the crucible in which character and leadership are formed. She says, "It is not in the still calm of life or the repose of the Pacific station that great characters are formed. The habits of the vigorous mind are formed in contending with difficulty. Great necessities call out great virtues." Abigail Adams did say that great suffering often engenders great leadership, but she also said it doesn't guarantee it.
Bennis points out that the take-home question for leaders is that our current context is fueled by intellectual capital. It's no longer the assets of buildings and equipment is in the industrial age. Our current economy is fueled by services and ideas. The power of a leader will follow ideas and not position because ideas, really good ideas, are the trump card in today’s world. Steve Jobs is an excellent example of this.

Bennis gives questions throughout his books that he feels will help access your own authentic leadership potential. Questions such as –

• What do you believe are the qualities of leadership?
• What experiences were vital to your development?
• What with the turning points in your life?
• How do you learn?
• Are there people in your life, or in general, whom you particularly admire?

References:


III. Research and Method

For obtaining data for my research, I used 2 routes. First, I wanted to explore the thought processes of current successful youth sustainability leaders. I approached getting data for that piece by interviewing youth sustainability leaders with open ended questions to see where the discussion might lead. The results of those conversations are in the body of this paper.
IV. Body

Question 1- What are the characteristics of YSL?

The interviewees concluded that sustainability leadership contained a variety of characteristics such as – compassion, caring, a belief that there was a better way to live and run society, vision oriented, strong ability to communicate, a relentless sense of responsibility and accountability, determination and motivation, acceptance of environmental problems in conjunction with the willingness to analyze and solve those problems, a sense of ethics, a talent and willingness to educate other people, a deep sense of passion for the cause, ability to grow and learn, capacity to walk the talk in daily life activities, a drive for meaning in one's life, an openness to adventure, ability and courage to deal with an older generation and with a power hierarchy, kindness, and the ability to see the data/feedback in terms of sustainability issues.

Camille Davis emphatically stated that the YSL generation knows that there's a problem. Unlike other generations that ignored these environmental issues. "Everybody knows there's an environmental problem. We now admit it. We are accepting the problem and not ignoring it." Emma Pliskin articulated about how to communicate to people as a YSL. She felt that a leader needed to approach the conversation (with the person you are trying to change) with a lot of knowledge and research so that one could evolve the person’s environmental arguments. She states, "You need to have the knowledge and research, the counter arguments and rebuttals. You need to know what you are talking about." On the other hand Gowri Varanashi felt that if a leader was lacking the knowledge, not to get disenchanted with the situation, that part of the process in being a leader was constantly evolving one's knowledge and skill base, that being on
the cutting edge of sustainability comes with a lot of learning if a young leader could deal with the discomfort of hanging in to solve the issue at hand.

YSL have the responsibility to “walk the talk” meaning that they live their lives with sustainability rituals as well as trying to push sustainability forward for society, for instance – they would carpool, use a reusable water bottle, buy secondhand clothes, grow their own food, support ethical businesses, work on self-growth such as yoga, and use reusable shopping bags. YSL conducted their lives in a way that was concordant with their belief system on how society should be operating in a conscious, low impact, and future minded way. All YSL’s felt that passion was a crucial aspect to being a leader; many followed this thought with stating they also felt a strong sense of responsibility to take action for their passion. So there seem to be a feeling that to be a leader in this field you have to be knowledgeable (or the willingness to become knowledgeable) and a strong orientation towards action. Quite a few of the interviewees stressed that leaders are very action oriented, even if things aren’t perfect, you just need to stick your neck out.

In contrast to other types of leadership, these sustainability leaders definitely felt a sense of urgency in what they were trying to accomplish, such as saving the rain forest or indigenous cultures. These leaders didn't feel like there was much of a buffer left with what they were trying to do. Like it is “now or never”, making what they were trying to achieve of utmost importance. The “direness” of the goal was repetitive in many of the interviews. Also in contrast to other type of leaders, YSL felt that it was very important to be confident when dealing with adults (people who contain the power to make changes) and not get intimidated. So standing up to
authority, being confident in this respect, was deemed as a crucial aspect of YSL. The interviewees stressed that you have to have determination learning how to do deal with adults who "don't get it."

YSL are more open and responsive to the accumulation of environmental data. There was a sense that today's youth leaders have the advantage of accumulated research that's been happening over the years and was joined with their willingness to learn and understand it. When approached with this data, they have the willingness and capacity to take action on behalf of correcting the situation. When interviewing the YSL characteristics of emotional intelligence were common. Even though these are considered “softer skills”, YSL seemed to be highly adept at the ability to express kindness, compassion, passion, and empathy.

**Question 2- Is YSL different today than it was in the past?**

Most of the YSL felt that youth leadership is different today than it was in the past. Only one interviewee Sarah Davis, the youngest of the group, a sophomore in high school, didn't know if there was a difference. Some of the overarching themes on why YSL thought there was a difference was- because of the influence of technology, core paradigm shift, no buffer left, relationship to “the system” and the evolving history of the environment movement.

Gowri Varanashi, Camille Davis, Emma Pliskin and Victoria Pan all agree that lately more people were stepping up to the plate to create a sustainable world. In the conversations, repeatedly there was mention of accessibility to information due technology such as being able to
Google on the Internet, twitter and Facebook. Because of technology, mass action could be formed quickly and efficiently, such as creating an event invite on Facebook, and then all those initially invited people, inviting their friends, makes action grow exponentially. That is very powerful since there are only 6 degrees of freedom between everyone on this planet. The interviewees felt like there is more of a "reality check" lately with people realizing that action needs to be taken now, and this may be an offshoot of the large accessibility of information regarding environmental issues now available due to Internet technology. Camille Davis says, "Yes in part that has to do with the fact that youth sustainability leaders are more informed about the scientific information and about how they can engage in the activities. A lot of this is also due to technology; we can respond quicker and engage on a mass scale." Emma Pliskin comments that she feels the essential characteristics of leadership are the same, but the way those leaders now engage is different. Emma Pliskin says, “The mentality is the same. The mode in which we communicate is definitely different. There's a lot more use of social media and ways of learning information. In terms of sustainability there's been more awareness on the radar then there had been in the past. But there are also more ways to damage the planet these days as well. Do bigger and deeper damage. So it's a harder fight, but we have more ways in which we can fight.” The problems are getting bigger and bigger, but YSL’s ability and size to deal with these problems is also increasing rapidly. Thank goodness.

Many of the interviews such as Matt Smith and Emma Pliskin pointed to the fact that in the 60’s and early 70’s there was a very strong environmental movement, and that generation was paving the way for current YSL. The environmental movement back then didn’t have as much “history” and data to work with as ammunition as this generation of YSLs do. Also, the
tactics as to HOW one approaches the system is different. Matt Smith felt like in the past, people would get frustrated with the system, thinking it was broken, and then “escape” to living in communes, or being part of the fridge society. This current generation of leaders were not trying to escape the system, they are determined to CHANGE the system. Matt Smith says, “In this earlier time period people thought the system was broken so they lived outside of it as a counterculture such as back to the land movement, communes, the majority of people just went and did their own thing. So the difference is that this generation wants to change the system to avoid worst-case scenarios coming from competing crisis such as racial and social injustice, economic collapse, and environmental devastation. This generation understands the gravity of changing the system as a whole.” Current YSLs are engaging with politics on every level. Gowri Varanshi and Emma Pliskin stated that they were looking into policy and law as future careers. On the other hand, Eric Fuchs felt that people, in general, were a lot more involved years ago. That today people didn’t show up to help out and do the right thing, that people were latent with distractions such as TV, shopping, and video games. Because of these distractions and disinterest, Eric felt that YSL had to try very hard to get people motivated and inspired.

**Question 3- Is There a Difference in YSL verse other types of leaders?**

YSL felt that there were similarities between leaders, such as sense of vision for the future. In terms of differences, which was the focus of the question, YSL feedback ranged from comments such as- more transparency, strong ethics, ability to move society forward in a way that creates friction or discomfort, ability to build collaborative and mutually trusting
relationships, ability to get people to work together for the common good, networking skills, and strong personal development so you can deal with people you may not necessarily like. Interviewees felt that a sustainability leader followed a strong moral and ethical code, in general, whereas leaders in other fields might be pursuing their position of status for personal gain and ego stroking. It was pointed out that sustainability leaders have a strong sense of duty to whatever it is they are passionate about.

Some sustainability leaders may turn the general public off because they can be perceived as being super hippie or crunchy, whereas leaders (in general) may appear to look more mainstream. Some leaders may also be more welcomed by society because they are satisfying dreams society wants, such owning a robot or living in space. Whereas sustainability leaders, a lot of the times, are trying to bring about a future that may involve the general society needing to change their behaviors in a way that's not so convenient or comfortable, such as bringing reusable bags when shopping, dropping the convenience of water bottles, buying cars that are more efficient instead of gas guzzlers like a Suburban, reducing meat in one’s diet, reducing energy usage, and the list goes on. Sustainability leaders are modifying behaviors of the general public for the good of the community but it's not always fun, or glamorous, and it requires people to make choices that can involve sacrifices. Sustainability leaders are asking people to simplify in a media driven world where “big” and “more” is believed to be better. Plus as Emma Pliskin points out, people don't like to be told they're behaving incorrectly. Trying to find the correct way to get people to change is challenging. Emma advises us to avoid an accusing tone and find a way to make that message appeal to the general public.
According to the interviewees, sustainability is still on the fringe of society and what is at the center is a consumer, competitive and profit-based culture. Sustainability leaders understand the urgency of our current situation such as peak oil, peak food, exponentially growing population, and an exploited planet. YSL according to Matt Smith ranks very high with respect to awareness and compassion. He says that since most of the countries that are going to be affected by climate change aren't us, that you really have to have empathy for what's happening in other parts of the world. He says, “You can especially see that because the people that will suffer the worst from our current trajectory will be the underdeveloped countries, so people with strong compassion will acknowledge this in and try to make changes. We need to build mutually trusting and beneficial relationships with other people. In this culture being oppressive or aggressive is rewarded to some extent but was sustainability leaders need to create trust, bring people together and serve the public good.”

*Question 4- What advice would you give someone who wants to become a sustainability leader?*

The YSL’s felt that the top three sages of the cause would be to- have enormous passion for your cause, acquire the knowledge and ability to take action even when not completely sure or even if the path was fuzzy/unclear. Again and again, YSL’s stressed how important it was to just get out there and take the first step. Some other advice interviewees gave was to– know your topic, find a way to get involved, learn sustainability behaviors, and strengthen your ability to work in high tension situations.

Victoria Pan is the current president of the Ridgewood Environmental Club, SEA. She is quite an impressive young lady, having first met her at the Kennedy conference at BCC when she approached me (note- not the other way around), and after that point we began working
together. In addition to SEA, she created a group called Students Saving Energy. Victoria advice for how to become a sustainability leader was to encourage young people that they can make a difference, they just needed to take that extra step of implementing their idea. And she said that once you start that first thing, take that first step, a lot of times it spirals into other things. She recounted the story that once she got the program started at school to turn the lights off, other environmental opportunities to get involved started popping up. She stressed in the interview that she only started with a small idea but that small ideas are very important. We didn't need to save the world today; we just need to start with a small idea.

Sarah Davis, Camille Davis and Paul Rosolie felt that it was very important to get deeply knowledgeable about the topic one was advocating for. Paul says, “Learn about what's going on. Know your stuff about the issue you're working on. The reason a person becomes leader is that they prove they know what they're talking about. And then they take action. Do something. Anything.” Camille Davis says, “Get informed first. When I was 12 I knew there was a problem but I didn't really know much about the issues. So the first thing you want to do is to get better informed on the subject you are interested in; talk to people about the issue and then generate further action for the cause.” On the other hand Gowri Varanashi felt that potential leaders could get too obsessed with acquiring knowledge, and what was truly important was the passion for the cause. She felt it was counterproductive to be single heartedly focused on gaining knowledge, though she felt it was important; she stressed that it was more important to just get out there and do something and the learning will come in tandem. Gowri states, “Some people are very obsessed with gaining knowledge and that is important. But passion is more important and being willing to take a responsibility and show that you care even if you don't know a lot about the
issue. I see people give up because they don't feel like they know enough and that makes me sad because you just need to show up and be active. Any person can go very far. Yet they do need to learn information but that comes along with being active and caring and keeping in touch with leaders that are already leading so that you are aware of current events taking place which brings you into the circle. If you work hard in that circle you will become a leader.”

Emma Pliskin felt like if someone was inquiring about how to be a leader, they probably already were. Her answer to this question focused around how to get a person engaged. She gave many suggestions including getting involved in the club, researching public policy, starting a green forum or getting involved in a green business. For Matt Smith the key to being a leader was learning to deal with discomfort. He stated that a lot of people were going to question your actions and behaviors but a leader just had to be comfortable with tension to help other people grow. When mentioning discomfort, he also mentioned that whenever bumping heads with the status quo it is bound to get uncomfortable. He said that his leadership grew a lot when he accepted that being uncomfortable in tense situations was a mandatory part of being on the front lines.

*Question 5- What is the best part and worst part of being a YSL?*

The interviewees commented that some of the best parts of being a leader included- new opportunities, relationship building, concordant meaning, joy in contributing to the betterment of the planet, inspiring people, and working with people that have the same interests. They commented that some of the worst parts of being a leader included- no road map for being a
sustainability leader, people judge your actions, dealing with ignorance, fighting losing battles, overwhelming issues, and feeling like one should always be doing more.

A common thread that ran through almost all of the interviews was a sense high priority to interests and goals that are concordant with their highest values. YSL’s know what they are doing is “right.” Matt Smith comments that, “Knowing every day you're spending a day not just on your own personal agenda but on something that is selfless. That has value and it adds a new kind of joy to your life.” Paul Rosolie says, “You get to inspire people and make a difference.” Emma Pliskin says, “You get a great sense of satisfaction knowing you are behaving in a not harmful and beneficial way. It feels great to know were not damaging anything.”

There was also a great sense of appreciation for the type of people one met on this path. Interviewees considered these people “environmental soul mates” because they shared the same kind of concerns and stresses. These new companions often provided relief and condolences in a world that experiences a lot of environmental strife. For example, Gowri Varanashi states, “Nature gets ignored in a lot of other fields. A lot of times there's just a focus on people. But in this field you make friends with individuals who love nature and because of that I can form a strong connection with them. You're going through a lot of the same issues they are.” Matt Smith commented that, “The best part of being a leader is the joy of building relationships with other compassionate people and together we create positive change.” Victoria Pan says that one of the perks of being a leader “is the satisfaction and appreciation you get from the people you work with. You develop really strong relationships; that motivates me to keep doing what I do…. I think working with people with the same ideas and goals is the best part.”
Eric Fuchs commented that he really enjoys being a leader because he feels it applied to all areas of his life, from how and where he gets his food, to how he drives his car, and to how he interacts with people. And because it relates to all aspects of his life, he said that he could relate to people on any topic about the issue of sustainability. Yet on the other hand he commented that people really judge every little inch of what you’re doing. He said he was often asked what type of car he drives and how many shoes or shirts does he have? He felt like being a sustainability leader particularly puts one under the microscope. There are people that prefer to be judgmental to quickly to call foul instead of having to take responsibility for changing their habits. When you are busy pointing fingers at other people, you don’t need to point them at yourself. In conjunction with this issue, Sarah Davis pointed out that it was very frustrating to talk to some people about sustainability issues, the ones who have no clue what they are talking about.

Matt Smith raised the very interesting point that there is no road map to be a sustainability leader, while there are road maps for other fields, such as how to become- a doctor, lawyer, accountant or business man. He suggested the best way to figure out one’s roadmap was to become more aware of what skills, ambitions, and strengths you have and see where they might best fit. He also thought it would be good to figure out if a SYL wants to work inside the system (like a government role) or outside the system, like an advocate member of 350.org. And because a SYL is creating their own map, they would probably score very high in terms of a sense of empowerment. Emma Pliskin talks about how empowerment is a key part of the
process of being a leader. She states, “You know you can improve others' lives and show people how they can behave in other ways and how you can change people's perspectives.”

One of the overarching themes about the worst part of being an environmental leader was the largeness, pervasiveness and painfulness of the problems being faced. Many of the interviewees spoke about a very large sense of being overwhelmed because of the characteristics of these issues (as just previously mentioned). It should be noted, even in the face of Goliath or the sinking Titanic; these leaders still show-up and try. Paul Rosolie nails it with his comments: “The worst part is in many cases you're fighting losing battles such as protecting clean water, protecting the rainforests, protecting indigenous people, and limiting the power of corporations. Look at Brazil and how they are implementing energy in the process of bulldozing Native Americans. The world’s leading powers own guns, money and ammunition and with it they are destroying swaths of life.” Gowri Varanashi also talks about the overwhelming-ness of doing the environmental work, and the Goliath odds; she comments that, “The worst part is the work gets really stressful and tiring. You feel like you can't deal with this anymore and you want to give up. If you can stay strong and keep going at it, it’s worth it. Everything is so based upon money and profit. It makes it really difficult to change things when everybody is living with these goals. It becomes difficult to do the right things.” Emma Pliskin also talks about the stresses regarding environmental leadership, “I put a lot of pressure on myself. I feel like I should be doing more or having a greater effect.” Victoria Pan adds that one must learn to delegate in these overwhelming situations. She says, “You’ve got a lot of things going on. You have a lot of people wanting to talk to you. We have a lot of things happening all at once. You
might feel overwhelmed. You need to learn to delegate. Now with more experience I am better at learning how to lessen the load.”

Victoria Pan also stresses an important point about making changes. She says that small changes count and should be celebrated, that leaders don’t need to save the whole world in one day, they just need to aim at making a dent in the problems. She says, “What I do makes an impact. You don't need to save the whole world; little changes are important to. We got the lights turned off at the school. We got recycling bins. These little accomplishments gave me more motivation. We have little celebrations when we accomplish small steps.”

Question 6- What Do You Picture Yourself Doing in 10 Years?

Most of the interviewees see themselves involved in a sustainability career down the road; the careers range from environmental lawyer, to health care entrepreneur, to alternative energy entrepreneur, to running ecotourism opportunities. These YSL’s clearly wanted to leave a legacy of change and interested in having a CEO seat (or power position) to do that. Speaking with the YSL’s it was refreshing to see their comfort level with the ownership of power. One of the YSL had already ready been running an organization for a couple years.

Eric Fuchs started an environmental organization 3.5 years ago, MEVO, and in ten years he wishes to have the organization evolving without him. His dream is to move on to creating sustainability in other countries, having visited Bhutan this past summer. The theme of overseas work can also be seen in Paul Rosolie’s aim. He hopes to conserve miles and miles of the Amazon rainforest, following in the footsteps of one of his idols, Charles Munn. Paul jokes that
in 10 years he hopes to receive, “an awesome award for protecting more acreage in the Amazon than anyone else in history.” Paul really feels the pain of the Amazon being destroyed and goes on in length about the importance of the enormous amount of biodiversity to preserve and how important the Amazon is to climate stability. He says that creating ecotourism in these parts of the world supports species, the climate, and jobs. He sees ecotourism as a win-win-win for people, planet and economy.

In terms of specific careers, Camille is going to study environmental engineering and in the future run her own alternative energy company; her particular interest in kite energy. Her sister Sarah is going to be an environmental lawyer, as well as Victoria Pan. Emma Pliskin is going to specialize in public health and policy, with the dream of starting her own health organization. Gowri is going to work in the jungle or with local education on conservation projects. Instead of talking about a career, Matt Smith discusses how he hopes his life is more ecologically balanced in ten years, and that he learns more about the basics of living off the land.

Question 7- How Did You Become a Leader?

There are lots of ways that YSL’s first felt they achieved status of a leader- for some it was when a position was achieved; others see leadership more as a process. Eric Fuchs said he first felt like a leaders he converted his friend to believe in sustainability issues. Sarah Davis, said it happened for her when she was asked to be president of her school’s environmental club. Victoria Pan felt she reached status of leadership when she created and ran a successful program at her high school called “turn off the lights.” Victoria said that the success of that program propelled her into other leadership projects and opened doors to new opportunities. Paul Rosolie
says that he first felt like a leader when his passion and love for the Amazon inspired other people. Paul said it wasn’t all roses thought. He comment that because of his work in the Amazon, he had to spend half of the year in the states doing organizing, marketing and writing, when he would rather be in the jungle.

Camille Davis felt that attaining leadership status was more oriented toward getting acclimated with a skill. She said that one had to be confident to speak their opinion; to know one is right. Matt Smith said that he became a leader when he became comfortable with being uncomfortable. He was able to witness other young leaders from 350.org that had gone through the transformation process of becoming a leader. By watching these young people lead, Matt felt he was able to immolate the process. Matt also spoke of the strong responsibility today’s youth have to pick up the ball and create change. He says, “It is now or never and it's up to us to do it.”

Emma Pliskin sees leadership as a process; she says, “Leadership is a way of behaving and seeing the world.” In past experiences where she has been a leader, such as her gymnastics team squad caption, she says that it is important to make sure everyone feels good and has a good time. Leaders need to be sensitive and responsible to create a good or meaningful experience for others.

Gowri Varabashi felt that she became a leader because she took initiative. She took a risk to get involved with a local graduate student that was studying the conflict between elephants and farmers. She says, “You need to be proactive, you can't wait, you need to look for opportunities. Even if you don't feel comfortable you should just go. It's that one move you need to make- to just get started. You need to go forward and show that you care even if it makes you
uncomfortable sometimes.” Leaders show people how to act. By getting people to care about such creatures as bugs and snakes, she is connecting the people back to nature and giving them a different perspective on living creatures.

**Question 9- If I Could Grant You a Sustainability Magic Wish, What Would You Wish For?**

Paul Rosolie asked for a scientific discovery that would immediately prove the importance of the Amazon. He wishes for— a “scientific discoveries made that natural systems are more delicate than we previously thought so that we immediately save, conserve, and fix the natural habitats. Something that would make us stop cutting out the forest immediately. 50% of the indigenous people are currently being annihilated. All that inspiration, songs and human creativity are disappearing. If we had to protect natural systems we would save so much. For instance we could have just realized through scientific discovery that the rainforest produces the weather and that if we screwed up the rainforest we would completely destroy temperate weather.”

Matt Smith wishes for courage like the lion in the Wizard of Oz. He says, “Having people be able to overcome their fears and work towards the good of others. Fear is a cultural barrier that prevents change and being able to be an agent for good. We need to move past our fears and take action towards a common good.”

Sarah Davis wants everyone to clean up their act. She says, “I wish everyone would recycle everything so that there would be no more trash.” Eric Fuchs and Camille Davis have
the same wish … nix climate change. Eric says, “Get rid of climate change. Find an immediate alternative fuel source. And more passionate people appear immediately.”

Victoria Pan wants and effective and meaningful global network for change. Victoria says, “A way to reach out to all the kids around the world. We need to connect and network on how to be more sustainable.”

Gowri Varanashi wants to have a once immensely green and species populated earth back. She says, “I wish we could go back to how it was a couple century ago when it was a more natural habitat. I wish we could move away from the fossil fuel but keep the knowledge of what we know now. We could avoid all the bad things that are happening today. “

Emma Plisken wishes for an audience that has a high ability to be educated and change. She says, “So many people are apathetic. If they could care enough to listen and question their behaviors things would change. You could do anything with someone that is willing to listen and learn.”

Question 10- Why Do You Do What You Do?

YSL’s attribute their conviction to save the planet to many reasons such as- passion for the planet and species, childhood disturbing experiences, creating concordant meaning in one’s life, and out of the critical status of the planet.
Camille Davis is in high school but she has already lived in 3 different countries- the US, Sweden and Southern Africa. She says that as child in Africa she would regularly see destitute people and a destroyed environment. According to Camille- “I lived in southern Africa for five years. I was exposed to a lot of environmental indifferences. A third of the population was roaming the street without getting their basic needs met. The really didn't have the time, interest, or money to deal with environmental issues. I would see firsthand the dumping sites. It hurt me to see so much natural beauty being destroyed. That is what piqued my interest. I'm not going to just stand by and watch this happen, I intend to change it.” When in Sweden, she said that the country was much more organized in terms of recycling and environmental policies that the general public followed without coercion.

For Emma Pliskin and Eric Fuchs, it was a matter of following meaningful and concordant goals in one’s life. Emma says, “I need to feel like I have a purpose and a point to what my goals are. I need to have a greater effect on society and earth. I want to have an impact. I would not be satisfied with myself if I didn't do something that worked for the greater good.” And Eric says, “

Gowri Varanashi, Victoria Pan, and Paul Rosolie, talk about their passion for the planet. Gowri says, “I love nature so much. I just want to help protect the parts of this world which are so unbelievable. Even a tree is an amazing organism. What is going on inside of a tree is amazing. It's so important and so precious. We need to save whatever we can. I want to help in whatever way I can to protect the Amazon. I get very angry when people say animals can’t feel pain. We are all made up of the same cells. We are all connected.” And Victoria says, “I love
doing it. It is my passion. I don't do it because I feel like I have to; I do it because I want to. I love nature. I love being outdoors. I love the beauty of trees. I feel a connection to the outside world. It gives me a really good feeling.” I do a lot of applying for grants, filling out paperwork, getting people to volunteer. I had a realization that I could pursue my own self-interests (verses some big skyscraper dream or some major mark in history) or I could pursue an interest that would help people even though they would never remember me.” Paul says, “Because I'm insanely inspired and amazed by the world around me. All the organisms have the same right to live as we do. If we destroy these things life on earth would suck. The things that make the world cool is the beauty, the forest, the blue skies. If we destroy everything it would be like the movie Mad Max. A burnt planet. I do what I do to protect the things I love and to help the people coming after me. Indigenous people are getting wiped out. They have the right to live. They live where natural resources are abundant.”

Matt Smith loves be involved with projects to create sustainability on the planet but he is clearly worried. Matt says, “I get a lot of personal joy and satisfaction with working with passionate people. What I am doing feels good. Second our global society is in trouble. Our current path will lead to pain and suffering for an enormous amount of people.”

**Section 5-- My Story— Learning to Lead 101**

**The Art of Getting People to Be Game-Changers**

Leadership is not for pansies. It's for people whose values and virtues are so strong that they are willing to put forth the energy, the time, and the sculpting of perspective to change people paradigms. I’ve studied and watched leaders but I know something about leadership
myself. I've given talks on leadership, two keynote addresses for Bergen Community College Leadership Weekend and a leadership talk for a STEM conference. Initially when I started to get onto the speaking circuit I wanted to talk strictly environmental topics but that didn't apply to what was in-demand on the college scene; that wasn't what the college was looking for. It should be noted that comment is not to put down to the college in any way; Environmentalism is simply not mainstream- here at BCC or most other places in the world. Environmentalism/sustainability is not something that is a top priority right now in our society, so we must be clever and find other avenues to achieve our green goals. But than I realized that leadership was a college value, and I knew that leaders of almost every sector (with exceptions) in general tend to make the world a better place. So in my mind I had a deal- I had found a way that I could attract the masses, satisfy the needs of the college, and still be concordantly true to my green goals.

Making this connection opened a whole new window for me. I started to think, well if I can get the masses to help the planet for leadership, maybe I could double that appeal or triple that appeal with something more (yes I was being greedy!). It then occurred to me how unhappy and how unsatisfied so many people were (including myself and seeing the terribly disturbing high rates of youth depression). Maybe I could aim even higher and hit three pseudo-birds at once: leadership, well-being and the environment. Now mind you my talks are not about the environment, explicitly. But me, as a role model, as the way I live my life, as the stories that I derive from my life as examples, they all scream about the environment. If I become someone that people admire, look up to, someone that people want to know "my ways" because I've achieved-happiness, status, knowledge, coolness, they will try to mesh their behaviors/attitudes with my green way of being. They will think I have something to offer that is of value to their
It should be noted that this “ideal” of who and how I would present myself as a leader was initially a huge gap from where I started. I was very passionate about helping the planet so I underwent watching and learning about how other successful leaders taught, dressed and behaved.

As advocates for the environment a lot of the time we attract our own crowd, we sing to the same choir; that won’t change anything. We need a much larger shift, a much larger and broader appeal to the masses and that is what I was aiming for. My personal belief is that we need a shift in consciousness and a path that will enable people to grow in order to catalyze that shift; leadership, true leadership, delivers that. It requires people to grow a hell of a lot. And to be effective as a leader you need to learn a lot about yourself as you are the tool you’re wielding. When I teach leadership, I am in a sense the product I am selling which is why leadership requires such conscious awareness towards knowing who you are, and who you want to intentionally create. I moved from being an unnoticeable wallflower to putting myself on “stage.” The biggest sign of my metamorphosis at college is when people would meet me and they’d ask how long I’ve been at the college. I would say “around 13 years”, you can always see the dismay. In my head I would think… “No, I am not new here. I am just re-invented.”

The very first talk I gave on leadership was titled – **The Intersection of Leadership, Happiness and Sustainability: How Can We Cultivate the Seed of Greatness in Ourselves, Our Families, Our Communities and Organizations, Our Nation and Our World?** (In appendix) At that point I was asked to give the keynote address for leadership; it was no accident, no fluke. The Environmental Club had risen to being one of the hottest and most active clubs on campus
and because of our strong success as a club, and me being the advisor, the consensus was that I was doing something special or invigorating that I could share with the rest of the college community. And I was indeed doing something special with the club, we weren't just working on environmental issues, *we were working on ourselves*. I knew the college students had to push through red tape at the college. They had to learn to speak with the president, the vice president and other people in administration, so they had to learn how to work with people of power and how to wield power. Studies show that certain groups of children are raised to talk to their doctors and teachers and while others are taught to be quiet to authority figures; the first type is the kind we need as a society. Young adults that can converse with authority and hold power move societies forward. They bring more strength and voice to the table of our future, and everyone benefits. Speaking up and speaking to authority is a skill, and a necessary one for being a leader. Secondly I worked with these college students on how to talk from their heart. Speaking one’s truth in a sincere and respectful way is a very powerful way to communicate. People respond to authenticity and courage. Lastly (and to my great humor) I got some of the very “crunchy” looking environmental students to wear ties and button-down shirts when presenting to crowds. I have to add here that their respect and closeness to me was crucial because I was asking them to do things that were difficult and not their normal behavior. For instance when I'm training someone to recycle, I go in the garbage too. I'm not going to ask someone to do a behavior that I myself am not willing to attempt to do.

So for that first leadership keynote address I went all out. I made these bright cherry-red, hot PowerPoint slides which again focused on happiness and sustainability. I spent the first few minutes talking about environmental data, what the vision of the future could be, and what
needed to happen now if we were going to have a sustainable future. Next I talked about happiness, and in the end I came back to what kind of people make the world change. It was a good talk. I felt a fluttering in my stomach because I knew I had done something very important for myself, for the people in the room, and for the world. When you empower people, shine a light on their own inner strength, they have the potential to change enormously. At the end of the talk I got a standing ovation, I got hugs, and I got tears. The ones that touched me the most were the ones that felt they were alone trying to fix the world. No, they weren’t. And I had stood on stage, in bright lights like a beacon, to connect and reaffirm that hope. Changes was possible. That talk had changed the fabric of time, of the future, and I knew it was not going to stretch back to the same shape. When the youth decides they are going to change the world that is exactly what they are going to do.

I had empowered the students, but I was only able to do that because someone had empowered me, Ben Tal-Shahar. The previous summer I had registered at the University of Pennsylvania taking the happiness course taught by Ben Tal-Shahar, the same guy that made happiness the #1 popular course at Harvard. This guy was the man; if happiness was to be found, he knew about it. And he did. He was right on. So in that first experience for me of teaching leadership as a workshop I used his amazing, empowering material. Maybe, just maybe what we needed as a key piece to save the world were more coaches like Tony Robbins, Maya Angelou, Jane Goodall, and Oprah Winfrey. Maybe somebody needed to put a little sugar on the burnt muffin of a planet we were trying to save. From my experience, so far, that little bit of sugar was doing the trick. It should be noted that I wasn’t giving people smoke and mirrors; I was finding a trigger point to engage and empower people to save our planet.
So here are some of the principles that I learned from Tal Ben-Sharar which ended up in my keynote address- that attitudes and behaviors are intimately linked, create rituals for success habits, be willing to fail in order to learn new things, the question you pose is more important than the answer because the question creates reality, and that we have a limited amount of constructive energy/ discipline. I reinforced the principles with the case studies I had learned from Tal Ben-Sharar. I ended the talk with inspiring the students to think about what kind world they wanted to create for their future. I told the students that everybody on this planet is connected by 6° of freedom, meaning we are way more connected than we realize; that we can move information, support and help very quickly around the globe. That is awesome! I ended with the video by Hawkins regarding that we are in the largest historical movement of goodwill on the planet. Ultimately, we are not alone on this quest. If anything, we are flanked on every side with support; we simply each need to move forward and do our own share and embrace our passions. I reminded them that the power of one is critical. What we choose to do or not do with our life matters. Reflecting again on that first leadership talk, I noticed a bit of lull in the room when I spoke regarding environmental issues. I noticed that when I spoke about depression rates of youth, which are astronomical, there was a sense of relief, understanding and uplift of energy in the room. The students were definitely resonating with this data, representing us living in an overwhelming world. After that I had mentioned the suggestions and tactics for happiness, which also continued to perk up the crowd; the way they were engaged, the way they were sitting in their chairs – straight up and forward, I knew I was hitting a nerve, in a good way.
My experience from the first conference made me feel like leadership was the core part of interest to grab the students, the selling point, in conjunction with happiness. So next year when I was asked to do the leadership keynote address again, I followed the request the director of student life gave me; he had a particular theme for the following year, one I had to follow. The first year I did the keynote, I was asked to do it because of the success of the Environmental Club. The following year, the keynote address had to be based on the pre-chosen theme Transformation Nation- moving student action into student satisfaction. So I picked the title for my keynote address to be: Applying Self Actualization for Action and Satisfaction – Living Our Greatest Lives. My goal was to bridge how the things we do with our life lead to a concordant sense of joy. For this presentation I added studies and tactics on how our virtues can be broken down into 24 strengths that I learned from positive psychologist expert Martin Seligman. I also added principles and concepts of life skills from the online course I did as my Ramapo summer internship, Philosopher Notes expert Brian Johnson. The talk was broken into three parts – putting virtues into action (being-goals versus bling/bucket – list goals), awareness of one's highest goals (finding ways to access of who one is and what one wants from life at their very deepest level of themselves) and lastly, consistency on the fundamentals (fundamentals are the small subtle things that have enormous power to make a strong, keep us grounded, and move us from being a light bulb to a lighthouse). Again the environment part was implied but in a way it spoke the loudest because I'm representing leadership and I am clearly-- through my stories, through my pictures, through my behaviors, through my reusable water bottle-- very loudly speaking for the environment.
In retrospect this talk was packed with too much information. I think I partly overwhelmed the students; gave them too much to absorb. Most importantly, in the talk I gave them a prototype of what the big, important questions are for life. For instance, if you could talk to your 105-year-old self for 5 min., 15 min., an hour, what would they tell you? If you could picture your perfect life on a postcard, what would it look like? Think about what your ideal day would be and write it down in infinitesimal detail – what time did you get up? What time did you breakfast? What did you have for breakfast? Who did you spend the day with? And on and on like this. Also, I helped them with dealing with problems. Life inevitably hits us with challenges, some small and some overwhelmingly large. And an intentionally conscious person will decide what size problem it is, and what size person they’re going to choose to be in respect to the problem. For instance if someone cuts me off on the highway I can a) decide that is a huge problem and flip out or b) decide that is a size 2 problem and I'm going to be a size 9 person and send them loving thoughts. When we get mad at people, or things, which inevitably happens, we are not throwing rat poison at them we are actually eating it ourselves. We are pouring concrete on our garden. Being angry or mad actually makes us hurt and sick. It injures us and not necessarily the person that anger is directed at. And instead of fighting feelings, it is best to “just feel them”. Being a leader requires being a “big” person; it is not just about what you do, it is also about how developed you are as a person. These types of issues are far from trivial; they make or break our success and effectiveness.

The last leadership talk I gave was for a STEM conference. STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The title of the talk was Green careers, Green Campuses and Leadership. I did this talk in conjunction with one of the ladies from continuing
education who works on the sustainability vocational track. This was a special experience for me because I could actually explicitly talk about saving the planet as the main theme. In general the talk covered green careers, the numerous green projects we have on campus, Jamie Clouds Fish Game as an interactive part, and a very brief and invigorating version of the leadership talk. I showed a video of a young lady from Vermont who ended up getting millions of dollars from the federal government to support her energy project. I think it was important to show the students that incredible progress can come from the youth sector. I wanted them to think about what their vision would be. The talk went well and the college asked me to give it again this year at the end of May.

Looking towards the future, there are a good opportunities for me to keep working the leadership circuit. I will most likely continue to do a few more leadership keynotes for the college (but this would also entail me needing to get more education about leadership), I will be again doing the STEM leadership talk towards the end of May of this year, I will be teaching the Success 101 course in the fall (which I got a sustainability module put in. Yea!), and I may be teaching the STEM track general education success class (at the very least I will be on board to help create the syllabus for this course). For sure there is a desire for leadership skills in my academic setting. It may not be in the exact context I want to teach it in, but we are making big progress. I have moved from the personal mentoring arena that started with the environmental club to a broader and more integrated college-wide audience within the system of the Academy and that is making a big difference on the amount of impact I can have on students. I feel that this is one huge step for humanity and the planet. Programs like these change people's lives and they change the trajectory of our future. The power of these programs cannot be understated –
they are crucial, they are relevant, they are empowering, and they are going to impact our way of life in ways that I could not even fathom at this moment.

VI. Conclusion

The two models used in this paper were theory and leadership, predominately leadership. Being an active practitioner of sustainability, I strongly lean on the leadership model. One can come up with strategy model but if the people onboard are not passionate about the project and cant lead it forward, the work will sadly be short lived. This paper also looked at characteristics of sustainability organizers in business and academia. As well, the paper covered the hearts and minds of local successful sustainability leaders.

Jamie Cloud president of the Cloud Sustainability Institute, in her presentation of the bell-curved model for innovation and change, showed that only 2.5% of the population pushes the rest of society forward. We must find and create ways to make more leaders. As evidence from the literature, leaders play a key role in the trajectory of our culture, civilization and planet. If we want to create a sustainable society we cannot just educate for sustainability, we must also create sustainability leaders. We must create the people that will actually implement the change. We must give them information about leadership, mentoring and then opportunities to be leaders.